

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 19, 1976

Office of the White House Press Secretary

THE WHITE HOUSE

TO THE CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES:

On February 4th a devastating earthquake struck Guatemala. That earthquake, together with its after-shocks, has left over 22,000 dead, more than 75,000 injured, and one million homeless.

The United States has a special responsibility to help meet the urgent needs in Guatemala. Immediate aid has already been extended by U.S. agencies, both public and private, including:

- ° Emergency shelters, medical supplies and food provided by the Agency for International Development.
- ° Transportation and medical facilities provided by the Department of Defense.
- ° Food distribution, medical services, and other disaster relief activities provided by numerous private voluntary agencies.

Last week I dispatched my Special Coordinator for International Disaster Assistance -- AID Administrator Daniel Parker -- to Guatemala for a firsthand review of the situation. He has now reported to me and to Congressional Committees on the extent of damage and need. Both the Senate and the House of Representatives have passed resolutions expressing sympathy for the people of Guatemala in their hour of distress and urging development of a comprehensive U.S. response. The Secretary of State will visit the Republic of Guatemala on February 24 to express further our support for the people of Guatemala.

I am now proposing urgent and specific action to turn these expressions of sympathy into tangible assistance. The proposed \$25 million "Guatemala Disaster Relief Act of 1976" which I am sending herewith represents an immediate humanitarian response of the United States to the victims of this tragedy who have been injured or have lost their relatives, their homes and possessions, and in many cases their very means of existence.

This legislation, and the ensuing appropriation, will enable us to respond to the human tragedy in Guatemala. Our response will reflect America's concern for the people of Guatemala.

GERALD R. FORD

THE WHITE HOUSE,
February 19, 1976

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A BILL

To provide for relief and rehabilitation assistance to the victims of the earthquakes in Guatemala, and for other purposes.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That this Act may be cited as the "Guatemala Disaster Relief Act of 1976".

Section 2. The President is authorized to provide assistance, on such terms and conditions as he may determine, for the relief and rehabilitation of the people who have been victimized by the recent earthquakes in the Republic of Guatemala. Such assistance may be provided in accordance with the policy and general authorities applicable to or available for the furnishing of assistance under section 491, relating to international disaster assistance, of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as amended.

Section 3. There is authorized to be appropriated to the President to carry out the purposes of this Act \$25,000,000 for the fiscal year 1976, which amount is authorized to remain available until expended. Obligations heretofore incurred against other appropriations or accounts for the purpose of providing relief and rehabilitation assistance to the people of Guatemala may be charged to the appropriations authorized pursuant to this Act.

Section 4. Not later than ninety days after enactment of appropriations to carry out this Act, and on a quarterly basis thereafter, the President shall transmit reports to the Committee on Foreign Relations and the Committee on Appropriations of the Senate and to the Speaker of the House of Representatives on the programming and obligations of funds under this Act.

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Section-by-Section Analysis of the Proposed Guatemala
Disaster Relief Act of 1976

I. Introduction

The major purpose of the proposed Guatemala Disaster Relief Act of 1976 is to provide authorization for appropriations for disaster relief activities necessitated by the recent severe earthquakes in the Republic of Guatemala. The bill would create a separate and discrete authorization specifically intended to deal with this major disaster.

II. Provisions of the Bill

Section 1. This section provides a short title for the bill, "Guatemala Disaster Relief Act of 1976".

Section 2. This section authorizes the President to provide relief and rehabilitation assistance for the people of Guatemala who have been victimized by recent earthquakes on such terms and conditions as he may determine. The section incorporates by reference the policy and general authorities applicable to the furnishing of disaster assistance pursuant to section 491 of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as amended, including the clause "Notwithstanding any other provision of this or any other Act" of that section which is designed to facilitate the rapid implementation of international disaster assistance programs.

Section 3. This section authorizes the appropriation of \$25 million for FY 1976 on a "no year basis" to carry out the purposes of the Act and provides that obligations previously incurred for the purposes of providing relief and rehabilitation assistance to the people of Guatemala as a result of the recent disaster are authorized to be charged to the appropriations authorized by this Act.

Section 4. This section provides for reports to the Committee on Foreign Relations and Committee on Appropriations of the Senate and to the Speaker of the House of Representatives no later than 90 days after enactment of appropriations to carry out this Act and on a quarterly basis thereafter setting forth the programming and obligation of funds under the Act.

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