

Floods reach record levels

AMSTERDAM, Netherlands — Floods that drenched much of northern Europe threatened to burst river dikes Tuesday in the Netherlands. Seventy thousand people were evacuated in the country's worst flooding since 1953.

The floods appeared to be receding Tuesday in Belgium, Germany and France after killing at least 26 people. The Dutch were gearing up for a major battle with their eternal enemy, the waters that threaten their low-lying country.

One death from the Dutch floods was reported Tuesday in the Waal River village of Winssen, a crisis worker said. Details were not immediately available.

Mandatory evacuations of thousands of people began Tuesday morning from land in eastern Netherlands where authorities declared a state of emergency.

Tens of thousands of farm animals also had to be shipped out of the "polders" — land reclaimed from marsh and river basins — to keep them from drowning.

Dutch floodwaters were expected to crest Wednesday afternoon, and the danger of dikes bursting made the evacuations more urgent.

If the dikes ruptured, some villages would be under up to 16 feet of water, authorities said.

One man said he had left everything behind to take refuge in a relief center in Nijmegen. "What else could I have done?" he asked.

A thousand soldiers were brought in to assist the effort, and thousands of acres of land were under water. The dikes that keep the river water out of the reclaimed areas were holding, with flooding primarily near the banks of the Maas and Waal rivers.

The European flooding has been caused by the early melting of Alpine snows and heavy rain. The flooding was the worst since 1953, when the North Sea dikes in the southern Zeeland province burst, killing more than 1,800 people.

Clinton takes Mexico crisis into own hands

WASHINGTON — President Clinton, bowing to stiff opposition in Congress, Tuesday abandoned his \$40 billion legislative package for Mexico. But he immediately announced an even larger package not requiring congressional action that draws, in part, on funds usually used to defend the U.S. dollar.

"Rather than face further delay ... I will act under my executive authority," Clinton told the nation's governors in a dramatic end-run around Congress.

The new plan includes a mix of contributions from the International Monetary Fund and other international organizations. But what promises to be its most controversial feature is Clinton's decision to dip into the government's Exchange Equalization Fund to as much as \$20 billion to help support Mexico's nosediving peso.

The fund, which only holds \$25 billion, is normally used to help stabilize the U.S. dollar against major currency fluctuations.

White House spokesman Mike McCurry said the president believed the situation was grave enough to warrant dipping into the fund. It is the first time the fund has ever been used to support any currency other than the dollar, he said.

Clinton also announced that the International Monetary Fund would put \$17.5 billion in the pot and that another lending organization, the Bank for International Settlement, would put up \$10 billion.

Those amounts represented increases from support the two agencies had already announced. A week ago, the IMF said it would provide \$7.5 billion in loans over 18 months, which at the time was described as the largest IMF support package in history. The \$10 billion from the Bank for International Settlement represented an

Aid for Mexico's peso

President Clinton, facing congressional opposition to his aid plan for Mexico, has assembled a substitute package combining U.S. money with international aid.

- The New Plan:
- The United States will make available up to \$20 billion in total resources from the Exchange Stabilization Fund and the Federal Reserve over a period of 12 months.
 - The International Monetary Fund is expanding its support package to \$17.5 billion.
 - The central banks of a number of major industrial countries, acting through the Bank for International Settlements, will consider providing \$10 billion.
 - The Bank of Canada has made available \$1 billion.
 - A group of Latin American countries are arranging \$1 billion.

Source: AP DN graphic

increase of \$5 billion over the original amount put up by the Basel, Switzerland, institution.

"We cannot risk further delay. The situation in Mexico continues to worsen," Clinton said hours after congressional leaders told him that prospects for passage in Congress of his original plan for \$40 billion in loan guarantees was slim.

Mexican markets rallied on the news. The peso strengthened to 5.95 to the dollar by late morning, better than its record low of 6.30 to the dollar on Monday. The Mexican Stock Exchange's key IPC index was up 3.5 percent.

He described the steps he announced today as "potentially even more aggressive than one I originally proposed."

He said he had concluded that Congress would not act on the crisis in time.

"I have worked with other countries to prepare a new package," he said.

Jury hears 911 calls

LOS ANGELES — A key witness for O.J. Simpson is "a known liar and a Simpson case groupie," a prosecutor told jurors today, and a detective testified that Simpson's ex-wife was badly bruised and hysterical after he responded to a 911 call in 1989.

In an unusual rebuttal to the defense opening statement just before testimony began, Deputy District Attorney Marcia Clark also said the defense witness, Mary Anne Gerchas, told a friend she wasn't even in the neighborhood the night of the murders.

The prosecution then called its first witnesses, the 911 operator who took a call from the Simpson household the morning of Jan. 1, 1989, and the officer who went to the home afterward. On that day, Simpson and his wife had a fight that sent Ms. Simpson to the hospital; Simpson later pleaded no contest to spousal battery.

Darden played a tape of the 911 call to the jury, in which a woman can be heard screaming. There are also noises in the background that sound either like slaps or the crackle of the police radio.

She also told jurors they would see Simpson in an video made shortly before the slayings showing him in good physical condition, doing pushups, throwing jabs and doing other exercises. The defense had argued that he had arthritis that would have made it impossible for him to kill two people.

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News... in a Minute

AIDS vaccine looks promising

WASHINGTON — Scientists searching for a safe AIDS vaccine said Tuesday they have created one with a built-in time bomb — a gene that will cleanse it from the body on cue.

Researchers believe the most effective AIDS vaccine is likely to be a live virus, which will prime the body to mount a spirited reaction to HIV. Many, though, worry about giving healthy people even a weakened form of the AIDS virus, since it might cause cancer, immune suppression or even AIDS.

So now a team from the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases has come up with a novel strategy: a live but weakened AIDS virus that can be killed off once it does its job.

Smith said the approach looks promising in the test tube. But much more testing, including extensive use in monkeys, will be necessary before it can be tried on people. He said human studies are at least three years away.

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