

Peru hostages rescued; all rebels killed

140-man military strike team ends 4-month captivity

Japan was not told in advance of the raid on its embassy.

LIMA, Peru (AP) — In a lightning assault, Peruvian troops stormed the Japanese ambassador's mansion Tuesday and rescued 71 hostages held for four months, killing all 14 rebel captors as the unsuspecting guerrillas reportedly played soccer.

One captive, Supreme Court Justice Carlos Giusti, and two soldiers also died, President Alberto Fujimori said. Some hostages were secretly warned just before the raid, one of the freed men said.

Fujimori said 25 other captives were injured in the gunfire and explosions that rocked the compound, only two seriously — Peru's foreign minister, Francisco Tudela, and another Supreme Court justice, both suffering gunshot wounds.

"I didn't waver for a single minute in giving the order for this rescue operation," said the president, who throughout the crisis adamantly rejected the guerrillas' demand that jailed comrades be freed in exchange for the captive diplomats and businessmen.

The operation ended an international ordeal that had transfixed two nations and focused global attention on a little-known leftist rebel group,

Tupac Amaru, which has waged guerrilla war here since 1984.

In Tokyo, Japan's prime minister called it a "splendid rescue," but also said it was "regrettable" that Peru had not forewarned his government of the surprise, broad-daylight attack.

Fujimori told reporters late Tuesday that intelligence information convinced him it was an ideal time to end the impasse by force.

He apparently was referring to word of the indoor soccer game. Bolivian Ambassador Jorge Gumucio, one of the freed hostages, said eight hostage-holders were playing soccer in the main hall of the diplomatic residence when the security forces struck, first setting off an explosion in a tunnel directly under the hall.

It was about 3:30 p.m. The 140-man military-police assault team poured through the compound's front gate, then blasted open the mansion's front door. Others attacked from the rear, and a third unit climbed to the rooftop and shepherded hostages down.

It ended quickly. As smoke billowed over the residence, triumphant soldiers hauled down the guerrillas' flag, and ex-hostages and rescuers cheered and jubilantly sang the Peruvian national anthem. A large pool of blood could be seen at the bottom of a stairway.

The relatively low casualty toll

among hostages was surprising to some. An armed forces assessment early in the 126-day siege estimated such an assault would cost the lives of 70 percent of those in the compound.

The hostages, all male, were mostly Peruvians, but also included 24 Japanese — 12 businessmen and 12 diplomats, including Japan's ambassador, Morihisa Aoki, who suffered a slight elbow injury during the rescue. There were no Americans among the hostages.

In Tokyo, Japanese Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto said Peru had not told him in advance of the raid, even though the compound is technically Japanese soil.

"Our country was not informed in advance and this is very regrettable," he said. But he expressed support for Peru's leader, saying, "There should be nobody who could criticize Mr. Fujimori for his decision."

Hashimoto said all the Japanese hostages were safe, but some were slightly injured.

Talks to peacefully end the crisis broke down March 12 over the rebels' demand that Peru free their jailed comrades. Fujimori repeatedly ruled that out.

Fujimori had said he would use force to end the crisis only as a last resort, but Peruvian news media repeatedly reported military plans to raid the compound.

Peru's hostage chronology

Dec. 17: About 15 Tupac Amaru rebels seize more than 500 hostages at the Japanese ambassador's residence. Later, they release the women.

Dec. 18: Rebels threaten to kill hostages unless the government releases jailed comrades. Guerrillas later release ambassadors of Germany, Canada and Greece and a Peruvian diplomat.

Dec. 19: The International Red Cross is designated as intermediary between rebels and government. Three hostages are released.

Dec. 20: Rebels free 38 hostages, including ambassadors of Brazil, South Korea and Egypt.

Dec. 21: Rebels make more demands, including changes in government's economic policy to benefit the poor. Fujimori refuses to cede to their demands.

Dec. 22: Rebels free 225 hostages, including diplomats from Austria, Cuba, Venezuela, Panama, Spain and the United States.

Dec. 24: Uruguay's ambassador is released after his country frees two Tupac Amaru rebels held there. Peru recalls top envoy in Montevideo in protest.

Dec. 26: Guatemala's ambassador freed.

Dec. 28: Government negotiator meets with rebels who later release 20 hostages. Red Cross says 83 hostages remain.

Dec. 31: Rebels release diplomats from Argentina and Honduras, leaving 81 hostages.

Jan. 1, 1997: Rebels release seven more hostages, leaving 74 captives inside the embassy residence.

March 12: Talks break down over Cerpa's demand that hundreds of rebels be released.

April 22: Peruvian forces storm the ambassador's residence and rescue dozens of hostages.



Source: AP Research

AP

Massacre claims 93

ALGIERS, Algeria (AP) — Attackers used knives, hatchets and shovels on Tuesday to kill 93 villagers, including three children, in the bloodiest massacre of a five-year Muslim insurgency.

The early-morning massacre was the latest violence in a campaign of terror by Muslim insurgents in advance of June 5 parliamentary elections, in which they are banned from running.

The Interior Ministry said 47 men, 43 women and three children were killed near the town of Bougara, 12 miles south of Algiers. In addition to the 93 dead, 25 people were injured in the attack, 18 of them seriously.

Some townspeople were mutilated by their attackers — their heads, legs or arms severed — according to hospital workers in Algiers and Blida, site of the Algiers-area army garrison.

The June elections will be the first since the army halted January 1992 parliamentary voting to thwart a likely victory by the now-banned Islamic Salvation Front. The move triggered the insurgency

and repression by security forces, which have left more than 60,000 people dead.

Members of a family who fled the area described the heavily armed group as Islamic guerrillas. They said the group began killing villagers because they refused to "collaborate."

Armed groups depend for their survival on ordinary citizens who provide food, money and other necessities.

"We have no more to give. They've already taken everything: money, food, animals," one member of the arriving family said.

The massacre was the biggest single mass killing since the birth of the insurgency.

Muslim militants killed 22 people in another village massacre earlier this month. Such massacres around Algiers have become increasingly common, killing more than 370 people, including Tuesday's victims, in the past month.

The Armed Islamic Group, blamed for most of the massacres, wants to topple the government.

Jury ready in McVeigh trial

DENVER (AP) — Seven men and five women were selected Tuesday to hear the Oklahoma City bombing trial, with the judge using a bingo-style system of numbers to shield the identities of the already anonymous jurors.

Sources close to the case said the jury consisted of seven men and five women, with an alternate panel of three men and three women.

A sloping wall keeps most reporters from seeing into the jury box, but members of the public have a better view. Audience members said the panel appeared to have 16 whites and two whose race could not be determined, but who appeared to be either Hispanic or American Indian.

Those jurors who could be seen by reporters included an elderly white man who leaned over and stared at reporters; a young white man with glasses; a young white woman with curly blonde hair; a white balding man with a mustache; a man with long dark hair who appeared to be an American Indian and a white young man with a beard.

Jurors return Thursday to take their oath and hear opening statements as Timothy McVeigh stands trial in the worst act of terrorism on U.S. soil.

The 28-year-old Gulf War veteran is charged in the April 19, 1995, truck

bombing of the downtown Oklahoma City federal building that killed 168 people and injured hundreds more. He could face the death penalty if convicted.

Intent on preserving jurors' privacy, U.S. District Judge Richard Matsch concocted an unusual system of exercising peremptory challenges, in which jurors were identified by a letter and a number.

Lawyers called out the codes — D-2, A-4, E-6 and the like — of the jurors to be dismissed. In peremptory challenges, no reason must be stated to excuse a juror. The process took about a half hour.

Prosecutor Joseph Hartzler tried to make light of the system.

"Like bingo, your honor," Hartzler quipped.

Matsch glared at the prosecutor and said, "It's a lot more serious than a bingo game."

By numbering the jurors, Matsch was creating an anonymous jury because reporters and the public would not be able to link panelists with answers they gave during questioning.

Since the trial began three weeks ago, Matsch has been meeting in secret with lawyers to handle the dismissal of prospective jurors based on their beliefs about the death penalty

or other views. He's even barred reporters from seeing prospects' faces and kept them from getting transcripts of court sessions.

"I think the public has a lot to lose," said Jane Kirtley, executive director for the Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press in Washington. "Our whole system of justice is on trial here."

But Jack King, spokesman for the National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers in Washington, said Matsch is just being cautious.

King said a secret process "prevents juror intimidation, and keeps them from being bothered by the press if they don't want it."

The defense mulled over its peremptory challenges for up to 30 seconds at a time, with McVeigh and his attorneys working off of charts and multicolored graphs.

As the session wore on, McVeigh became increasingly involved in the decision-making. Working with two black felt pens — a fat one and a skinny one — McVeigh scratched off the numbers of excused jurors and frequently leaned over to confer with Jones.

Leak worsening on space station

MOSCOW (AP) — Antifreeze fumes leaking from a cooling pipe on the aging Mir space station have reached the maximum acceptable concentration and may become dangerous to the Russian-American crew, a news agency reported Tuesday.

The crew has fixed two other leaks, but a remaining leak in the Kvant-1 research module has eluded cosmonauts trying to seal it, Mission Control Center spokesman Viktor Blagov said at a news briefing, according to Interfax.

Blagov said officials were worried about the situation, but it was not immediately clear what would happen to the station and its crew if the leak is not found soon. The Russian space agency did not answer calls from The

Associated Press on Tuesday night.

NASA is unaware of any new serious problems aboard the Mir and has not heard of any plans to abandon the space station, said Frank Culbertson, director of the agency's shuttle-Mir program.

Culbertson said the levels of leaked antifreeze were safe and that the three men aboard the station were in no immediate danger.

"If they were in immediate danger, they would be on their way home," he told reporters Tuesday afternoon.

The three men are taking blood and urine samples to check for any evidence of ethylene glycol, Culbertson said. "So far, they've shown no ill effects."

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