

## 27 feared dead after Navy planes collide

SAN DIEGO - Two Navy submarine-hunting planes collided Thursday, and all 27 people aboard were feared dead in cold, choppy waters 60 miles off Southern California, authorities said.

The Navy listed the crews as missing, but there was little hope any of the crew members from the downed P-3 Orions survived.

The all-weather planes were engaged in an anti-submarine warfare training exercise when they collided in bad weather, authorities said.

"I think we have to be realistic here," said Senior Chief Petty Officer Bob Howard, a Navy public affairs officer at North Island Naval Air Station. "It is very cold out there. We're talking about what apparently is a mid-air collision . . . two aircraft. I would say it would be very grim."

Still, he said, the Navy was conducting an aggressive air and sea search of the crash site.

Search and rescue teams spotted some debris from the planes but found no signs of life.

There was no word on how long the search would last, but Howard

said the Navy would make "extraordinary" attempts to retrieve remains and wreckage.

A Navy helicopter crew flying in the area and sailors from the destroyer USS Merrill all reported a ball of fire and loud explosion at about 2:30 a.m. PST, Howard said during a briefing at North Island Naval Air Station.

He said the accident occurred over the Pacific Ocean about 60 miles southwest of San Diego.

"They were operating in conjunction with other surface and air elements when a mid-air explosion was reported approximately the same time radio contact was lost," Howard said.

The collision occurred as one P-3 Orion was arriving to relieve the other, which had just completed its part of the exercise, Howard said. Officials were uncertain how much contact the pilots had before the crash, he said.

The aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln, the USS Merrill and at least two other ships, along with helicopters and fixed-wing planes were assisting in the search.

Howard said it was believed 13 crew members were aboard one P-3



Orion and 14 on the other. The planes were on a training mission from Moffett Naval Air Station near San Jose. Names of crew members were withheld pending notification of their families.

The P-3s were in contact with land- and sea-based air controllers during the exercise, but officials were uncertain who was directing them at the time of the collision, Howard said.

He called that "a very pivotal point," and said investigators will examine how the two planes wound up on a collision course.

"That's obviously something we're looking at," Howard said. "When you conduct an investigation like this, the one thing you don't want to do is rule anything out."

## Iraqis battle back Rebels: Saddam using napalm

NICOSIA, Cyprus - Iraqi opposition groups claimed Thursday that Saddam Hussein's loyalist forces were using acid, napalm and chemical weapons to crush Kurds in the north and Shiite Muslims in the south rebelling against his rule.

Iraqi troops have tried to cut off supplies of food and medicine to areas held by the insurgents, and Iraqi warplanes and helicopters also have attacked rebel-held northern oil fields, setting wells ablaze, the opposition said.

Iran's official news agency said the Tehran government had strongly protested Iraq's reported abduction of the world's highest Shiite authority.

Also Thursday, an Iraqi delegation began talks with allied officials in the Saudi capital of Riyadh on speeding up the repatriation of Iraqi prisoners of war. Iraq freed 1,150 Kuwaitis in compliance with ceasefire terms.

The opposition Iraqi Kurdistan Front, in a statement released to Iran's official Islamic Republic News Agency, said the leader of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan sent a message to the U.N. secretary-general seeking an urgent Security Council meeting on the Iraqi uprising.

IRNA said the letter from the Kurdish leader, Jalal Talabani, cited the torching of the oil wells and the use of napalm.

It said he urged the Security Council to "act resolutely to prevent Saddam's forces from persisting in these acts of gross environmental terrorism and to prevent the indiscriminate destruction of civilian areas by Hussein's forces."

Jalabani, in an interview with The Associated Press in Damascus, said he would return to Iraq this weekend to join forces with other opposition leaders.

"This is the spring of freedom for Kurdistan," said the guerrilla leader.

"We would invite them to intervene on the side of their Iraqi brothers to promote an Arab solution to the struggle and thereby prevent any intervention by other foreign forces," said Imam Sayed Hussain al-Sader, the general secretary of the council.

The Supreme Assembly of the Islamic Revolution in Iraq, an umbrella of opposition groups, claims Iraqi forces have used ground-to-ground missiles against rebel-held cities, shelled them with artillery and tank cannons, and used napalm and chemical weapons.

# Legislature endorses Union referendum

MOSCOW - Lawmakers urged national and republic leaders on Thursday to use the recent referendum on preserving the union as a springboard to approving a new treaty to join the republics.

After a day of relatively calm debate, the Supreme Soviet legislature approved an eight-point resolution declaring that "a majority of people (agreed) that the fate of the country's peoples is indivisible, that only through joint efforts will they be able to successfully resolve questions of economic, social and cultural development."

The legislature had scheduled the referendum at the urging of President Mikhail Gorbachev. The resolution gave Gorbachev another card in his bid to hold the republics together under a new Union Treaty.

Neither Gorbachev nor his chief

foe, Russian Federation President Boris Yeltsin, has commented publicly on the results of Sunday's referendum.

Nine republics, including the huge Russian Federation, took part in the referendum; six boycotted it. More than 82 percent of the eligible voters in the nine republics cast ballots, with about 77 percent voting in favor, referendum committee chairman Vladimir Orlov told lawmakers.

"The referendum and its results can be viewed as the success of Soviet democracy and a triumph of those forces which associate the future of their native land and their personal destinies with the preservation and unity of the U.S.S.R.," Orlov said.

Voters were asked: "Do you consider it necessary to preserve the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics as a renewed federation of equal, sovereign republics in which human rights

and freedoms of any nationality will be fully guaranteed?"

Thursday's resolution was given preliminary approval, then deputies made mostly minor changes before giving it a final OK point by point.

The final version says national and republic governments "shall be governed in their practical actions by the decision of voters to support renewal of the (union) in the referendum, whose results are final and have mandatory force in the whole territory of the U.S.S.R."

Lawmakers recommended that Gorbachev and his Federation Council, made up of leaders of the republics, "energetically carry out work to finish the new Union Treaty, based on the results of the referendum, for it to be, based on the results of the referendum, for it to be signed in the shortest period."

They also urged leaders to hasten their work on a new Soviet constitution, something Gorbachev has promised to undertake after the treaty is signed.

Eight of the 15 republics have indicated they would sign the treaty, which has been sent to the republics for consideration.

The resolution urges the Federation Council and the Cabinet, a smaller working body close to Gorbachev, to enforce economic links between the republics and the central government.

Other articles urge the protection of civil rights against ethnic conflict and recommend that the legislature's constitutional oversight committee review conflicting laws.

The resolution orders the country's chief prosecutor and the Interior Ministry to investigate allegations of voting fraud during the referendum, and singles out six republics — Moldova, Armenia, Georgia, Latvia, Lithu-

ania and Estonia — for rejecting the vote on their territory.

The final point says "state agencies, enterprises and organizations, political parties and other public associations, and also the mass media, ought to take into account the will of the people in preserving the union government."

That was aimed at critics of the referendum, led by Yeltsin, as well as newspapers and republic governments that had urged people to boycott or vote no.

Orlov, the referendum committee chief, said the referendum passed by 71 percent in the vast Russian Federation, 70 percent in the Ukraine, 83 percent Byelorussia, almost 94 percent in Kazakhstan, 93 percent in Azerbaijan, 94 percent in Kirgizia, 96 percent in Tadjikistan, and 98 percent in Turkmenia.

# U.N. to lift food embargo on Iraq

UNITED NATIONS - The Security Council's sanctions committee will lift the food embargo on Iraq now that Baghdad has agreed to allow the United Nations to distribute the food-stuffs, a senior Western diplomat said Thursday.

The official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said the sanctions committee would allow food and other essentials into Iraq starting Friday if the Red Cross and United Nations can see that it reaches all parts of the country.

Iraq will have to allow the food to be sent into the Kurd-controlled areas of the north, and the provinces of the south where Shiites are rebelling, he said.

The Security Council on Thursday

heard a report that Iraq had been "relegated to a pre-industrial age" by the "near-apocalyptic" allied military assault.

Undersecretary-General Martti Ahtisaari's report recommended the sanctions committee lift barriers to food and agricultural equipment immediately.

"It is unmistakable that the Iraqi people may soon face a further imminent catastrophe, which could include epidemic and famine, if massive life supporting needs are not met," his report said. "Time is short."

Iraq's U.N. Mission and Washington Embassy were closed, and Iraqi officials were not available to confirm that they would allow food to be distributed to all regions of the coun-

**“ It is unmistakable that the Iraqi people may soon face a further imminent catastrophe . . . if massive life supporting needs are not met.**

Ahtisaari U.N. undersecretary general

try. The council's committee on sanctions was to meet Friday morning. It consists of the same 15 nations as the Security Council, under Austria's chairmanship.

Since the council imposed an international trade embargo on Iraq on Aug. 6, four days after Iraq invaded Kuwait, all supplies bound for Iraq except for medicines have had to receive the approval of the sanctions committee.

Food is only allowed into Iraq in humanitarian circumstances. But the sanctions committee can effectively lift the embargo on food by declaring that a humanitarian emergency exists.

Western officials have indicated that overall embargo on Iraq would not be lifted until a permanent ceasefire is signed.

# Kuwaitis torturing detainees, group says

KUWAIT CITY - Kuwaiti security forces and free-lance gangs are using lit cigarettes, knives and other instruments to torture hundreds of people suspected of collaborating with Iraqi troops, a human rights group said Thursday.

Also, the body of a man apparently beaten to death was found in a Kuwait City neighborhood, the second corpse

to appear in the area in recent days. U.S. officers at the scene said American officials were urging the Kuwaitis to investigate numerous human rights abuses.

Middle East Watch, a New York-based group, said about 30 to 40 people have been killed since the U.S.-led coalition forces drove Iraqi troops out of the emirate three weeks ago.

"We have interviewed people who described torture techniques which are very similar to those perpetrated by the Iraqis on the Kuwaitis," said Andrew Whitley, executive director of Middle East Watch.

About 2,000 people are being held, and many, "possibly the majority," have been abused, Whitley said.

Many detainees are Palestinians, who claim they are being victimized as a group because some of them assisted the Iraqis during the occupation.

Iraqi President Saddam Hussein won the support of many Palestinians with his Scud missile attacks on Israel and his repeated demands for a Palestinian homeland.

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