

Rebels blamed for Sri Lankan explosion

COLOMBO, Sri Lanka — In one of the worst attacks in Sri Lanka's 12-year civil war, a truck packed with explosives rammed into the central bank Wednesday, igniting towering fires in the business and tourist district. At least 60 people died, including the driver, and more than 1,400 were wounded.

Authorities blamed the attack and a fireball caused by a rocket-propelled grenade moments earlier on the Tamil Tiger rebels, whose 12-year armed campaign for an independent homeland has killed nearly 40,000 people. There were no immediate claims of responsibility.

In the chaos after the midday attack, dozens of people were trapped atop burning buildings waving for help. Helicopter gunships bristling with machine guns tried to pluck sur-

vivors from rooftops but were repelled by the heat.

The director of the National Hospital's trauma unit, Hector Weerasinghe, told The Associated Press that 53 people died Wednesday. Seven more people had died by Thursday morning, said sub-inspector Lal Gunawardene of the National Hospital's police post.

Nearly 100 were still listed as critical, and another 1,000 had been hospitalized, he said. About 250 others had been treated for minor wounds and released.

Rescue workers began using heavy earth-moving equipment Thursday to clear the rubble of the shattered commercial buildings around the central bank.

Most of the dead and wounded were in the Central Bank building,

where Sri Lanka's gold reserves are held and the country's financial policy is made.

Bank guard Prasanna Wijewardhana said a blue truck with three men drove into the security barricade outside the bank. Two men leaped out and started firing automatic weapons.

Some guards returned fire, but many of them fled, Wijewardhana said. The attackers "had the advantage of surprise," he said.

During the gunfire, a rocket-propelled grenade landed in front of a nearby office building, gouging a crater and shattering windows at The Associated Press office 100 yards away.

Police said the driver of the truck died in the explosion. Hours later, they arrested two others seen fleeing with

automatic rifles about a mile from the blast.

Amid the debris outside the bank, police found a small card printed with the message: "This vehicle is carrying 4,000 kilograms (8,800 pounds) of explosives. If you try to stop us, we will blow it up."

Police believe the attackers carried the card, printed in English and Sri Lanka's majority and minority languages, Sinhalese and Tamil. They maintained the bomb weighed only 110 to 220 pounds.

Officials blamed Tamil Tiger rebels, and claimed they were trying to unhinge a government plan to give the Tamil minority greater regional autonomy and end the war. There was no immediate statement from the Tigers, who rarely claim responsibility for their attacks.

Fed cuts interest rates

WASHINGTON — The Federal Reserve cut interest rates for the second time in two months Wednesday, hurrying to the rescue of a faltering economy. Major banks immediately reduced their own lending rates, meaning lower borrowing costs for millions of Americans.

The stock market, which had surged on Tuesday in anticipation of the Fed's credit relief, set another record on Wednesday. The Dow Jones industrial average closed at 5,395.30, up 14.09.

Private analysts said further rate reductions were likely as the Federal Reserve tries to stave off recession.

The Fed said it was cutting its target for the federal funds rate, the interest that banks charge each other on overnight loans, from 5.5 percent to 5.25 percent. It also reduced its largely symbolic discount rate, the interest it charges on direct loans to banks, to 5 percent.

The actions should stimulate economic activity by lowering the cost of credit. But the Fed's statement said merely that the reductions could be made because "moderating economic expansion in recent months has reduced potential inflationary pressures."

Chase Manhattan was the first major bank to announce a cut in its prime rate, and other banks quickly followed suit. The prime rate, the benchmark for many business and consumer loans, was cut to 8.25 percent from 8.5 percent.

Private economists, who had been urging the central bank to act, said they believed Wednesday's reduction in the funds rate, the third since July, would not be the last.

"Given how soft the economy is, we are going to see more easing," said Lawrence Chimerine, chief economist at the Economic Strategy Institute in Washington.

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Judge: Oklahoma town not fit for bombing trial

OKLAHOMA CITY — Citing "obvious deficiencies" in its tiny courthouse, a federal judge said Wednesday he had serious doubts about holding the Oklahoma bombing trial in Lawton as previously planned.

In another development, a woman whose two young sons were killed in the April 19 blast is suing bombing suspect Timothy McVeigh and other unknown individuals for \$30 million in a wrongful death suit.

McVeigh and Terry Nichols are charged with murder and conspiracy in the bombing of the Oklahoma City federal building, which killed 169 people and injured more than 500 others. They could get the death penalty if convicted.

This week, U.S. District Judge Richard Matsch has been considering a request by defense attorneys to move the trial out of Oklahoma.

The defense claims that pretrial publicity will make it impossible for the defendants to get a fair trial; prosecutors want the trial to remain in the state so the survivors of bombing victims can attend.

Lawton, a military town 90 miles southwest of Oklahoma City, was originally chosen as the trial site by U.S. District Judge Wayne Alley.

But Alley was subsequently removed from the case because his courtroom and chambers in Oklahoma City were damaged in the blast, and an appeals court said that the damage could have raised doubts about his impartiality.

During testimony Wednesday

"There are obvious deficiencies there that need to be corrected before the trial could be held there."

RICHARD MATSCH
U.S. District Judge

about the suitability of Lawton for the trial, prosecutors and defense attorneys agreed it would cost at least \$1 million to renovate the tiny federal courthouse there to handle the bombing trial.

The defense noted the small size of the courtroom and the fact that the holding cell in the courthouse was only big enough for one person.

"I think it's a waste of time to even talk about Lawton," Matsch said.

"I'm wondering if Lawton should be seriously considered," the judge added. "There are obvious deficiencies there that need to be corrected before the trial could be held there."

It wasn't known when the judge would rule on the defense motion.

The wrongful death lawsuit against McVeigh was filed Friday by Edye Smith, whose sons, Chase, 3, and Colton, 2, were in the day-care center on the second floor of the building when the bomb exploded.

At least five other wrongful death suits have been filed in the case.

Du Pont lawyers may find insanity defense sticky

PHILADELPHIA — John E. du Pont saw Nazis in his trees, heard the walls talking to him and cut off pieces of his skin to remove the bugs from outer space.

"Doesn't take a rocket scientist or even a psychiatrist to say the guy was crazy," law professor Eddie Ohlbaum said.

But that doesn't mean the multimillionaire accused of murdering Dave Schultz, an Olympic wrestling champion, is crazy under the law.

Lawyers rarely pursue the insanity defense and rarely succeed. Even Jeffrey Dahmer couldn't convince a jury he was insane when he killed and dismembered 15 men and boys.

"An insanity defense in general is an uphill battle," said Dr. Neal Blumberg, a Baltimore psychiatrist who evaluates about 60 criminal defendants a year. "There's a public perception that people are getting away with murder and this is an easy de-

fense to fake."

To prove insanity, lawyers must show that du Pont was too mentally ill to know what he was doing or unable to know the difference between right and wrong.

For example, "let's assume that when he pulled the trigger he thought he was releasing electrons to communicate with the nature of the Holy Spirit," said Ohlbaum, a Temple University law professor who has argued insanity defenses.

Lawyers representing du Pont need to establish a history of mental illness and document his behavior at the scene of the crime.

Killers found guilty but mentally ill are sent to a mental institution; if they recover, they go to prison for life. In contrast, those found not guilty by reason of insanity are sent to a mental hospital and can be released once they are deemed to be no threat.

Attention Students:

Spring semester distribution of Federal Perkins Loan checks will be February 5, 6 and 7 in the Nebraska Union Ballroom.

Hours of distribution are 8:30-11:30 a.m. and 1:00-4:00 p.m. each day.

Students must present their student photo ID to receive their check. Checks not claimed by 4 p.m. on February 7, 1996 will be cancelled.

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