

into China, we have a tremendous opportunity to reach a young generation of people who are in desperate need of another side of the story. And those reporters are providing it with RFA.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I thank my good friend from California (Mr. ROYCE), the author of the House companion of this bill, for his leadership on this issue.

Today I rise in strong support of the Senate bill, S. 3104, a bipartisan bill that deserves our prompt approval. I want to thank the gentleman from California, who has been working on this issue for a number of years. And as we know, Mr. Speaker, an unfettered and independent press is so vital to the maintenance of liberty that its protection was enshrined in the First Amendment of our Constitution.

Tyranny cannot abide dissent. And the repressive regimes know that they cannot afford to allow the unregulated dissemination of information and ideas. People accustomed to thinking freely and speaking freely cannot be deterred from also living freely. These are the realities that drive our Nation's longstanding commitment to surrogate broadcasting, providing to oppressed societies the kind of news and information that local journalists would supply if they were allowed to operate freely.

We can all recall the important role that Radio Free Europe played in helping us to end the Cold War. For the past 14 years, its younger sibling, Radio Free Asia, has provided critical broadcasting in a neighborhood that contains some of the world's most anti-democratic regimes: North Korea, Burma, China, Vietnam, and Laos. It also broadcasts in important minority languages such as Uyghur, Cantonese, Wu, and dialects of Tibet.

Among all of the freedom broadcasting services of the United States, RFA, Radio Free Asia, is the only one whose authorizing legislation contained a sunset date, which Congress has repeatedly extended. It is high time to remove that sunset and make Radio Free Asia's authorization permanent.

Sadly, the need for Radio Free Asia is not going to end any time soon, Mr. Speaker. Making the authorization permanent, therefore, is an important signal of the United States' commitment, putting those regimes who try so extremely hard to block the Radio Free Asia broadcasts on notice that they cannot wait out our resolve to support freedom of the press in Asia.

In addition, permanent authority makes operational sense, as the recurring sunset has complicated Radio Free Asia's ability to hire long-term staff, to negotiate cost-effective leases and capital agreements. For these reasons, Mr. Speaker, this measure before us deserves our unanimous support.

Let us stand today with the long-suffering people of China, of Tibet, of

North Korea, of Burma, of Vietnam, of Cambodia, and Laos, and against regime-sponsored attempts to restrict the information they receive.

Ms. JACKSON LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of S. 3140, a bill to permanently authorize Radio Free Asia, and for other purposes. I thank my colleague Senator LUGAR for introducing this important bill that reasserts our commitment to a free press and freedom of speech in Asia and throughout the world.

Freedom of the press is one of our most cherished values and enshrined in our first amendment. "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances." I believe it is one of the most valuable and fundamental rights written in the Constitution, as it grants us as people the ability to speak truth to tyranny. In the United States we often take this freedom for granted, but in many countries throughout the world it does not exist at all, or exists only on paper and not in practice.

Thus the United States has long sought to expand this freedom throughout the world, promoting free speech and freedom of information in places where governments have strangled their people's ability to speak their minds. Most notably during the Cold War, Radio Free Europe was one of the many tools the United States used to try and reach out to those behind the Iron Curtain, who were deprived of information and whose right to speak their minds freely was severely curtailed. Radio Free Asia, RFA, attempts to do the same for the people of Asia whose freedom of speech and press, particularly in China and North Korea, has been stifled by increasingly restrictive government policies.

The consistent and continued attempts on behalf of these governments to block and jam RFA's broadcasts are a testament to their value and effectiveness. Like a cool breeze drafting through a hot, stifled room, RFA is a breath of fresh air to those who are deprived of information and afraid to speak freely. Creatively using shortwave broadcasts and the Internet, RFA has been able to circumvent many of the restrictive tactics of oppressive governments, often relying on the ingenuity and intelligence of local listeners themselves to spread the word.

But RFA needs more time and more resources to do its job right. It is of paramount importance that Radio Free Asia continue its broadcasts in the future, until its implementation is made obsolete by its own success in promoting freedom of information in the countries it currently serves. According to Freedom House, freedom of the press is in decline almost everywhere in the world, making Radio Free Asia's services that much more vital in reaffirming this Congress' concern for the freedom of people around the globe. I am glad that the Congress has decided to continue the important work of the RFA and to promote freedom to our oppressed brethren in Asia.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Ms. WATSON. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by

the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WATSON) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, S. 3104.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

EXPRESSING SUPPORT FOR PEOPLE OF GUATEMALA, HONDURAS AND EL SALVADOR AFTER TROPICAL STORM AGATHA

Ms. WATSON. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 1462) expressing support for the people of Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador as they persevere through the aftermath of Tropical Storm Agatha which swept across Central America causing deadly floods and mudslides, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The text of the resolution is as follows:

H. RES. 1462

Whereas, on May 29, 2010, Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador experienced devastating floods and mudslides brought on by Tropical Storm Agatha;

Whereas Tropical Storm Agatha has left 174 dead and 62,827 families were directly affected in Guatemala;

Whereas Tropical Storm Agatha has left 22 dead and 7,998 in shelters in Honduras;

Whereas Tropical Storm Agatha has left 11 dead and 12,000 in shelters in El Salvador;

Whereas over 2,000 Guatemalans were displaced with little forewarning following the eruption of the Pacaya volcano;

Whereas the combination of Tropical Storm Agatha and the eruption of the Pacaya volcano have devastated Guatemala's landscape leaving behind sinkholes and mudslides across the country;

Whereas, due to recent droughts, erratic rainfall, high food prices, and a sharp drop in remittances, Guatemala has suffered severe food insecurity that will increase in the wake of Tropical Storm Agatha;

Whereas Guatemalan officials are estimating that damages will surpass \$475,000,000;

Whereas the loss in the agriculture sector could be close to \$18,500,000 in Honduras;

Whereas 380 schools have been affected in El Salvador;

Whereas critical infrastructure relating to water and sanitation has been destroyed;

Whereas the United States has provided relief for the victims of Tropical Storm Agatha by deploying United States Southern Command support helicopters and frigates for assistance with the transport of food, water, and emergency supplies;

Whereas countries and organizations around the world have contributed millions of dollars in medicines and aid, and humanitarian aid agencies in the United States and around the world are mobilizing to provide much needed assistance to the relief and recovery efforts; and

Whereas Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador have begun the process of recovering from these natural disasters: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the House of Representatives—

(1) mourns the loss of life and expresses solidarity with all people affected by Tropical Storm Agatha;

(2) commends the brave efforts of the people of Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador as they recover from Tropical Storm Agatha;

(3) recognizes the assistance of the international community during the recovery effort in providing relief to the people of Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador; and

(4) urges the Secretary of State, in coordination with the Administrator of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), to continue to develop a strategic plan to promote food security and recovery efforts with the goal of mitigating the current and future effects of the recent natural disasters that have devastated Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. MAFFEI). Pursuant to the rule, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WATSON) and the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from California.

□ 2040

GENERAL LEAVE

Ms. WATSON. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the resolution under consideration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from California?

There was no objection.

Ms. WATSON. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of this resolution and yield myself such time as I may consume.

On May 29, 2010, Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador experienced devastating floods and mudslides caused by Tropical Storm Agatha. Agatha has left 174 dead and directly affected more than 62,000 families in Guatemala, killed 22 and forced nearly 8,000 into shelters in Honduras, and left 11 dead and 12,000 in shelters in El Salvador. And to make matters worse, over 2,000 Guatemalans were displaced with little forewarning following the eruption of the Pacaya volcano on May 27, 2010.

The combination of the tropical storm and the volcano has devastated Guatemala's landscape leaving behind sinkholes and mudslides across the country. In addition, due to recent droughts, erratic rainfalls and high food prices, a sharp drop in remittances, Guatemala now faces severe food insecurity, and this is expected to increase in the wake of Tropical Storm Agatha.

Guatemalan officials are estimating that damages will surpass \$475 million. In Honduras, the loss in the agriculture sector could be close to \$18.5 million. In all three countries, critical infrastructure relating to water and sanitation has been destroyed.

The United States has provided relief for the victims of Tropical Storm Agatha by deploying United States Southern Command support helicopters and frigates to assist with the transport of food, water, and emergency supplies. Humanitarian aid agencies in the United States and countries and NGOs around the world are mobi-

lizing to provide much-needed assistance to the relief and the recovery efforts.

The resolution before us recognizes the assistance efforts already under way and urges the Secretary of State in coordination with the administrator of the United States Agency for International Development, or USAID, to continue to develop a strategic plan with the goal of mitigating the effects of the recent natural disasters that have devastated these three countries. Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador face a major challenge as they recover and rebuild. They deserve our continued support.

For these reasons, Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this important resolution.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I rise today as a proud cosponsor of House Resolution 1462, which expresses the support of the United States to the people of Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador in the aftermath of Tropical Storm Agatha.

Having already declared a state of emergency following a volcano eruption just 50 miles from Guatemala City days earlier, Guatemala was hit by Tropical Storm Agatha on May 29, 2010. Floods and mudslides devastated parts of Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador as a result of the storm. Hundreds of lives were lost, hundreds of thousands of survivors left in shelters.

Immediately following this disaster, as we always do, the United States, as a government and as a people, was standing by to lend a helping hand. The United States Southern Command, SOUTHCOM, located in my home district in Miami, Florida, deployed four helicopters from Soto Cano Air Base in Honduras to conduct aerial assessments and transport emergency relief supplies to areas impacted by the disaster.

The ability of SOUTHCOM to utilize resources from the Soto Cano Air Base demonstrates the important role that Honduras plays in enabling the United States to provide support for security and disaster purposes. SOUTHCOM also sent personnel from Miami to join a humanitarian assessment team on the ground in Guatemala. And I was proud to see Royal Caribbean Cruises, also of Miami, work with the Pan American Development Foundation to help transport food to the tens of thousands of survivors in the days following the storm.

The growing security challenges facing Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador as a result of narco-traffickers and vicious gangs have only been complicated by this recent natural disaster. It will be critical for the United States to work with responsible democratic nations in the region to ensure that this does not become a window of opportunity for criminals.

The success we have seen in Colombia and the ongoing efforts being taken in Mexico against the drug cartels have

created an unfortunate sandwich effect in Central America. But only through a united hemispheric-wide approach that is based on a shared commitment to democracy, to security, to prosperity, will we achieve success against the narco-traffickers and organized crime.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I would like to extend my heartfelt condolences to the families and friends of those who suffered as a result of Tropical Storm Agatha. As the brave people of Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador continue to recover from this tragic disaster, please know that we have you in our hearts and in our prayers.

Ms. JACKSON LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H. Res. 1462, support for the people of Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador as they persevere through the aftermath of Tropical Storm Agatha which swept across Central America causing deadly floods and mudslides. I would like to thank Mr. MACK for introducing this resolution underlining our heartfelt support for our North American neighbors in their time of desperate need.

Mr. Speaker, the countries of Central America have suffered devastating damage and loss of life at the hands of Mother Nature. Tropical Storm Agatha has left over 200 dead and over 95,000 in shelters, most of them in Guatemala. The powerful storm has inflicted over \$475,000,000 in damages throughout the region, destroying critical water and sanitation infrastructure. Combined with recent droughts, high food prices and a dramatic drop in remittances from the United States, Guatemala in particular has suffered severe food insecurity that will likely increase due to the effects of the storm.

I join my fellow members in expressing our most heartfelt condolences for the loss of life and suffering the Guatemalan, Honduran and Salvadoran people have endured in the wake of the storm. We mourn for those who are no longer with us, and extend our deepest sympathies to those they have left behind, in many cases without food or shelter. It is a tragedy for anyone to lose their home, their father, their mother, their children, their friends. We will do everything we can to help them recover from this disaster.

But we also commend the people of these ravaged countries for their bravery, and for standing tall in the face of adversity. In spite of the frustration and sadness that come in the aftermath of a disaster, they are fighting hard to recover. They could certainly use our help.

The international community and the United States have already responded. Countries, NGOs and humanitarian aid agencies from around the world have generously contributed millions of dollars in medicine and aid, and mobilizing to transport and deliver support and supplies. The United States continue to assert and strengthen our commitment to participate in the global outpouring of support to our devastated neighbors to the south.

After all, we are no strangers to the effects of natural disasters, and many of our cities have suffered through more than their fair share. As a Representative of the good people of Houston, Texas, many of the Atlantic hurricanes and tropical storms that wreak havoc every summer hit very close to home. From