

News Digest

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 3, 1998

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Rwandan found guilty of genocide

ARUSHA, Tanzania (AP) — He painted himself as a lowly village mayor powerless to halt the "force of evil" that engulfed Rwanda in 1994. Still, prosecutors held Jean-Paul Akayesu responsible for the slayings of 2,000 minority Tutsis who had sought his protection.

After nearly four years of work, the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda rendered a verdict Wednesday, the first of its kind by an international court: Guilty of genocide. Guilty of crimes against humanity. Guilty of rape, murder and torture.

Akayesu winced and knotted his fingers behind his back as chief Judge Laity Kama read out each verdict in a subdued courtroom, where bulletproof glass shielded the defendant from the public gallery. It was the U.N. tribunal's first conviction.

His lawyer said Akayesu, who maintained his innocence throughout his 20-month trial, would appeal.

Akayesu, born in 1953, could be sentenced to a maximum of life in prison — not enough to satisfy some survivors of the slaughter of more

than 500,000 minority Tutsis and moderate Hutus.

"The penalty doesn't match the crime," said one Tutsi widow, Chantal Kayitesi, who came to this remote northern Tanzanian town to hear the long-awaited decision.

In neighboring Rwanda, where the tribunal has been harshly criticized for mismanagement, corruption and slowness, Wednesday's verdict was greeted dispiritedly by those who bothered to listen to a live radio broadcast.

"I don't see the people in Rwanda going to the streets to congratulate the international court on this one," said Patrick Mazimhaka, a Rwandan state minister. "It has gone on for so long — I think people have given up."

Still, the 300-page judgment was heralded as historic because it marks the first conviction for genocide, an offense defined in 1948 after the Nuremberg trials. It is also the first time an international tribunal defined rape as a genocidal crime.

Prosecutor Pierre Prosper said the decision provides "a road map for how we are to proceed" in similar cases.

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U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan called the judgment "a testament to our collective determination to confront the heinous crime of genocide in a way we never have before."

The three-judge panel rejected the argument that Akayesu was powerless, asserting Wednesday that a mayor in Rwanda "was treated with a lot of deference ... and had a lot of power."

The former mayor was held responsible in what the court called a "meticulously organized" genocide that included the killings of 2,000 Tutsis in the Taba area and the rapes of dozens of women, even though

police and military committed most of the acts.

Akayesu also was found guilty of ordering the deaths of Tutsi intellectuals, and telling militiamen to kill five teachers.

The judges rejected arguments that the genocide was a sad but inevitable consequence of Rwanda's civil war, saying obvious noncombatants such as children and newborns were killed.

"It is clear that the massacres that occurred in Rwanda in 1994 had a special object, namely the extermination of Tutsi (people)," Kama said.



Wall Street encourages rally in world markets

LONDON (AP) — Wall Street's dramatic rebound sent Asian and European stocks higher Wednesday, but some analysts wondered whether the rallies could be sustained against a gloomy outlook in many economies.

Traders in New York were slow to recognize the serious potential fallout from the financial troubles in Asia and Russia, and uncertainty might hang on for some time in markets that now lack any firm sense of direction, said Jeremy Batstone, an analyst at NatWest Stockbrokers in London.

"Sentiment is finally beginning to crack," Batstone said. "The market is beginning to wake up."

Blue chips were up by about 2 percent or more in early dealings on the biggest European stock markets — London, Paris and Frankfurt, Germany — following rallies in Tokyo, Hong Kong and Singapore.

London's Financial Times-Stock Exchange 100-share index had climbed 109.6 points, or 2.2 percent, to 5,278.7 by midday.

Internet porn ring cracked in 12 countries, 40 arrested

LONDON (AP) — Police in the United States, Britain and 10 other countries raided the homes of more than 100 suspected pedophiles today in what authorities called one of the largest efforts ever to break an Internet child pornography ring.

The British National Crime Squad coordinated the pre-dawn raids as part of a five-month investigation into the Wonderland Club, which authorities said exchanged pornographic pictures of children as young as 2 on the Internet.

During the investigation, police found a database containing more than 100,000 pornographic photographs of naked boys and girls and confiscated computers and computer programs from dozens of suspects.

Police said they targeted 180 suspects and arrested more than 40 people in the raids, which took place on three continents — in Australia, Austria, Belgium, Britain, Finland, France, Germany, Norway, Portugal, Sweden and the United States.

Officials: Smaller dummies needed for airbag testing

WASHINGTON (AP) — In a move to protect the people who appear most at risk from airbags, the Department of Transportation is calling for a new crash-test dummy to represent small women.

Transportation Secretary Rodney Slater had earlier proposed certification for new crash dummies representing toddlers and infants as well.

"This continues our comprehensive series of efforts to preserve the benefits of air bags and minimize their risks, in this case to small women," Slater said. The new dummy will be 5 feet tall and weigh 110 pounds.

Until now, the government has required automakers to pass crash tests for air bags using only adult male dummies. But the 105 people killed in the United States by inflating air bags have been mostly children and small women, the very people automakers were not required to design for in order to meet government regulations.

229-passenger plane crashes in Canada

■ The Swissair jetliner went down after the pilot attempted an emergency landing.

HALIFAX, Nova Scotia (AP) — Swissair jetliner with 229 people aboard crashed off Nova Scotia late Wednesday after the pilot reported smoke in the cabin and attempted an emergency landing at Halifax airport.

Rescuers said people had been found in the water southwest of Halifax but it is unclear whether anyone had survived the crash.

Swissair Flight 111 left New York's Kennedy International Airport about 7:30 p.m. bound for Geneva and declared an emergency about an hour later, said Lt. Cmdr. Glenn Chamberlain of the Halifax Rescue Coordination Center.

The pilot reported smoke in the cabin of the McDonnell Douglas MD-11 shortly before losing contact with the air traffic control tower in Moncton, New Brunswick, Canadian Press said.

The plane also dumped fuel over nearby St. Margaret's Bay before crashing, the news agency quoted an airport worker as saying.

Some aircraft debris was believed found off Clam Island

between Blandford, about 20 miles southwest of Halifax, and the popular tourist retreat of Peggys Cove, the Canadian Broadcasting Corp. said.

Lt. Cmdr. Mike Considine of the Search and Rescue Center in Halifax said the weather in the area was good, with clear skies and relatively calm seas.

CBC reported deteriorating weather conditions at the scene, including rain.

Chamberlain said rescue crews were searching for the aircraft seven miles off Peggys Cove.

Residents told of hearing loud noises from an aircraft passing overhead. Dozens of ambulances were dispatched to the scene and rescue vessels began combing the waters off the coast.

Local fishermen were called to the area because they are familiar with the waters.

Canadian air force Col. Brian Akitt said federal emergency officials informed him at 9:50 p.m. that an airliner was believed to have gone down off the coast and the military was preparing a rescue operation.

"We heard the plane go over our home, then my husband and son heard quite an explosion," Blandford resident Audrey Bachman told The Associated Press. She said she was sleeping at the time of the crash.

Storm moves east, becomes hurricane

■ Earl, moving at 90 mph, caused Florida's governor to call a state of emergency.

PANAMA CITY, Fla. (AP) — Gulf Coast residents cleared out and boarded up Wednesday as unpredictable tropical storm Earl revved up into a 90-mph hurricane, veered eastward and began pouring heavy rain on northern Florida.

Gov. Lawton Chiles declared a state of emergency, mandatory evacuations were ordered for barrier islands southwest of Tallahassee and traffic built on some coastal roads as people headed inland.

"We decided to leave when the news was bad," said Eleanor Griffin, 70, of Dothan, Ala., who cut short a four-day family vacation on Santa Rosa Island west of Panama City. "We decided to run for higher ground."

Hurricane warnings were posted from Pascagoula, Miss., to Florida's Big Bend, about 100 miles north of Tampa.

A tropical storm watch was in effect along the Florida Gulf Coast south to Tampa. Watches and warnings west of Mississippi had been lifted earlier, but a tropical storm watch was re-established for extreme southeastern Louisiana on Wednesday — from the Mississippi line west to Grand Isle — as forecasters warned

they still had "considerable uncertainty" about Earl's path.

Although the storm's advance slowed down to a crawl during the afternoon, forecasters said it was most likely that Earl's poorly defined center would come ashore late today near Panama City, then cut across southern Georgia into South Carolina.

"It's like a plate of spaghetti here, trying to pick the center of it," Jerry Jarrell, director of the National Hurricane Center in Miami, said Wednesday.

Before the third hurricane of the season took a right turn and headed for Florida on Wednesday, it had been tracking almost due north, and Texas and Louisiana seemed to be the targets on Tuesday.

Earl's maximum sustained wind speed jumped from 60 mph early in the day to 90 mph by early afternoon; the minimum strength for a hurricane is 74 mph.

The storm surge near the center could be 5 to 7 feet above normal tides and 10 inches of rain were possible. A flood watch covered a wide area from Tallahassee east to Jacksonville on the state's Atlantic coast and south to the Tampa Bay area.

Stephen Jenkins, working as a janitor at a waterfront restaurant in Panama City, said Wednesday that he planned to be "nowhere near this

Government OK's company's sale of 'morning-after' pill

WASHINGTON (AP) — For the first time, a company won government permission Wednesday to advertise and sell regular contraceptive pills as "morning-after" pills to prevent pregnancy after unprotected sex.

The technique, which uses regular birth control pills, has been sanctioned as safe and effective by federal officials for more than a year. But without anyone trying to sell it to

women or their doctors, experts say it has hardly been used.

That could change as more women learn of the pills, which have been 75 percent effective at preventing pregnancy in tests when taken within three days of sex. By contrast, regular contraceptive pills are 99 percent effective, if taken properly.

"Physicians are kind of waiting to be asked. Since women don't know about it, they don't ask," said Dr. Felicia

Stewart of the Kaiser Family Foundation, which surveyed doctors and patients about the pills last year.

The morning-after pills are different from RU-486, the French abortion pill, which ends a pregnancy several weeks after it has begun.

The PREVEN kits, made by Gynetics Inc. of Somerville, N.J., will be available by prescription by the end of September. The company,

which won Food and Drug Administration approval Wednesday, anticipates that women will seek them out after unprotected sex — or keep them in their medicine cabinets.

European women have used this technique for years, but most contraceptive makers here have resisted selling emergency birth control, citing litigation and political concerns.

Until now, it has been complicated for women to correctly

use the morning-after technique. It involved taking regular birth control pills, but from regular birth-control packets that contained several types of pills. Thus women had to sort through to choose the right ones.

In contrast, the PREVEN kits will include only the four pills needed for emergency contraception. Each kit will sell for about \$20 and also include a pregnancy test.