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FRIDAY, AUGUST 05, 2005

George Bush's Culture Of Death Continues

by Michael in New York on [8/05/2005 02:33:00 AM](#)

The world poured out its heart during the brief moment the tsunami captured our attention. But the slow-motion disaster of hunger -- which can be predicted months in advance -- leaves us cold. Money spent early on could save a lot more lives a lot more cheaply. But **Bush ignored the nightmare in Niger.**

International aid officials and charity workers here say that the world's dilatory reaction to Niger's woes is hard to excuse. Some of them also say that Niger's miseries this year are merely a worsened version of its perennial ones - and that until Niger addresses its problems of primitive farming, primitive health care and primitive social conditions, infants will continue to die unnoticed in numbers that dwarf any hunger emergency....

...they are pushing the death rate for small children even higher than Niger's customary one-in-four level, and killing off the livestock upon which the nation's nomads depend.

How many people need aid depends on the yardstick used. About 1.2 million of Niger's 3.6 million rural farmers and herders are described as "extremely vulnerable" to food shortages and in need of food aid, according to an assessment of Niger's crisis conducted four months ago by the United Nations, major charities and Niger's government. Of those, about 874,000 urgently need free food, the latest assessment concluded late last month, and that number could rise until the harvest is completed in October....

Among others, the United Nations World Food Program and Doctors Without Borders sounded alarms, and Niger's government, with World Food Program approval, quickly **asked donors to give Niger 71,000 tons of food aid and \$3 million for the 400,000 most vulnerable farmers and herders.**

By May, it had received fewer than 7,000 tons of food and one \$323,000 donation, from Luxembourg....

The charity has angrily accused governments of allowing children to die, albeit not intentionally, so that the free market in grain would not be disrupted.

Three million dollars could have made a crucial early difference. Three million dollars and some of the food we let rot in silos to prop up prices and undercut other African farmers. That isn't even big enough to qualify as an accounting error for the US. So big business trumps starving babies. And Bush does nothing. Some "culture of life."



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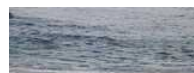
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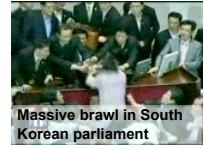
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