

U.N. opens humanitarian center, prepares to take over refugee camp

ZAKHO, Iraq - The United Nations raised its blue-and-white flag in northern Iraq on Tuesday, preparing to take over a U.S.-built camp for Iraqi Kurdish refugees. Thousands of refugees began streaming homeward.

Allied officials also hinted there could be a further expansion of the security zone for the hundreds of thousands of Kurds who fled to the Turkish border after Saddam Hussein crushed a Kurdish uprising in the wake of the Persian Gulf war.

A U.S. source, speaking on condition of anonymity, said any part of Iraq north of the 36th parallel would be considered potential territory for the allied-protected zone.

"This is a historic day," said U.S. Army Maj. Gen. Jay Garner, as United Nations special envoy Steffan De Mistura officially opened a humanitarian center for displaced Kurds near the allied-built tent city at Zakho.

A cavalcade of overloaded cars, trucks, wagons, buses and tractors began descending from the primitive mountain camps on the Turkish border, heading for the Zakho area.

Many of the returning Kurds drove past the U.S.-built camp and went directly to their homes in Zakho. Those heading to the tent

city included residents of towns outside the allied security zone and those whose homes were damaged.

At the United Nations, the United States, Britain and France indicated Tuesday that they believed the U.N. secretary-general should press Iraq to permit a U.N. police force to protect the Kurds and replace the 9,000 allied troops in northern Iraq.

The secretary-general, Javier Perez de Cuellar, was non-committal. Iraq has denounced the proposal as a violation of its sovereignty.

The U.N. sanctions committee deferred action on Iraq's requests to regain \$1 billion in frozen bank assets worldwide. It also wants to sell about \$1 billion worth of oil to finance purchase of food, medical supplies and humanitarian aid.

The economic sanctions were imposed on Iraq after its Aug. 2 takeover of Kuwait.

Mud-splashed vehicles, many with smashed headlights and windshields, snaked down a winding mountain road from the Isikveren camp in Turkey. They were crammed with adults, children and even animals, with tents, bedding and other belongings bundled precariously high on top.

British troops tiered down several hundred refugees, and the French army led down at least one

caravan of cars and trucks.

By dusk on Tuesday, 2,000 men, 1,240 women and 1,160 children had passed through an allied checkpoint.

Star Hassan, an Iraqi Kurdish guerrilla, watched the refugees leaving. "They are very happy, but not very happy about the safety in Zakho, because we don't trust Saddam Hussein," he said.

Until Monday, the guerrillas had been blocking Kurdish refugees from leaving the mountains, saying it still was not safe to return.

But at a meeting between guerrilla leaders and allied generals on Monday, the guerrillas agreed to stop blocking all the roads, said Army Lt. Col. Gary Goff. "So far, they have complied," he said.

The United Nations outpost, with a staff of 15, will concentrate in the short term on providing food for the people of Zakho.

Gordon Murchie of the State Department's Agency for International Development said the first priority was saving the refugees from starvation in the mountains. The next step, he said, is "to get people off the mountains and back to some kind of physical and psychological normality."

The final phase, he said, will be the takeover of the effort by U.N. and non-government organizations.

Bangladesh battered Typhoon kills thousands

DHAKA, Bangladesh - A powerful typhoon battered densely populated Bangladesh for more than eight hours Tuesday, killing at least 1,000 people and leaving millions homeless. State-run television said at least 800 people were killed in the coastal districts of Cox's Bazaar, Noakhali and Bhola when 20-foot waves whipped up by 145 mph winds swept ashore.

The storm out of the Bay of Bengal left more than 250 other people dead on low-lying coastal islands and in the port of Chittagong, the federal Relief Ministry reported. There was no word from several remote islands that are home to thousands of people, due to severed communications.

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia called an emergency meeting of her Cabinet to discuss relief measures. She said the typhoon had caused damage worth \$1 billion and appealed for international help.

Relief officials said about 3 million people in this poor country bordered by India and Burma were evacuated from flimsy mud and straw homes in the path of the storm before the typhoon struck.

About 80 percent of the huts were blown away, the Relief Ministry official said.

"The deaths would have been on a much larger scale" if the residents had not been shifted to shelters, he said.

United News of Bangladesh said at least 5,000 fishermen aboard 500 trawlers were unaccounted for. It said their boats were at sea when the ty-



phoon struck the southeastern coast where about 7 million people reside in 2,000 villages.

The typhoon battered 14 coastal districts, uprooting trees, telephone lines and electricity poles, a Relief Ministry official said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

Most information on the disaster came via radios operated by the Red Crescent, the Muslim equivalent of the Red Cross.

An official at the Dhara office of the Red Crescent said he knew of 246 deaths.

Village wiped off map by quake

KUTAISI, U.S.S.R. - Rescuers Tuesday dug through a mountain village that one official said was "wiped off the map," hoping to find survivors among dozens of people buried alive in an earthquake.

Monday's quake in Soviet Georgia killed at least 80 people, injured 500, destroyed 40 schools and six hospitals, and left 80,000 homeless, said Georgian Prime Minister Tengiz Sigua.

Sigua said after a helicopter tour of the site that he expected the death toll to rise.

He flew over the village of Khakhieti, which was destroyed when a mountainside collapsed and buried 40 people alive.

"It was awful," Sigua said in an interview with The Associated Press in Kutaisi, a city about 36 miles west of Khakhieti. "Simply put, it's a nightmare."

"This village was wiped off the map," he said.

Rescuers searched collapsed homes and buildings in the towns and villages of north-central Georgia for any survivors.

The injured were being ferried out to hospitals in the mountainous republic, while officials were shipping in busloads of water, food and tents for the homeless.

About 80 percent of the housing was destroyed in the affected area,

where about 250,000 people live, Sigua said.

Wednesday was declared a day of mourning in Georgia.

Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev sent his condolences to relatives of the victims and he authorized his government to assist the stricken region.

Offers of aid have been received from Israel, France and Japan, Sigua said.

The American Red Cross in Washington said the League of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies sent an assessment team to Georgia and that the Armenian Red Cross also sent a 27-member rescue team.

The earthquake struck at 12:13 p.m. Monday among sparsely populated villages and towns and measured 7.1 on the Richter scale. Its epicenter was near 11,363-foot Mount Samertskhie and Ambrolauri, a town 90 miles northwest of the Georgian capital of Tbilisi.

Rescuers managed to save 30 miners trapped in the Barital-barium mine high in the Caucasus Mountains near the quake's epicenter, said Georgia's deputy health minister, Merab Ketashvili.

"None of them were injured, although several were short of breath," he said by telephone.

Aftershocks continued throughout

Monday and early Tuesday.

Tremors were felt throughout much of the Caucasus Mountains. The area of greatest damage measured about 24 square miles around the epicenter, said Sergei Orefyev of the Institute of Physics and Earth Sciences.

Also heavily damaged was Dzava, a mountain town of 11,000 people near the epicenter, as well as nearby Ambrolauri, Oni and Sachkhere.

Sachkhere's railroad station was reported badly damaged, along with two churches in the town and a synagogue in Oni. The newspaper Kom-somolskaya Pravda reported damage to military airfields in northern Georgia.

Daily Nebraskan

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The Daily Nebraskan (USPS 144-080) is published by the UNL Publications Board, Nebraska Union 34, 1400 R St., Lincoln, NE. Monday through Friday during the academic year; weekly during summer sessions. Readers are encouraged to submit story ideas and comments to the Daily Nebraskan by phoning 472-1763 between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. The public also has access to the Publications Board. For information, contact Bill Vobejda, 436-9993. Subscription price is \$45 for one year. Postmaster: Send address changes to the Daily Nebraskan, Nebraska Union 34, 1400 R St., Lincoln, NE 68588-0448. Second-class postage paid at Lincoln, NE. ALL MATERIAL COPYRIGHT 1991 DAILY NEBRASKAN

Nuclear plant fire

'Severe' damage, but no radiation released

WISCASSET, Maine - Fire severely damaged the non-nuclear part of the Maine Yankee nuclear power plant, officials said Tuesday. They said the reactor shut down normally, no radiation was released and nobody was injured.

U.S. Rep. Thomas Andrews accused Maine Yankee officials of withholding details about the fire's severity when it began Monday night. Plant officials denied trying to downplay it.

"The public has a right to know exactly what occurred," said Andrews, a Maine Democrat. "They should be given all the details surrounding the accident and the ensuing investigation as quickly as possible."

On Monday night, Maine Yankee officials confirmed a fire had broken out, but gave no indication of its severity and said they could provide no details until Tuesday. Late Tuesday morning, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission revealed the first description of the fire and details of the damage.

The company said later Tuesday

that the plant's main generator may have sustained "serious damage" during the fire, but that it could be several days before the extent was known.

Maine Yankee President Charles Frizzle said the fire was "probably the most serious event" at the plant in its 19 years. He stressed no one was injured and the blaze posed no danger to the public.

The fire began 6:32 p.m. Monday and was classified as an "unusual event," the lowest of four ratings the NRC gives to nuclear plant incidents.

NRC spokeswoman Diane Screnci said that authorities on the scene reported "a loud boom" preceded the hydrogen fire, but she said investigators were unsure whether an explosion occurred.

The NRC's initial report of the incident said "reports were received of an explosion in the main transformer and of multiple hydrogen fires in the turbine hall."

Charles Marschall, the NRC's senior resident inspector at the plant,

said the fire was fueled by hydrogen and damaged the plant's main transformer, electrical conductors and wires leading from the generator to the transformer.

The transformer feeds electricity produced by the plant to the transmission system outside the plant, the company said.

"I don't want to downgrade the seriousness of the event, but it's not a nuclear event," Frizzle said at a news conference Tuesday afternoon. "From my perspective, this should not reflect negatively on the use of nuclear power. It has nothing to do with nuclear power."

If the generator is not damaged, the plant will be shut down for several weeks while officials replace the transformer. If the generator is inoperable, the plant may be down for several months while a new generator is installed, Frizzle said.

Officials were investigating the source of the fire, which occurred 100 to 200 feet from the containment building that encases the plant's nu-



clear reactor within a 4 1/2-foot wall of concrete reinforced with steel.

The plant was operating normally when the main transformer failed and the reactor shut down automatically, officials said.