

Mr. Speaker, for the RECORD I present the article by William Drozdiak entitled "France Acknowledges Radioactive Leakage in South Pacific Nuclear Tests."

[From the Washington Post, Jan. 24, 1996]

FRANCE ACKNOWLEDGES RADIOACTIVE
LEAKAGE IN SOUTH PACIFIC NUCLEAR TESTS
(By William Drozdiak)

PARIS, January 23.—France acknowledged today that radioactive materials have leaked into the sea from its nuclear tests in the South Pacific but insisted that the quantities were so minimal that they posed no threat to the environment.

The confirmation that radioactive elements such as iodine-131 have seeped into the lagoon near the Mururoa test site seemed likely to revive the storm of protests that followed President Jacques Chirac's decision to conduct a final series of underground nuclear explosions before signing a global test-ban treaty.

Japanese Foreign Minister Yukihiko Ikeda said he will demand a full explanation from France about the nature of the leaks. Other countries in the Pacific region, notably Australia and New Zealand, are expected to follow suit, French officials said.

Defying international criticism, France has carried out five nuclear tests since September to verify a new warhead and to perfect simulation technology that will be used to monitor reliability of its nuclear weapons. A final test will take place next month before the test site is shut down permanently, French officials said.

But the latest accounts of radioactive leakage at the Mururoa test site have raised questions about the credibility of the French government's arguments that the nuclear explosions present no environmental menace.

"There is no way to assess whether there is a coverup because the French do not allow independent verification," said Tom Cochran, a nuclear-test specialist at the Natural Resources Defense Council in Washington. "What makes people suspicious about whether they are hearing the truth is the fact that these tests were really unnecessary in the first place."

France has always contended that its underground nuclear blasts inflict no damage on the fragile ecology of the Mururoa coral atoll, 750 miles southeast of Tahiti, which serves as its principal test site. Explosive devices are bored deep within the basalt foundation of the atoll, and French scientists say the intense heat from the blast vitrifies the rock and traps all radioactivity before it can escape.

But Alain Barthoux, director of nuclear tests at France's Atomic Energy Commission, acknowledged that traces of radioactive material are usually "vented" into the lagoon when scientists drill down into the rock to obtain samples after every blast.

Barthoux claimed, however, that such leaks involve "insignificant amounts" of radioactive substances, such as cesium, tritium or iodine, that vanish quickly in the environment. Quantities of iodine-131, for example, which can cause cancer when ingested by humans, shrink by half within eight days and disappear entirely within 80 days, he said.

Barthoux denied a report in the Japan's Yomiuri Shimbun newspaper that small amounts of radioactive iodine were continuing to leak into the water as a result of the latest round of nuclear tests. The paper quoted sources at the Geneva disarmament conference, where the global test-ban treaty is being negotiated, as saying a French nuclear expert disclosed the radiation leakage at a meeting in Washington last November.

The French specialist was quoted as saying the information was "extremely confidential."

France first acknowledged the release of radioactivity from its nuclear tests when oceanographer Jacques Cousteau visited the Mururoa site in 1987 and was allowed to conduct independent tests of the water in the lagoon. He found the presence of radioactive iodine, cesium, cobalt and europium, but in quantities that were not considered dangerous.

But he warned that Mururoa's coral crown was deeply cracked and could pose a problem if testing continued. He said risks grew that higher levels of radioactive residue could seep into the lagoon.

French Defense Minister Charles Millon denounced reports from last year of widening fissures in the atoll as "unreliable." Foreign Minister Herve de Charette told the National Assembly that "never have any cracks of any kind been spotted."

But a confidential Defense Ministry report acknowledged the government has been aware, at least since 1979, that Mururoa's underwater basalt foundation is fractured several places.

The report described the effects of an accident in 1979 in which the French detonated a 150-kiloton weapon only 1,300 feet below the surface of the lagoon. The blast was supposed to occur at 2,600 feet, but the bomb got stuck halfway down the test shaft and the French detonated it there rather than risk trying to move it.

The explosion blasted loose more than 130 million cubic yards of rock and coral, causing a tidal wave that injured several French scientists and guards. The document also described underwater avalanches that followed three tests as proof the growing number of tests was posing serious environmental risks to the Mururoa atoll.

The fragile state of the site after repeated tests persuaded France to stage its biggest blasts on nearby Fangatafa atoll, where, in October, it exploded a 100-kiloton warhead, designed for submarine launch.

PRESIDENT'S ACTIONS SPEAK
LOUDER THAN WORDS

(Mr. BARTLETT of Maryland asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. BARTLETT of Maryland. Mr. Speaker, last night our President spoke to all Americans about the challenges facing us. The President challenged Congress to help him produce a smaller, less bureaucratic government in Washington. The President told Americans that the era of big government is over. The President challenged Congress to balance the budget, reform welfare, reduce teen pregnancy, to provide a tax credit for children, and to preserve Medicare.

Mr. Speaker, the President's actions speak louder than his words. I am reminded of a colloquialism, "Been there, done that." Congress already passed legislation to balance the budget, reform welfare, reduce teen pregnancy, provide a tax credit for children, and preserve Medicare.

The President's response? He vetoed them, all of them. This President will say anything, but he obviously has trouble performing.

FUEL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS
IMPORTANT FOR AMERICA

(Mr. SANDERS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. Speaker, in the United States of America millions of our citizens should not be forced into worrying about how they are going to heat their homes in this record breaking cold weather winter.

In Vermont and throughout this country we have had nights of 20 below zero, 30 below zero, and even 40 below zero.

The LIHEAP Fuel Assistance Program has provided over 24,000 Vermont households, and 6 million low-income households nationally, including many senior citizens, with the fuel assistance they need to survive the freezing weather. Three-quarters of the households on LIHEAP have incomes of less than \$8,000 a year.

Today, I am sending Appropriations Committee Chairman ROBERT LIVINGSTON a letter with over 115 congressional signatures, Democrats and Republicans, asking him to make certain that the continuing resolution that is passed by Friday contains full funding for LIHEAP—and that the remaining \$200 million that was appropriated is released.

This is America, and 80-year-old senior citizens should not be forced to go cold in the winter.

THE CHINA HOLOCAUST

(Mr. WOLF asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. WOLF. Mr. Speaker, every Member should read the editorial in the Washington Post called "Holocaust: The China Parallel." It is by Walter Reich, the director of the Holocaust Museum and the chairman of the American Psychiatric Association's Committee on Human Rights.

What does he say?

According to the reports provided by Human Rights Watch, the starved children in the Chinese orphanages look very much like the starved children in the German "Children's Specialty Institutions"; the Chinese institutions, too, administer sedatives to some children selected for death; they, too, use false diagnoses as coverups; they, too, cremate the remains of starved children; and they, too, employ physicians, many of whom probably tell themselves that the children dying under their care would have died anyway, and in any case are useless eaters in a country challenged by scarce resources.

The parallels between the Chinese orphanages and the Nazi programs to kill disabled children are alarming. These parallels remind us that human beings, including physicians and other caregivers, are extraordinarily vulnerable to inhuman acts and extraordinarily capable of justifying their behavior on what they see as rational grounds. And they remind us that countries in which democratic institutions are forcibly forbidden and human rights systematically quashed are ones in which human life becomes, quite simply, expendable.

Finally, somebody has said something about the similarities between the Holocaust and the activities of the Chinese Government.

Now, I know the Clinton administration will not do anything. But will the Congress do anything? This Congress has done nothing. The business of this Congress is business. You have watched priests put in jail in China; you have watched bishops be put in jail in China; you have watched Harry Wu's enslavement. Now you watch 60 Minutes and orphans being killed, and we know the Clinton administration has done nothing, but this Congress, this Congress, where we all have the right to speak out, we have done nothing.

TIME FOR CONGRESS TO WORK TOGETHER

(Mr. DOGGETT asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. DOGGETT. Mr. Speaker, neither political party has a monopoly on truth. We need to work together, as President Clinton urged last night, to find some common ground about the problems that this Nation faces.

There is not any good reason why we cannot put the fanaticism of this Gingrich-led Congress behind us. Enough of the temper tantrums; enough of the Government shutdowns that waste taxpayer money; enough of the threats to reject the full faith and credit of the United States of America.

The time to start anew is today, working together, to address this question of the adjustment of the debt limit. We cannot afford to have the first default in the next month in the history of this Nation. Six former Treasury Secretaries, Republicans and Democrats alike, have come together to urge us to address this debt limit issue. We ought to do it today. It is the same kind of bipartisan support we need from our House colleagues to address this very serious matter.

Every single American who has got a credit card loan balance, who has a variable mortgage, who might ever want to take out a loan, had a stake in our protecting the credit of this country.

MOVE TOGETHER TO ATTACK DEFICIT

(Mr. HAYWORTH asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. HAYWORTH. Mr. Speaker, again I come to the well and listen with great interest to my good friend from Texas, even as he decries fanaticism, launch into his own special brand of name calling. And that is fine; good people can disagree.

But it is precisely because we need to maintain the full faith and credit of the United States of America that we must move together to attack this

egregious deficit and this huge debt in the trillions of dollars, and the best way to do that is to truly put aside name calling and work together, work together to end runaway spending.

The President came last night and he said the days of big Government are over, and yet the budget plan he endorses calls for an additional \$350 billion in spending and additional \$200 billion in taxes.

Friends, let us work together. But the same old formula of tax-and-spend is not the prescription for America's future. It is time to truly say the days of big Government are over, and a limited and effective Government should be the mission of the United States of America.

MAINTAIN ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

(Mr. PALLONE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, the President challenged the Congress last night not to turn the clock back on environmental protection. Unfortunately, that is what has been happening in this House. Whether it is Superfund or enforcement within the EPA, in each case over the last year we have seen significant threats and efforts to turn back the clock on environmental protection.

Right now the Superfund Program is in shambles. Enforcement within the Environmental Protection Agency has been suggested, and pursuant to the CR that we passed, cut back by 25 percent. Lobbyists and special interests, as the President has said, the polluters, are now in the room writing the environmental bills and trying to weaken environmental laws.

We need to heed the President's call. In this year in Congress we have to make sure there is adequate funding for Superfund and for environmental protection. This was always a bipartisan issue. As the President mentioned, much of the environmental laws were passed when President Nixon was President and the Democrats controlled Congress.

The President also looked at the future and he said we can expand the economy; we can create jobs at the same time we protect the environment. He had a vision for the future in this country which is proenvironment, and this Congress should heed his call.

□ 1230

TALK IS CHEAP

(Mr. FRISA asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. FRISA. Mr. Speaker, once again the President gave a sterling speech last night. So good, in fact, that I would say he has a silver tongue. Unfortunately, he expects Americans to pay for the polish.

So, we have heard enough slick talk from Bill Clinton, because his talk does not come cheap. We pay the price. Let us do the real work of the American people and cut the size and cost of Government and leave more money in people's paychecks so that we can spend our own money how we see fit. When we accomplish that, our work truly will have been done.

HOLDING DEBT CEILING DECISION HOSTAGE IS BAD POLITICS

(Mr. SCHUMER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. Speaker, the message from the President last night was simple. He wants a centrist and bipartisan agreement, a balanced budget in 7 years. The President reached out his hand. It would be a shame if NEWT GINGRICH and the Republican freshmen slapped it. But already we hear plans from the extreme Republicans to add this bangle to the spending bill and that dangle to the debt ceiling.

Mr. Speaker, last month the Republicans hostages were Government employees. This month it seems it will be the debt ceiling and America's credit rating. Holding the debt ceiling hostage will raise mortgage rates for homeowners, credit interest rates for consumers, college loan interest rates for students.

Last month, Republicans learned that holding Federal employees hostage was wrong and bad politics and they had to retreat with their tail between their legs. Now, amazingly, the Republicans are attempting to play this hostage game again, this time with the full faith and credit of the United States. Mr. Speaker, I say to my Republican colleagues, when are you guys going to learn? Enough already.

PRESIDENT ATTEMPTS TO BASK IN HEROES' HONOR

(Mr. DORNAN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. DORNAN. Mr. Speaker, my father, Harry Joseph Dornan, who is the hero of my life, died 21 years ago today. He would be tormented today, as I am, by the lack of character and integrity at the highest level of our Government.

Mr. Speaker, he took me and my brothers into the Oval Office in 1941, and he held the White House and its occupant in a certain awe and respect. Even liberal writers say that the White House has been dragged down to the street level over the last 3 years.

Last night, amidst that snow job, Mr. Clinton did it again. He put heroes in the gallery trying to reflect in their honor and glory, and that is not possible when Paula Corbin Jones is going to get her day in court. And then he put a hero in this front row who, like