

What about the Onslaught of Hurricanes?

by John Cobin, Ph.D. for *The Times Examiner*

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I remember reading the news in May 2006 regarding the coming hurricane season. The doomsayers predicted an onslaught of massive hurricanes like Katrina, Andrew, and Hugo during the 2006 hurricane season (June 1st to November 30th). Why? The doomsters pointed to “global warming” as the culprit. That phenomenon, they claim, denounces man-generated emissions of “greenhouse gases” (mainly), including things like our exorbitant consumption of beef. Increased beef demand has the by-product of increasing the amount of bovine flatulence—itsself a greenhouse gas—which augments the alleged irksome emissions. The preachers of leftist policy and ideology want us to believe that we are about to bear the consequences of our peccadilloes of opulence and environmental sins. And the angel of death will be manifested against us humans in the form of hurricanes. In other words, the Day of Judgment cometh.

Of course, we now know that 2006 was not too bad a year in terms of hurricane damage. There were a couple of damaging tropical storms which hit the South and New England. There was a category 1 hurricane which passed mainly through northern Florida. But there was no onslaught of severe storms. There simply was *not* an above-average hurricane experience on account of global warming. Judgment Day did not come in 2006.

And what saith the doomsters and the environmentalist preachers of doom? Why are they not ashamed for getting it wrong? Well, it turns out (conveniently) that 2006 was a year of El Niño, and that favorite Latin son trumped the angel of death. The hurricanes were stayed by this mighty boy and thus Mother Nature had mercy on us humans once again. The doomsters of May 2006 just didn’t know that the fury of 2006 would be trumped by El Niño. So the media and the masses forgave the false prophets.

So here we are sitting in mid-2007, having just completed the first two full months of hurricane season without a hurricane. Yet there are no red faces yet at the National Weather Service’s Climate Prediction Center (<http://www.cpc.noaa.gov/products/outlooks/hurricane.shtml>). They are standing by their prediction for lots of hurricanes before the end of November. “NOAA’s 2007 Atlantic hurricane season outlook indicates a very high 75% chance of an above-normal hurricane season, a 20% chance of a near-normal season, and only a 5% chance of a below-normal season.” Maybe they will end up being right but with almost one-half of the season behind them without a touchdown they are running out of time to score.

The prediction continues: “The outlook calls for a very high likelihood of an above-normal hurricane season, with 13-17 named storms, 7-10 hurricanes, and 3-5 major hurricanes.” (A major hurricane is classified as category 3, 4 or 5.) That means in the three and one-half remaining months of hurricane season 2007, we should average 2 or 3 hurricanes per month, and at least one of those will be a major hurricane. Maybe we should all start storing extra food now and buying or beefing up our homeowner policies!

Of course, with the myopia prevalent among the government school-educated consumers of the nightly talking heads, it will be easy to exonerate the prophets of doom if even one major hurricane materializes this year. Just let a swirling storm bash into Savannah and cruise through Columbia and Raleigh, destroying a few thousand homes and killing a dozen people. The doomsters will immediately capitalize on the crisis, selling more books and patting themselves on the back while CNN interviews them for their “expert” opinion. And almost no one will notice that the doomsters were way off in their predictions.

In what sport or game does 10% predictive accuracy mean anything? Yet if the doomsters predict 10 hurricanes for 2007 and they get only 1 “good” one it will be accounted to them as stunning accuracy. And they will begin once again the mantra about global warming and cow flatulence. They will remind us that we are guilty of environmental sin and that we must expect the consequences from Mother Nature. Sports pundits and bookies are incredibly more accurate in analyzing and using available data to predict who will be in the Final Four, who will win the Rose Bowl, or who will make it to the World Series (even from the beginning of the season) than the National Weather Service, Al Gore, or the Sierra Club are at predicting the severity of global warming or a particular hurricane season.

The worst part is that the masses in America and Europe will believe the prophets of doom. They will call for public policies of repentance. Westerners will want to absolve themselves of guilt. Hillary will blame the Republicans and Mother Nature will tip the scales in favor of Her chosen Democrats. Yes, Mother Gaia could become personified in the face of President Hillary in 2008. And the onslaught of Hillaryism could be far more damaging to America than a baker's dozen of category 5 hurricanes.

But instead of politics, let's focus on something we cannot control: the weather. The National Weather Service is not a renowned, hard-core left-wing interest group and yet its predictions are still grim. (You can imagine how dire the predictions of the "hard left" must be.) Let's remember too that fear sells. The media love to report things that scare people since people will buy more fear than they will buy "boring" good news. Why don't the major media report blessings like low numbers of hurricanes? Simple: there is little economic advantage for them to do so and even less ideological advantage as they clandestinely wish to promote the vision of the anointed left and their darling environmental extremists.

Having said all that, let's hope that at least an informed remnant will take the predictions of the prophets of environmental doom with a grain of salt.¹ Despite the doomster's ranting about Mother Nature's wrath, the Day of Judgment will not come until God Himself ordains it.

¹ For further reading on the topic, see Ronald Bailey (2002), *Global Warming and Other Eco Myths: How the Environmental Movement Uses False Science to Scare Us to Death*, New York: Prima Lifestyles (Random House).