

## **The hurricane expert who stood up to UN junk science**

*The Deniers -- Part III*

*Lawrence Solomon, Financial Post*

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You're a respected scientist, one of the best in your field. So respected, in fact, that when the United Nations decided to study the relationship between hurricanes and global warming for the largest scientific endeavour in its history -- its International Panel on Climate Change -- it called upon you and your expertise.

You are Christopher Landsea of the Atlantic Oceanographic & Meteorological Laboratory. You were a contributing author for the UN's second International Panel on Climate Change in 1995, writing the sections on observed changes in tropical cyclones around the world. Then the IPCC called on you as a contributing author once more, for its "Third Assessment Report" in 2001. And you were invited to participate yet again, when the IPCC called on you to be an author in the "Fourth Assessment Report." This report would specifically focus on Atlantic hurricanes, your specialty, and be published by the IPCC in 2007.

Then something went horribly wrong. Within days of this last invitation, in October, 2004, you discovered that the IPCC's Kevin Trenberth -- the very person who had invited you -- was participating in a press conference. The title of the press conference perplexed you: "Experts to warn global warming likely to continue spurring more outbreaks of intense hurricane activity." This was some kind of mistake, you were certain. You had not done any work that substantiated this claim. Nobody had.

As perplexing, none of the participants in that press conference were known for their hurricane expertise. In fact, to your knowledge, none had performed any research at all on hurricane variability, the subject of the press conference. Neither were they reporting on any new work in the field. All previous and current research in the area of hurricane variability, you knew, showed no reliable upward trend in the frequency or intensity of hurricanes. Not in the Atlantic basin. Not in any other basin.

To add to the utter incomprehensibility of the press conference, the IPCC itself, in both 1995 and 2001, had found no global warming signal in the hurricane record. And until your new work would come out, in 2007, the IPCC would not have a new analysis on which to base a change of findings.

To stop the press conference, or at least stop any misunderstandings that might come out of it, you contacted Dr. Trenberth prior to the media event. You prepared a synopsis for him that brought him up to date on the state of knowledge about hurricane formation. To your amazement, he simply dismissed your concerns. The press conference proceeded.

And what a press conference it was! Hurricanes had been all over the news that summer. Global warming was the obvious culprit -- only a fool or an oil-industry lobbyist, the press made clear, could ignore the link between what seemed to be ever increasing hurricane activity and ever increasing global warming. The press conference didn't disappoint them. The climate change experts at hand all confirmed the news that the public had been primed to hear: Global warming was causing hurricanes.

This judgement from the scientists made headlines around the world, just as it was intended to do. What better way to cast global warming as catastrophic than to make hurricanes its poster child?

You wanted to right this outrageous wrong, this mockery that was made of your scientific field. You wrote top IPCC officials, imploring: "Where is the science, the refereed publications, that substantiate these pronouncements? What studies are being alluded to that have shown a connection between observed warming trends on the earth and long-term trends in tropical cyclone activity? As far as I know, there are none." But no one in the IPCC leadership showed the slightest concern for the science. The IPCC's overriding preoccupation, it soon sunk in, lay in capitalizing on the publicity opportunity that the hurricane season presented.

You then asked the IPCC leadership for assurances that your work for the IPCC's 2007 report would be true to science: "[Dr. Trenberth] seems to have already come to the conclusion that global warming has altered hurricane activity and has publicly stated so. This does not reflect the consensus within the hurricane research community. ... Thus I would like assurance that what will be included in the IPCC report will reflect the best available information and the consensus within the scientific community most expert on the specific topic."

The assurance didn't come. What did come was the realization that the IPCC was corrupting science. This you could not be a party to. You then resigned, in an open letter to the scientific community laying out your reasons.

Next year, the IPCC will come out with its "Fourth Assessment Report," and for the first time in a decade, you will not be writing its section on hurricanes. That task will be left to the successor that Dr. Trenberth chose. As part of his responsibility, he will need to explain why -- despite all expectations -- the 2006 hurricane year was so unexpectedly light, and at the historical average for the past 150 years.

- Lawrence Solomon is executive director of Urban Renaissance Institute and Consumer Policy Institute, divisions of Energy Probe Research Foundation.

Next: The polar denier

#### THE CV OF A DENIER:

Christopher Landsea received his doctoral degree in atmospheric science from Colorado State University. A research meteorologist at the Atlantic Oceanic and Meteorological Laboratory of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, he was chair of the American Meteorological Society's committee on tropical meteorology and tropical cyclones and a recipient of the American Meteorological Society's Banner I. Miller Award for the "best contribution to the science of hurricane and tropical weather forecasting." He is a frequent contributor to leading journals, including Science, Bulletin of the American Meteorological Society, Journal of Climate, and Nature.

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