

All Nation Still Mourns Rep. Leland Plane Crash Victims

by Capitol News Service

The nationwide mourning for heroic Rep. Mickey Leland (D-Houston) and his courageous associates who perished on a worldwide mission of mercy continues as the White House and Congress seek to return the bodies of the victims to United States soil for final ceremonial rites. Funeral services were scheduled for Saturday, August 19th for Congressman Leland in Houston, Texas and memorial services were held for Capitol Hill aid Joyce Williams at Howard University this week.

At week's end the American flag was flying at half-staff throughout the Capital and a task force of State Department, Defense Department and Ethiopian officials began removal of the bodies while investigating the crash. Fred McClure, assistant to the President for legislative affairs, was coordinating the efforts.

Democratic Reps. Ronald V. Dellums (CA), Chairman of the Congressional Black Caucus and William Gray (PA), majority whip, were leaders of the Congressional escort selected to go to Africa to accompany the return of the American martyrs to this country, according to political protocol. The honorary team included Republican Reps. Bill Emerson (MO) and Jim Fields (Texas) a home state

colleague of Leland.

Reps. Gary Ackerman (D-NY) and Alan Wheat (D-MO) were already in Africa searching for the missing delegation when the wreckage was cited by U.S. military helicopter after satellite technology, reconnaissance overflights and Ethiopian foot patrols had failed.

Leland, the popular, dedicated, hardworking chairman of the House of Representatives Select Committee on Hunger is the third member in the history of Congress to die in the line of duty in peacetime when a 20-passenger emergency relief plane crashed the mountains of Ethiopia after taking off from Addis Ababa, the country's capital. Ironically, Rep. Larkin Smith (R-MS) was killed in an airplane crash the same week as he was flying from Hattisburg to Gulfport, Miss. in a small aircraft with one pilot.

The International delegation of nine Americans and seven Ethiopians (including two pilots) apparently encountered heavy seasonal rains which hampered the week-long search and recovery of their remains. The wreckage was finally located about 60 miles from their destination, the Fugnido refugee camp of some 50,000 poverty stricken residents near the Sudan border, Somalia and

Kenya, East Africa.

Hailed by fellow Texan President George Bush, as a hero who died for a "noble cause" in trying to aid the hungry in Africa and the U.S., 44 year old Congressman Leland was surrounded by the best and brightest in government service on his final, tragic mission.

The victims included: Patrice Johnson, committee chief of staff and a graduate of Frisk University, New York U. and Princeton; Hugh A. Johnson Jr. (no relation) staff team leader who was a graduate of Morehouse College and Columbia U; Joyce F. Williams, a graduate of Florida A&M University and Howard U., was a House District Committee staff member who cancelled her vacation to join the delegation.

A frequent traveler to international trouble spots to aid refugees, Leland often said "the poor in Africa looked just like the poor people in my District." A supporter of legislation to help the hungry in the U.S. and throughout the world, the congressman once slept in the streets with the homeless in Washington.

The extended mourning began last week with a candlelight vigil in the Capitol by the Congressional Black Caucus before the crash was confirmed. Rep. Walter E. Fauntroy (D-DC) led a memorial service sponsored

A Call To Action

A decent and affordable home is but a distant dream for many of our people. For millions, home is a box, a street corner, or a cot. These are our nation's homeless. They live, suffer, and die in our midst. For millions of others, home is a place that costs too much, is too crowded, or is unsafe. We are far from meeting our national commitment to decent homes for all.

A crisis threatens our nation; it affects every segment of our society.

Since 1981, budget authority for all Federal housing assistance programs has been cut by more than 75% -- from \$32 billion to less than \$8 billion a year. Substandard and expensive housing are the norm for the poor. Millions live doubled-up or worse, while millions more face the loss of their housing from expiring Federal subsidies or property

conversions. After 50 years of struggle, only one out of every four eligible poor renters actually receives a Federal housing subsidy.

The response of Congress has been to fund emergency measures that accommodate but do not eliminate homelessness. Laws, such as the McKinney Act, aid the needy but do not address the root cause of a serious national problem: the shortage of affordable housing.

Congress hides behind the budget deficit when it comes to housing our people. We call on Congress to recognize housing as the immediate national priority it must become.

As a compassionate and concerned people, we must bring to government an emphatic message to reverse the housing crisis.

In mid-September, pilgrimages will leave New York City, Roanoke, Virginia,

by the Black Senate Legislative Staff this week after the crash was confirmed. Senate staffer Jackie Parker postponed a trip to southern Africa to arrange the memorial.

Leading the tributes to Leland, Congressman Dellums issued the first statement, saying "we (in the CBC)...who knew and loved Mickey Leland around the world are devastated at the loss of this extraordinary human being who devoted his life's work to others. We are deeply grieved by this tragedy which has befallen his family and those who loved ones perished on this mission. Mickey and his party sought to bring hope and sustenance to a far corner of the world which suffers the ravages and pains of hunger and illness."

Dellums also paid personal tribute to the other victims by stating: "Sixteen courageous, dedicated people, Ethiopian and American, lie dead on a mountain side in western Ethiopia. They all shared a common commitment to helping the poor, the starving and dispossessed in that war-torn, drought stricken land. Their deaths are a collective loss to all humanity..."

"Finally," he added, "I want to express my personal appreciation for all the efforts made by the U.S. and Ethiopian governments to locate our colleague and friends. I also wish to thank the governments of Israel, the U.S.S.R., Sudan, and

Egypt, among others, for the assistance they rendered. Our only collective consolation is that we tried to do our human best under very difficult conditions."

Leland was first elected to the House of Representatives in 1978, from Houston, where he represented the 18th congressional district. He served as CBC chairman from 1985-87. A graduate of Phyllis Wheatley High School and Texas Southern University in Houston, he married the former Alison Walton. The Lelands have a son, Jarrett David, and Mrs. Leland is expecting another child.

A series of funerals and ceremonies for the victims of the tragedy were scheduled this weekend as families and relatives remained in seclusion. "One of the greatest tributes we can pay is to continue the work of Mickey Leland," said C. Payne Lucas, president of Africare, a private agency established to provide aid to African nations.

Ms. Alma Newsome, communications director for Congressman Leland and his staff, first brought the nation's attention to the impending tragedy when she announced the plane was missing at the beginning of the week, but expressed optimism that the group would be found alive. At Week's end, she tearfully thanked the media, the U.S. and Ethiopian governments and all the public for their cooperation, response and support.

and the West Coast, making their way to Washington, D.C. There, on Thursday, October 5, marchers will settle in camps around the city.

On Thursday and Friday (October 5-6), they will join with many others to visit Congress and express the elected officials the concerns that have brought them from all around the nation.

Then, on Saturday, October 7, we will come together at the U.S. Capitol in Washington, D.C., to raise one voice with one message for the restoration of housing funds to the Federal budget: **END THE THREAT AND THE TERRIBLE REALITY OF HOMELESSNESS NOW THROUGH THE CREATION OF SAFE, DECENT, AFFORDABLE HOMES FOR ALL OUR PEOPLE.**

Thus, we now issue this call to all people of conscience and compassion in this nation to join in these days of action. We ask your support for these goals and for the entire calendar of events and plans described here, the totality of this message. We recognize that everyone who supports these goals will not be able to participate in every activity. We especially acknowledge the religious obligations of our Jewish sisters and brothers who will be observing the Sabbath and the holiest days of the year at this time.

We ask each person accepting this call to do as much as possible to fulfill these goals, to help bring this message to Washington. Open your doors, support the marchers, lobby your officials. We invite you -- We Urge You -- to be part of this massive and peaceful effort and the gathering that will unite the many diverse groups who see and experience this crisis of homelessness and housing, a gathering to fulfill our national housing goals and eliminate homelessness. **HOUSING NOW!**

Come to Washington, D.C. Together, we can make a difference.

Dr. McNair's Wife Found Guilty Of Death Threat

The wife of convicted Las Vegas gynecologist Kimball McNair was found guilty last week of threatening to kill a witness who testified against her husband.

Rosa McNair was convicted on one count each of disturbing the peace and threatening a life by acting Las Vegas Municipal Court

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