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GUIDANCE ON DISASTER SUPPLEMENTAL  
MAY 23, 1997

- \* POTUS statement of May 22 attached
- \* Wire stories from this morning attached.
- \* OMB stuff on impact of delay attached. (Actually still pending)
- \* Current status:

The House and Senate have passed separate bills, but there is no conference agreement yet. There was an effort before the non-recess recess to pass a "temporary" bill with \$1.5 billion (\$1 billion for disasters, \$500 million for peacekeeping), but the more extreme elements among Republicans in the Congress, especially in the House of Representatives, stood in the way.

- \* Remaining issues:

Continuing Resolution

Census sampling

Roads through Federal lands

Law enforcement commission (A.G. veto threat)

Ukraine policy

- 
- \* **It's disappointing that the Congress allowed its more extreme Republican elements, particularly in the House of Representatives, to stop them from providing assistance to the hundreds of thousands of people in 33 States who are depending on their action.**
  - \* (If asked) With regard to peacekeeping, we are working with the agencies involved to make sure we have money to meet our immediate needs. We think there are discretionary funds that will permit us to continue our work, but we're concerned that lack of action could undermine our efforts. (RUBIN CHECKING OUT THIS LANGUAGE.)

TOIV  
Chow, Rubin

**THE WHITE HOUSE**  
**Office of the Press Secretary**

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**For Immediate Release**

**May 22, 1997**

**STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT**

I urge the Congress not to leave for Memorial Day recess without sending me a clean, emergency supplemental bill that provides the disaster assistance upon which hundreds of thousands of Americans are depending. The people of 33 States are waiting for the Congress to act. In recent weeks we have witnessed extraordinary destruction in the Dakotas and Minnesota matched only by the courage with which residents of these States have faced their plight. The Congress owes it to them to pass a clean bill and send it to me for my signature.

-30-30-30-

## **Automatic Continuing Resolution Does Not Belong on Disaster Supplemental**

### **Resulting Delay Will Impede Disaster Response Effort**

While Federal agencies that provide immediate relief to disaster victims (FEMA, SBA, and other agencies) have resources available and are providing immediate assistance to disaster victims, many long term recovery and reconstruction efforts can not proceed until the Disaster Supplemental is signed into law.

A budget process issue such as the automatic continuing resolution contained in S. 672 does not belong in emergency disaster relief legislation. The House should not approve such a provision so that disaster relief is not delayed. Examples of Federal response efforts that would be delayed by the inclusion of this provision follow:

#### **HUD: Community Development Block Grant**

Unlike other Federal agencies such as FEMA, HUD does not currently have funds available to dedicate to the disaster recovery efforts. The Senate bill contains HUD disaster funding under the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG program). The House is urged to approve CDBG funding. Any delay in enacting the disaster supplemental would impede HUD's efforts to provide disaster recovery assistance. The delay would increase the uncertainty over the amount of assistance that will ultimately be provided and thus compound the difficulty in planning for disaster recovery. Affected communities would experience a comparable delay in receiving funding.

This delay would impact activities not funded through other Federal disaster assistance programs, in particular activities to address the needs of lower-income individuals. The \$500 million of CDBG funds contained in the House and Senate bills would be used to buy out properties as part of a relocation effort; and to provide grants or loans to businesses and families who lack the income, savings, or credit history to qualify for an SBA loan.

#### **Department of Agriculture**

##### **Emergency Conservation Program**

No funds remain in the program to restore farmlands to production after natural disasters. A list of eligible recipients is being developed, but no one is receiving assistance. The delay in funding means that farmland remains vulnerable to future floods (spring thaw) and less ready to be planted to cropland this year. Cropland will not be leveled, debris will not be removed from fields, pasture remains unfenced, and conservation structures remain in disrepair. As a result, the damages to farmers increase, as the planting delay reduces their farm income (later planting results in lower yields per acre).

### **Watershed and Flood Prevention**

No funds remain for new projects, all funding has been committed to addressing earlier natural disasters. USDA offices are accepting applications from local sponsors, assessing damages, and making determinations. A list is being developed, but no one is receiving assistance. The effect of the delay is to increase the likelihood of increased damages from flooding later this year as areas are left vulnerable: streams can overflow because they remain constricted from debris that has not been removed, threatening roads and bridges with wash-out. Other infrastructure and property can end up destroyed by the failure to repair damaged levees. Also, the opportunity for non-structural measures, like the purchase of floodplain easements from willing sellers, decreases with the delay in supplemental funding because landowners need to decide now whether to crop this year or wait for the possibility of an easement buyout.

### **CCC Disaster Reserve Assistance Program (livestock indemnity)**

No payments can be made until the supplemental is enacted (the program does not exist under current law but is funded in the Senate bill). As a result, producers will likely not be able to replace livestock killed by the natural disasters, reducing farm income. (See note below)

### **Tree Assistance Program**

No payments can be made until the supplemental is enacted (program doesn't exist under current law). As a result, orchardists and foresters will likely not be able to replace trees destroyed by natural disasters, reducing farm income. (see note below)

(NOTE: these two disaster payment programs do not have regulations in place, so while applications may be taken, payments will not be able to go out "the next day" after the supplemental is enacted, but will have to wait for regs - which will be expedited nevertheless.)

### **Emergency Loans (under the Farm Service Agency)**

Existing appropriations for these loans will be depleted by the first week of June. Any delay in the supplemental contained in the Senate bill beyond this time frame will cause farmers to wait for emergency loan assistance to offset economic losses from natural disasters. This loss of credit will reduce their ability to repair farm structures and purchase inputs for spring crop planting.

### **Department of the Interior**

Delays in supplemental funding would have significant impacts on DOI park and refuge restoration work, particularly on Yosemite National Park in California. Interior has proceeded with the most urgent repairs to roads and infrastructure (using existing authority to transfer balances and presumably a similar DOT authority), but these are partial and interim solutions. The supplemental will be too late to help this summer season (it will be a mess), but the biggest effect from delay will be in the 1998 summer season. Contracts need to be awarded now to get as much work as possible started on widening roads, permanent utility repairs, replacing housing and lodging buildings before next winter, when this sort of work will not be possible. The public will not be as patient next summer and will rightly expect this to be fixed.

### Department of Commerce/Economic Development

Delay in funding post-disaster economic recovery planning grants will mean that disaster-impacted local communities will not have the immediate institutional capacity to focus on long term recovery planning issues. These issues are both critical to reviving the local economy in the short term and restructuring the economy in the long term.

Post disaster technical assistance grants to States for marketing/promotion to help revive the tourism industry will not be available to salvage the Summer tourism season and bookings for the convention business.

The delay in implementing the EDA Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) program will slow down business recovery. For example, business segments not eligible for SBA funding will not be addressed, i.e., landscaping and nursery industries.

**Press Guidance**  
**May 30, 1997**

**FEMA/ Texas**

Governor Bush may request emergency funds from FEMA for damage sustained by recent tornadoes. At this point, it appears unlikely that the state will qualify for a Presidential Disaster Declaration.

- At this point preliminary disaster declaration has been completed.
- Our understanding is that the vast majority of damages are insured. We stand ready to meet any needs that we can consistent with the law. (The law does not allow for duplication of benefits.)
- FEMA is working with the Governor's Office in light of the damage assessment to determine what needs can be met at the federal level. (11:50am -- At this point the Governor has not yet made a request)

*For Briefer Only* - There are only 28 houses which are not insured in the area. This level of damage would not normally qualify a state for a Presidential Disaster Declaration. There are, however, other options such as SBA loans and other assistance that can still be made available.

Mellody per Morrie Goodman, FEMA

4.21.97

**Press Guidance**  
**April 21, 1997**

**North Dakota**

The President will travel to Grand Forks, North Dakota to survey fire and flood damage in the affected area. Erskine Bowles convened a interagency meeting at the White House this morning at 10am to discuss the situation in North Dakota, South Dakota and Minnesota. He has scheduled another for 3:30pm. Following that meeting there will be a meeting in the Roosevelt Room with the congressional delegations from these states. *See attached details from meeting and trip by Lorrie McHugh.*

- The President declared North Dakota, and South Dakota disasters on April 7th. Minnesota was announced on April 8th. Once a declaration is made, all eligible costs are covered.

***FEMA update highlights:***

- The Department of Agriculture will provide emergency food stamps to affected individuals in eight counties in North Dakota.
- The Army Corps of Engineers will be shoring up levies north of Grand Forks.
- Supplies including thousands of cots, tents and sleeping bags are being flown in from Warner Robbins Air Force Base in Macon Georgia.
- Water is also being provided for 13,000 people
- FEMA is providing portable radio equipment to three radio stations in the area to keep them up and running.
- 3500 people being housed in nearby Crookston.
- Electrical power has been turned off in strategic areas to prevent additional fires. The mayor has ordered a 24 hour curfew for all areas under mandatory evacuation.
- Seven deaths reported at this point in Grand Forks (no others that we are aware of)

*Why isn't FEMA being helpful in assisting reporters in accessing the area?*

Officials are in the midst of life-saving procedures to rescue those who did not evacuate. They simply do not have the resources or staff to accompany journalists into the area.

*What is happening with the President's earth day event?*

The Vice President will attend the Earth Day event at the Anacostia River. *For briefer only:* unclear whether he will make the TRI announcement or hold it for POTUS to announce at a later date.

A Melody per Morrie Goodman, FEMA 646-4600  
See attached situation report for additional information.

April 21, 1997

MEMORANDUM TO: Kathryn O'L Higgins  
Secretary to the Cabinet

FROM: James L. Witt  
Director

PREPARED BY: Lacy E. Suiter  
Executive Associate Director  
Response and Recovery Directorate

SUBJECT: Floods in North Dakota, South Dakota, and Minnesota

This memorandum is meant to inform you about floods that are affecting the States of North Dakota, South Dakota, and Minnesota. The latest information available about these incidents is as follows:

*North Dakota:* As of April 20, the city of Grand Forks has been placed under a mandatory evacuation order. Approximately 32,000-35,000 people (roughly 75 percent of the city) have been evacuated. The Red River of the North is flowing between 150,000 and 200,000 cubic feet per second. The Red River is currently at 53.8 ft. and is expected to crest April 21 at 54 ft, which is 26 ft. above flood stage. The river is expected to remain at this level for six to seven days. There are approximately 1.7 million acres of agricultural land under water, inhibiting crop production. This is expected to have a major impact on an economy that is 40 percent agriculturally based.

A fire broke out in the downtown area and destroyed or severely impacted 11 buildings. The fire was projected to be 100 percent contained by yesterday evening.

The water system has been shut down and has been contaminated. The water treatment system has not been impacted due to its location outside of the city. However, it has been shut down because the water collection system is no longer functioning. It is estimated that it will take three weeks before the water service will be restored.

There are currently three shelters open housing approximately 3,400 people including 2,500 at the Grand Forks Air Force Base.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) will be reinforcing levees downstream for the next four weeks as the crest continues to travel north to Canada. Sandbagging operations are continuing but have slowed as the focus turns to the evacuations. USACE is still enhancing levees and currently constructing a ring of levees around local hospitals and associated nursing homes located in both North Dakota and Minnesota. USACE is increasing the level of staff to 450 personnel. To date, USACE has

authorized \$7.6 million for flood fight and advanced measure activities for North Dakota, South Dakota and Minnesota.

The only radio station operable in the Grand Forks area is being threatened by rising waters. FEMA is sending a portable FM radio transmitter and related equipment to help keep the radio station on the air. FEMA will assist in the reestablishment of other radio communications. Television monitors will be installed by FEMA in shelters to display information concerning disaster assistance.

FEMA is sending 7,000 blankets, 3,080 cots and 900 sleeping bags from FEMA and American Red Cross (ARC) stocks in Atlanta, GA to be used in both North Dakota and Minnesota disasters.

FEMA Community Relations staff is being augmented by 20 additional staff to be deployed to the Bismarck Disaster Field Office.

Three Disaster Medical Assistance Teams (DMATs) (California-1, California-4 and Washington-4) have been deployed to Grand Forks to relieve medical personnel.

**Minnesota:** Several dikes were breached on April 18, flooding East Grand Forks and forcing the evacuation of some 10,000 people. On Sunday, April 20, a mandatory evacuation of Polk County, west of State Highway 220 to the Red River, was issued, and residents were asked to go to New Crookston High School or other shelters east and north of the county. Sandbagging operations have stopped and emphasis is being placed on the evacuations. The river is not expected to crest until tomorrow at 26 feet above flood stage and river levels are expected to remain at this level for several days. It will be approximately two (2) to four (4) weeks before residents will be allowed to return to their homes.

In Polk County, the local water systems are no longer operating and power has been partially shut down to preserve its integrity. There are still a number of road closures throughout the state.

Approximately 90 percent of East Grand Forks has been flooded. City and county shelters are being opened in Crookston (Polk County), Red Lake Falls (Red Lake County) and Thief River Falls (Pennington County), and some resorts are also providing temporary housing. The Crookston Senior High School had processed 1,200 evacuees as of 11:00 a.m. CST today. As of April 19, the ARC was not operating any shelters, but is sending a representative to Polk County to assist the county Emergency Operations Center (EOC) to coordinate the evacuation of Polk County. The ARC has instituted a Mass Care Plan in Minnesota and North Dakota and will be tracking evacuees as they check into shelters. ARC is operating five (5) fixed-feeding sites and 11 mobile-feeding sites, and has served a total of 81,375 meals to date.

**South Dakota:** The situation remains stable and is primarily moving into a recovery state. The James and Big Rivers continue to recede. The ARC is currently operating one shelter, which housed three persons overnight. All Preliminary Damage Assessments are continuing and expected to be completed by April 21.

As always, I will be certain to contact you should additional information become available about these incidents.

**FEMA Preparations for Potential Flooding: Spring 1997**  
**March 31, 1997**

On February 10, at the mid-year meeting of the National Emergency Management Association, FEMA sponsored a presentation on potential floods in the spring of 1997. The presentation was delivered jointly by FEMA Director James L. Witt and a representative from the National Weather Service. All ten (10) FEMA Regional Directors were also in attendance. State Emergency Management Directors were afforded the opportunity to voice their preparedness concerns, and to propose mechanisms that would ensure a rapid and effective response to any spring floods.

On March 8, 1997, FEMA Director James L. Witt toured the snow-affected areas of South Dakota with South Dakota Senator Tom Daschle. Recognizing the potential flooding impacts of such an enormous amount of snow, the Director wanted to ensure that he had firsthand knowledge of the areas that may experience flooding.

On March 20, 1997 FEMA Director James L. Witt briefed the entire North Dakota Congressional delegation on potential flooding in the State of North Dakota.

FEMA is also planning to conduct a series of teleconferences and meetings within the next two (2) weeks to specifically address the issue of potential flooding. The following is an outline of these events:

- **Territorial Teleconferences:** Three (3) teleconferences are being scheduled with: (1) FEMA Regions I-IV; (2) Regions V-VII; and (3) Regions VIII-X. The teleconferences will also include State Emergency Management Directors and representatives from the National Weather Service and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The purpose of the teleconferences is to provide a summary of specific risk areas and the preparatory actions that are being taken to minimize the impact of spring flooding.
- FEMA will distribute a flood preparedness survey that will request information on Regional and State flood preparations, to include:
  - Regional/State impact potential;
  - Regional/State coordination requirements;
  - Coordination meetings with States, Federal agencies and voluntary sector;
  - Identification of potential response facilities;
  - Team staffing and readiness;
  - Public and Congressional awareness activities; and
  - Readiness shortfalls.
- As an addition to an upcoming FEMA Regional Director's meeting on Performance Partnership Agreements, FEMA will conduct a flood response planning meeting that will include all Senior Managers. FEMA-specific flood preparedness actions and Regional support issues will be discussed.
- A meeting of the Catastrophic Disaster Response Group (CDRG), which is comprised of all Federal Agencies that are signatories to the Federal Response Plan, will include an agenda item on Spring floods. The spring flood potential will be discussed, along with all preparedness actions, and any mutual support issues.
- As an outcome of these events, FEMA is planning to prepare a senior-level document to share with the Administration and Members of Congress.

Draft

WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

Draft

**For Immediate Release**

**January 15, 1997**

**PRESIDENT CLINTON RELEASES EMERGENCY HOME ENERGY FUNDS FOR  
NORTH AND SOUTH DAKOTA**

The President today directed the Department of Health and Human Services to release \$5 million in emergency Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) funds for North and South Dakota and the Indian tribes located in those states. Last Friday and Saturday, President Clinton declared North Dakota and South Dakota, respectively, national disaster areas due to the extreme winter storms.

“The people of North and South Dakota have endured one of the worst winter storms of the century with temperatures far below normal levels,” the President said. “These emergency funds will help alleviate the suffering and potential effects of life threatening cold on low-income families and individuals.”

LIHEAP helps eligible families pay for fuel and weatherization to insulate homes. States determine eligibility and benefit levels. Also as part of LIHEAP, the Congress sets aside emergency funds to help states meet urgent home heating or cooling needs. The President determines when an emergency warrants release of these funds.

North Dakota will receive \$2,760,000 and South Dakota will receive 2,240,000. These totals include \$774,184 to be provided directly by HHS to 10 tribes, which were significantly impacted by severe cold weather.

-30-30-30-

## **Flooding/Disaster Declaration Update**

### **January 7, 1997**

- James Lee Witt will be at the White House today to update Chief of Staff Panetta (and likely the President) on the situation out west following the recent flooding. Meeting will be this afternoon, but no time yet set. Witt returned last night from a two day trip to Nevada, Idaho and California where he inspected flood damage and held town meetings with those residents who were affected. He is expected to make a recommendation to the President regarding potential travel to the region.

(FYI - Mike: Morrie Goodman says Witt will recommend that the President not travel to the region, too much clean-up going on, etc, but the President apparently had a strong desire to go, so we should probably not predict what will happen until they meet. Apparently, the VP very much wants to go if the POTUS does not.)

Q: Any other emergency requests pending?

A: Pending for the President's signature today are disaster declarations for both Minnesota and Washington state, although these are not related to the recent western flooding. (Washington's is for flooding that occurred in November.) They should be signed by early afternoon.

Regarding the most recent flooding, both Oregon and Washington state are now in the process of conducting preliminary damage assessments. Neither state has yet to request a disaster declaration, but those requests from the Governors could come as early as later today. Cabinet Affairs will update us when that happens.

Aid to date: Last weekend, the President signed disaster declarations for Nevada (4 counties and Carson City), Idaho (13 counties), and California (37 counties).

Q: How much will this all cost?

A: It is too soon to tell until the water recedes and the exact extent of the damage is known.

(FYI Mike -- State emergency offices have been giving out widely ranging figures on damage costs, but it really is too early to tell. Obviously the damage will be in the hundreds of millions, but that includes insured losses and other variables. FEMA counsels us to stay away from any figures at this point. Reporters who want more explanation can go to FEMA, where they can explain different funding possibilities and programs, although they too are avoiding figures.)

Drafted: Kathy McKiernan

Cleared: Morrie Goodman/FEMA, 646-4600

**Disaster update**  
**January 6, 1997**

- James Lee Witt will travel to California today to tour flooding damage in and around Sacramento and Modesto. He will hold a 2 pm (PDT) press conference before returning this afternoon to Washington. Yesterday, he held town meetings and inspected flood damage in Nevada and Idaho.

Traveling with Witt are: Deputy Federal Highway Administrator Jane Garvey, Assistant Secretary of the Army Mike Walker, General Russell Fuhrman, Chief of Civil Works with the Army Corps of Engineers, and Deputy Small Business Administrator Ginger Lew. In California, Witt will be with Senator Boxer and the State Emergency Director. Wilson not expected to join them.

- This weekend, the President signed disaster declarations for Nevada (4 counties and Carson City), Idaho (13 counties), and California (37 counties). The President's action authorizes federal funds to help individuals in those counties who have suffered from the flooding through individual family grants, small business loans and unemployment assistance. The President's action also authorizes a 75-25 federal-state cost share to cover emergency measures such as the removal of debris from roadways, emergency personnel overtime costs, etc.

Q: How much will this all cost?

A: It is too soon to tell until the water recedes and the exact extent of the damage is known. Check with FEMA for more info.

Q: Any other emergency requests pending?

A: Not at this time. FEMA is working with both Washington state and Oregon on damage assessments in those states. The states want to complete their assessments before making their requests for disaster declarations.

Q: Will the President travel to the Northwest to inspect the flooding?

A: James Lee Witt is now conducting a preliminary inspection of the damage. After that inspection is completed he will make a recommendation to the President regarding potential travel and the President will make a decision based on that recommendation.

Drafted: Kathy McKiernan

Cleared: Morrie Goodman/FEMA, 1-800-skygram (pin 84426)