

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Montana.

MONTANA WEATHER EMERGENCIES

Mr. TESTER. Mr. President, I rise today to share an incredible story about a community working together in the aftermath of a powerful storm in Billings, MT.

The storm that occurred on Father's Day spawned at least one tornado that touched down in Billings Heights, blowing apart several businesses and one of the city's most familiar buildings.

If my colleagues will take a look, this is a picture of what the inside of Rimrock Auto Arena looks like today. You can see the tornado ripped off the roof. Thousands and thousands of folks have memories from inside this building, from concerts to sporting events to graduations.

This picture was taken by Larry Mayer, a photographer for the Billings Gazette. Minutes after the tornado tore through, emergency responders, as my colleagues can see, arrived on the scene to keep folks away from the debris in the streets.

The wind twisted guardrails around light poles. The rain turned streets into rivers. Golf ball-sized hail came crashing down.

In our part of the country, we are used to extreme weather—subzero cold, drought, snow, and severe thunderstorms—but a tornado tearing through the middle of Montana's largest city is pretty darn rare. Through it all, only one minor injury was reported, and that was due to hail.

While we stand together in support of the folks who lost their businesses and their property last Sunday, we are grateful no one died. Nobody lost their home. I attribute that to a lot of luck and to quick action and smart decisions by emergency responders in Billings and in Yellowstone County.

Immediately after the clouds lifted, officers kept onlookers out of harm's way. More than a dozen National Guardsmen immediately secured the area, answering a late night call on Father's Day. News reporters went to work sharing the story. Unelected leaders, from councilmen to commissioners, buckled down to hammer out the next steps.

This week, people across the country opened their newspapers and turned on their TVs to see the incredible pictures from Billings, MT. They saw what happens when a community works together in the aftermath of a storm such as this. Everyone lived to share their story, and the community grew stronger because of it.

It is not just Billings that felt the force of wild weather this last week. Further north, the community of Rocky Boy's Indian Reservation is still trying to tally up the damage after a powerful rain storm last Thursday night. In the nearby Bear Paw Moun-

tains, there is word that water wiped out entire roads. Dozens of families in the area were forced out of their homes, and roads were destroyed.

Last week, a microburst destroyed a home near Froid, MT. Ramona Ryder, the woman who lived in a residence there, died in that storm.

Of course, Montana is a State where agriculture is not just the top industry, it is the livelihood of thousands of families. Weather takes its toll on crops and soil and irrigation. But over the past week, we have seen unusual weather across the Big Sky State, and we can expect more of it. From farmers to tribal communities to folks who live in Montana's biggest cities, it impacts everyone.

Now we begin the process of rebuilding the businesses and the familiar buildings destroyed by these storms.

I ask the Presiding Officer and all of my colleagues to stand with me to offer any support we can to the Billings and Rocky Boy's communities and to those folks up in the Bear Paw Mountains and especially to the folks who have to start from scratch because, as we know all too well in Montana, it takes working together to rebuild, and we will become stronger.

With that, Mr. President, I yield the floor. I suggest the absence of a quorum, and I ask unanimous consent that the time during the quorum call be divided equally between the Democrats and Republicans.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. GILLIBRAND). Without objection, it is so ordered.

The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. KAUFMAN). Without objection, it is so ordered.

HAMAS IN GAZA

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, I rise today to speak about the current situation in the Gaza Strip.

In 2007, Hamas, a State Department-designated foreign terrorist organization, forcibly seized control of Gaza. Hamas continues to refuse to recognize Israel's right to exist and, in fact, has perpetrated terrorist attacks against Israel, launching countless rockets from Gaza into Israel.

Hamas calls for the elimination of Israel and Jews from Islamic holy lands. No Hamas leader has publicly expressed a willingness to disarm or to stop attacks on Israel and Israelis.

Israel, like every other country in the world, has a right to defend itself. With a sworn enemy on its border, Israel must protect her citizens against potential attacks every single day. Under the blockade, Israel directs ships to the port of Ashdod, where they are inspected for arms and other dangerous items before Israel allows off-loading

and assists in the delivery of legitimate goods to Gaza.

We know that Israel's concerns about arms transfers to Gaza are legitimate because both weapons and raw materials are smuggled into Gaza through tunnels from the Sinai in Egypt. Thousands of rockets and mortars have been fired from Gaza into Israel over the last decade.

Just last week, Israel has shown signs of compromise, announcing its intention to ease the blockade and allow more civilian goods and humanitarian aid to enter the Palestinian territory by land, including construction materials for civilian projects.

It is important to note that Hamas has made no such compromises and continues to maintain its vehement and violent stance against Israel's existence. Hamas also continues to endanger Gaza's civilian population by using hospitals, schools, mosques, and residential neighborhoods as command and operations centers or as weapons storage facilities.

While Hamas claims to be the popular representatives of the Palestinians in Gaza, their actions show that they hardly care for the plight of the average Gazan, as their rule deprives their own people of a transparent democracy, civil rights and freedom.

The best way to ameliorate that and to fix the broader current crisis and prevent future ones, of course, is Israeli-Palestinian peace and the creation of an independent Palestinian state that lives side-by-side with Israel, providing security and economic stability for the Palestinian and the Israeli people.

Today, it is Israel that continues to acknowledge the necessary framework for any peace agreement.

Israel has shown willingness for direct negotiations, but the Palestinians continue to insist on proximity talks. Israel is seeking to make peace with a partner whose parliament is controlled by Hamas, an organization still sworn to the destruction of Israel.

The only way to achieve peace is for Hamas to give up its militancy, forego terrorism and violence against innocent civilians, recognize Israel's right to exist and become a legitimate partner in Palestinian institutions. The more than 1 million Palestinians living in Gaza deserve that, the millions of Israelis who are subject to Hamas rockets and terror deserve that and frankly, the world deserves a stable, secure Middle East.

I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. ENZI. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.