ANTHRAX ISN'T THAT RISKY

HON. JOHN J. LaFALCE

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, November 28, 2001

Mr. LAFALCE. Mr. Speaker, I would like to share with my colleagues the following article, which appeared in the Wall Street Journal on October 22, 2001. The article underscores the importance of putting into perspective the relatively small risk to average Americans posed by the threat of anthrax and bioterrorism, and the need for Americans to continue to go about their daily lives as before.

[From the Wall Street Journal, Oct. 22, 2001]

CHILL OUT: ANTHRAX ISN'T THAT RISKY

(By Ezekiel J. Emanuel)

My brother's business partner, a well-educated Hollywood agent, called to say that he just purchased $1,900 worth of Cipro to protect his wife and two kids. Knowing there was a threat of anthrax out there, he couldn't sleep comfortably without Cipro at home.

The fear of anthrax, and the public response to it, has so far reflected bad math, bad medicine and bad public health. We cannot continue to let confusion determine how we act. It may hurt us badly.

First, the bad math. Anthrax is out there. Letters containing spores are a real threat. But the question is: How big a threat? So far one person has died of inhaled anthrax, and several others have cutaneous anthrax—from which they will probably recover uneventfully with treatment. Several hundred more people have been exposed, but far fewer than 100 have tested positive for having anthrax without being infected. For the family of Robert Stevens, who died in Florida, it is a terrible tragedy. But for the rest of us, anthrax is not a public-health menace that should drive us to do crazy things.

The risk of dying of anthrax needs to be put into perspective. One death among 280 million Americans is a miniscule risk. It is less than the risk of dying from driving just one mile. To put it another way, 280 people would have to die of anthrax to equal the risk of driving 50 miles in a car (about one in a million). How many Americans refuse to drive because of the risk of dying in a car accident?

More important, the risk is hardly random. There may be call for people working on Capitol Hill or at the White House or federal agencies or major news organizations to be concerned. But for average Americans the chance of an anthrax-filled letter is less than one in a billion, substantially less than the risk of being struck by lightening (about one in 600,000 in a year).

There are many reasons we react more strongly to the risks of anthrax than to the risks of driving. We are used to driving; we are habituated to the risks. We take precautions—we buckle up, we don't drink and drive. But anthrax is new, unexpected, outside our routine, and therefore scary.

Also, it is not the single death from anthrax that really worries us but the unknown possibility of a full-scale bioterror attack. But here we need to rationally consider the risk of a large attack and the likely harm it will cause. It takes a great deal of sophistication to generate the right-sized spores and, even more challenging, the right way of aerosolizing them over a large area. Spiked letters are not terribly effective at spreading anthrax to thousands, let alone millions, of people. During the Cold War, it took the U.S. and the Soviet Union decades to work out the details of biological warfare with anthrax. Is it likely a terrorist group could do the same in a few weeks or even years?

Also, anthrax does not kill instantly. It takes several days. With the nation on high alert to the threat, any large-scale dissemination would be detected and people in the exposed area would be monitored and treated. The risks of dying of anthrax are simply not very high.

Stocking up on Cipro is bad medicine. First, children should not take Cipro; it can damage the development of their joints. Second, while relatively safe, Cipro, like all drugs, has side effects, some of which can be serious. Besides minor annoyances of nausea, diarrhea and rashes, Cipro can cause the inflammation and rupture of tendons. Prolonged use—like the 60 days of treatment necessary for prophylaxis against anthrax—can cause superinfections with very serious and even life-threatening bacteria. It also can have serious, potentially fatal, interactions with other drugs, such as the asthma drug theophylline.

And spending $1,900 on Cipro for anthrax is foolish. There are many other drugs that are just as effective against anthrax, safer for children and considerably cheaper, including penicillin, erthyromycin and doxycycline.

Cipro is a prescription drug. It should be used when there is a medical indication for its use, making the benefits of specific treatment favorable compared to the risks of the drug. Physicians should not dispense it as a way of calming worry. Real facts, not the prescription pad, are the right treatment for the insomnia of my brother's partner and his wife.

Bad medicine produces bad public health. The dispensing of antibiotics for colds, sore throats, the flu and other minor viral infections has created a serious problem; many bacteria are becoming resistant. We have been able to stay ahead by developing new antibiotics, but we are losing the race. The bacteria are able to mutate to outsmart our drugs faster than our pharmaceutical companies can develop, test and market and market new antibiotics. The result is a danger to us all. The next infection we get may be harder—or, God forbid, impossible—to treat because the bacteria no longer respond.

Millions of Americans self-medicating with Cipro is a real threat to public health. In the years since it has been on the market, bacteria have become resistant to Cipro. Widespread use serves no medical purpose, but only increases the chances of other bacteria—more threatening than anthrax—becoming resistant. We would end up protecting ourselves against the miniscule risk of anthrax, only to make ourselves more vulnerable to more common everyday bacteria. Not a good bargain.

My advice to my brother's partner: Take the Cipro to the pharmacy and get your money back. Keep driving your car and be sure you buckle up every time. Stop asking for antibiotics for every cold. And keep alert, contacting your local health department, hospital or physician if there is a credible threat.

CONGRATULATIONS TO SIX ALUMNI RECIPIENTS OF 2001 GEORGE ESTABROOK DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD

HON. STEVE ISRAEL

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, November 28, 2001

Mr. ISRAEL. Mr. Speaker, I am extremely pleased to rise today to offer my sincere congratulations to the six alumni recipients of the 2001 George M. Estabrook Distinguished Service Award. These six individuals are receiving Hofstra University's most prestigious alumni award for all of their excellence in the categories of career and service to society.

Thomas J. McAteer, Honorable John Pessala, Edward P. Mangano, Mindy Dragovich, Lauren Hanley and Steven B. Aptheker all represent an extremely impressive group and truly deserve their award tonight, December 1, 2001 at the Hofstra Annual Alumni Award Dinner.

Congratulations again to this fine and outstanding group of candidates.

SAVE-A-FRIEND NATIONAL HOTLINE PROGRAM

HON. MARK FOLEY

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, November 28, 2001

Mr. FOLEY. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today concerning the Save-A-Friend national hotline program. The need for a national school violence hotline to help prevent tragedies in our nation's schools is extremely pressing. These senseless acts of violence against children must be stopped. While hotlines at the state and local level are useful, a national hotline must be implemented in order to better combat the problem of school violence.

I am pleased that the concept of Save-A-Friend has been supported by so many and I plan on making a request to the United States Department of Justice recommending a total of $500,000 in grant funding for the study and preliminary design of a Save-A-Friend National Hotline Program. This hotline should be staffed by trained professionals, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and ensure timely interaction between schools, local police organizations, the FBI and other federal law enforcement agencies. My request will ask the Department of Justice to report back its plan and budget to implement such a program on a national basis next year. This report will be submitted before the Fiscal Year 2003 budget process.

TRIBUTE TO THE HILL VIEW TREE FARM

HON. BILL SHUSTER

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, November 28, 2001

Mr. SHUSTER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to share some exciting news from my district. I am delighted to report that the official White House Christmas tree is coming from a farm in my district. Specifically, the White House Christmas tree has been chosen from the Hill View Tree Farm in Middlecreek, PA, which is owned and operated by Janice Bowersox and her son and daughter-in-law, Darryl and Aimee Bowersox.

In order to achieve the honor of being designated the farm to supply the White House Christmas trees, the Bowersox family entered the national Christmas Tree contest, an event sponsored by the National Christmas Tree Association. The Bowersox family won the contest at the national convention in August 2000,

where they were named Grand Champions. As the winner, Hill View Tree Farm became the chosen supplier of two Christmas trees for the White House.

One tree will be set up in the Yellow Oval Room to serve as the tree for the Bush family. This is the tree under which members of the first family are likely to put their presents. This tree, from the Hill View Farm, is about 8 feet tall and has been growing in the field since 1989. The larger tree, which will be placed in the Blue Room, must be at least 18½ feet high. This larger tree will be the official White House Christmas tree. It is being supplied for Hill View Farm by Donald Craul of Lewisburg, Pennsylvania.

The two trees will be cut and delivered to the White House the week after Thanksgiving. Janice, Darryl and Aimee Bowersox will present the official White House Christmas tree to first lady Laura Bush at the White House on the morning of November 28.

Hill View Tree Farm was founded in 1954. The farm has about 150,000 Christmas trees growing on 120 acres. The Bowersox family grows Douglas fir, Colorado spruce, white pine, and concolor fir trees. According to Janice Bowersox, winning the White House Christmas tree contest has long been a family goal. Janice Bowersox said she and her family are honored to be presenting this year's tree and thrilled to have received the top honor in the Christmas tree industry.

I am delighted that a farm from my district was chosen to be a part of the White House Christmas tree tradition. I am happy for the Bowersox family, and I hope that the Christmas tree chosen for the White House will bring joy to the President and Mrs. Bush and their family.

THE TRANSPORTED AIR POLLUTION MITIGATION ACT OF 2001

HON. GARY A. CONDIT

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, November 28, 2001

Mr. CONDIT. Mr. Speaker, today I introduce ''The Transported Air Pollution Mitigation Act of 2001.'' This bill holds upwind air districts responsible to neighboring downwind air districts for the impacts of transported air pollution.

The Clean Air Act requires States to address the impact of air pollution that is transported between States. It is silent, however, about addressing transported air pollution within a State or what mitigation measures are imposed when transported pollution occurs between States. This oversight allows upwind air districts—because of prevailing wind patterns—to transport locally generated emissions to neighboring downwind air districts and only requires them to address the emissions that remain in the upwind district.

Transported pollution impacts the environment, public health, and economies in the downwind air districts. Pollution knows no political boundaries. A case in point is the San Francisco Bay Area. The California Air Resources Board has classified the San Francisco Bay Area as an ''overwhelming'' ozone contributor to each of the four neighboring air districts surrounding it—Sacramento, the San Joaquin Valley, Southern Sonoma, and the Monterey Bay-Central Coast region. This classification means that air quality monitoring data has shown there are days in which the downwind air district is in violation of quality standards because of emissions generated by the upwind air district.

This bill is a matter of fairness and equity. It requires those areas that are responsible to be accountable for the public health, environmental and economic impacts to their downwind neighbors.

CLEAN DIAMOND TRADE ACT

SPEECH OF

HON. SHEILA JACKSON-LEE

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, November 27, 2001

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise to express my support for the ''Clean Diamond Trade Act,'' and, additionally, to express my support for those diamond-producing nations like Botswana that have served as a positive example during the development of this important legislation.

The move to prevent so-called conflict diamonds from reaching U.S. markets has never been so important. Illegal diamond smuggling has helped prolong conflicts in which millions have been displaced, and millions more have been killed in brutal conflicts that have ravaged sub-Saharan Africa. Additionally, recent reports in the Washington Post by editor Steve Coll and other news services that rebel warlords in nations such as Sierra Leone are mining diamonds for sale to the al Queda terrorist network have highlighted the need for this important legislation. Thus, efforts restricting this source of funding to blood-thirsty factions that are running roughshod over the inalienable human rights due to the citizens of these war-torn nations are both highly commendable and exceedingly necessary. They serve to protect the lives of innocent African civilians, cut the funding sources of terrorist organizations, and thereby serve to protect the lives of innocent Americans.

My only concern is that in this drive to cut war-mongering factions off from the funding that sustains them, Congress ensures that law-abiding nations whose diamond industries support stable democracies not be a casualty of this very important and honorable piece of legislation.

In April, some of my colleagues and I had the opportunity to visit Botswana, a country whose growing economy is inextricably linked to its legitimate diamond mining industry. During my visit, we met American ambassador John Lange, His Excellency President Festus Mogae, and Health Minister Joy Phumanbi, along with many other dignitaries and government officials. We toured the Jwaneng Mine and the Princess Marina Hospital. These meetings made a strong impression on me, particularly the tour of the hospital. It was a clear indication of the strides that Botswana has been able to make in its fight against AIDS and HIV infection through the revenue generated by its diamond industry.

In these times of conflict and the proliferation of the AIDS pandemic that is devastating many sub-Saharan African Nations, Botswana stands out as an example of democracy in action. Its diamond industry and sound financial management has made Botswana's economy one of the fastest growing in the world. Botswana's successful development of its diamond industry has translated into the resources needed to bolster its democracy and fight the scourge of AIDS that is spreading so rapidly throughout the region.

As a member of the Congressional Black Caucus, these issues are of particular importance to me. The CBC has long focused on stabilizing the region and increasing economic growth and trade opportunities for sub-Saharan Africa. The protective language in section 4 of H.R. 2722 is vitally important to achieving those ends. It establishes a framework under which diamonds from legitimate, law-abiding governments are separated from those originating in conflict zones. The legislation allows the president to import diamonds only from those countries that take effective measures to stop trade in conflict diamonds.

Under the act, effective measures are defined as those that either (1) comply with the requirements of U.N. Security Council Resolutions on conflict diamonds, (2) meet the requirements of an international arrangement on conflict diamonds (provided that arrangement comports with Security Council Resolutions), or (3) contain certain ''minimum standards'' (e.g., the country requires that all rough diamond exports are packaged securely with officially validated documentation certifying country of origin, total carat weight, and value). Under this new framework, the Administration would have the authority to bar rough diamond imports from any country that does not have an effective system of rough diamond controls.

This is imperative because it allows those who are lawfully engaged in building stable industries to support their economies to continue to grow and provide for the welfare of their citizens. To penalize countries who are legitimately mining diamonds to build vital infrastructure that provides better services and more opportunities to its citizens in order to punish those who would smuggle diamonds to achieve more sinister aims throws the baby out with the bath water. Any legislation dealing with the diamond trade must make a distinction between the two. Indeed, by drawing this bright line, Congress will not only cut funding to war criminals. Congress will have succeeded in supporting and bolstering trade opportunities with countries that can be held up as examples of success in this troubled region.

This body will be well apprised of further successes. The bill requires that the President submit to Congress regular reports identifying countries involved in conflict diamond trade and describing actions taken by the United States and other countries to stop trade in conflict diamonds. Additionally, the bill specifies that the GAO transmit a report on the effectiveness of the Act within three years of its effective date.

I commend Congress for addressing this very critical issue in such a responsible and effective manner. It is consistent with other Congressional initiatives to combat the AIDS pandemic and seek resolution to the numerous conflicts in the area. By singling out the export of so-called ''blood diamonds'' for sanction, this act will enhance the ability of legitimate diamond industries in the area to flourish, providing a much needed foundation on which economic and political stability can be built.