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# Caterpillars Trigger Emergency in Liberia

By JONATHAN PAYE-LAYLEH

AP

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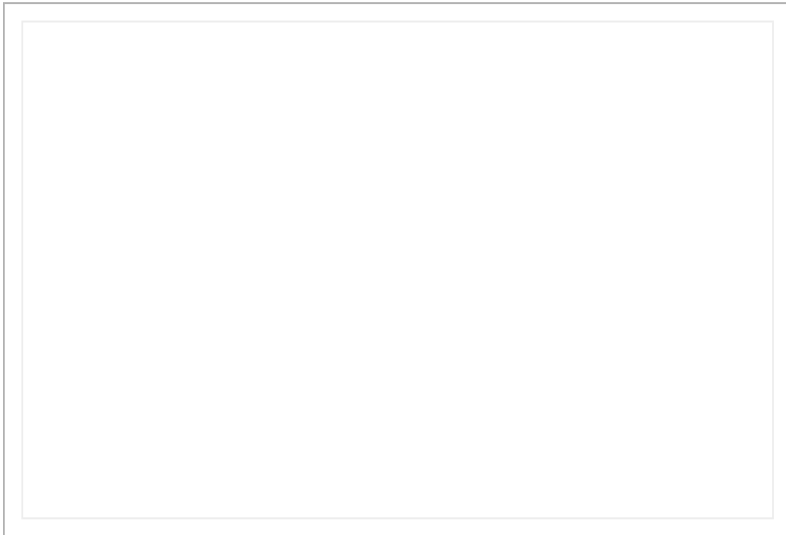
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MONROVIA, Liberia (Jan. 27) — Liberia's president declared a state of emergency over an invasion of crop-eating caterpillars that has affected 350,000 people in the West African country.

President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf told lawmakers Monday night that the pests "have invaded our country with the potential to set back our progress in the production of food and export crops."

## Animals in the News



Liberian Ministry of Agriculture / AP

33 photos

Army worms feed on a plant Jan. 16 in Pelelei, Liberia, part of an infestation that prompted the government to declare a state of emergency. The caterpillars are devouring crops including bananas, plantains, coffee and cocoa and are clogging wells and waterways with their excrement. **Click through this gallery for more animals in the news.**

(Note: Please disable your pop-up blocker)

"This is indeed a crisis and I hereby declare a state of national emergency with particular emphasis on the existing and potentially affected counties," she said.

The inch-long pests, which have been identified as army worms — the caterpillar stage of a moth — are clogging wells and waterways with excrement and devouring vital crops including banana, plantain, coffee and cocoa. The outbreak in Liberia, which is still recovering from years of civil war, has been blamed on last year's unusually long rainy season. The pests have also entered neighboring Guinea, according to the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization.

Sirleaf said the government has set up a task force to deal with the situation and has started spraying in the affected areas. She also said water and food were being supplied to people displaced by the pest invasion.

But she warned that more effort and more resources are required "if we are to be successful in containing this problem." She ordered the Minister of Finance to identify budgetary resources "from any source possible that can

be used to meet the needs that are required."

An Agriculture Ministry-led command post, manned by fewer than 100 pest control workers, has been set up near the central provincial town of Gbarnga in a bid to contain the invading caterpillars that number in the tens of millions.

The last time Liberia experienced such an invasion of pests was 30 years ago, but officials then were able to prevent its spread.

The West African nation was ravaged by civil wars for years until 2003. The drawn-out conflict that began in 1989 left about 200,000 people dead and displaced half the country's population of 3 million.

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### My last cent 1

11:18 PM Jan 29 2009

OBAMAS PEOPLE SENT THEM ...

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### Plantmanw365

10:58 PM Jan 29 2009

It only takes the most common garden insecticide to kill army worms. One that is also the safest to use. Army worms occur in the US often. I guess they were trying to grow all their food organically and no eco system could be prepared for such an invasion.

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### Plantmanw365

10:57 PM Jan 29 2009

It only takes the most common garden insecticide to kill army worms. One that is also the safest to use. Army worms occur in the US often. I guess they were trying to grow all their food organically and no eco system could be prepared for such an invasion.

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### RockyMtnNightowl

10:30 PM Jan 29 2009

Sorry didn't realize the rest of my comment didn't show up. Here's the rest of it. Obviously some of you don't know how to comprehend (understand) anything you read. I really hope none of you bad mouth talkers have any children. After all what kind of example are you setting for them. Poor? Disrespectful? Racist? Pathetic? Arrogant? Unacceptable? Hatefulness? Embarrassment? Ignorance? or possibly Ethnocentrism? (the emotional attitude that one's own ethnic group, nation, or culture is superior to all others). Hopefully you understand my point.

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**gbelter777**

10:04 PM Jan 29 2009

moth balls gregbelter

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**Wrascil**

09:52 PM Jan 29 2009

fortunately DDT is still made in south america and india along with R12 freon so developing nations can readily wipe out those pests un-like america where everything is illegal

AVG RATING: (2) [REPORT!](#) [sign-in to rate](#)

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**RockyMtnNightowl**

09:40 PM Jan 29 2009

OK for all those Bush haters and O'Bama haters, racist, pathetic, lowlife, scum, losers, etc. umm don't you have anything better to do than to talk bs on here. Enough is enough and all you people just prove that none of you should even be alive. I'm glad I don't live anywhere near these caterpillars and obviously you would rather blame our last president and new president for these problems. READ the article. WHERE does it say that Bush / O'Bama is to be blamed for it? Another thing, for those people who think its cool, acceptable and attractive to purposely misspell and not use proper grammer then don't waste our time with stupid made up words. YOU know the words I'm talking about. I don't care what color, race, religion, background you come from etc, Quit your nonsense talking. The article isn't about politics or color or our president. It's about caterpillars and the damage they're causing in another country. Obviously some of you don't know how to comprehend (understand) anything y...

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**PSRIDGELL**

09:06 PM Jan 29 2009

They need to lay off workers, like Caterpillar here in the U.S.

AVG RATING: (6) [REPORT!](#) [sign-in to rate](#)

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**PSRIDGELL**

09:02 PM Jan 29 2009

I didn't realize Obumo has so many relatives in Liberia

AVG RATING: (4) [REPORT!](#) [sign-in to rate](#)

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**PSRIDGELL**

09:00 PM Jan 29 2009

I didn't realize Obumo has some many relatives.

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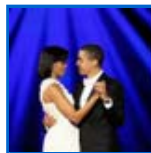
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Kevin Frayer, AP

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