

News Digest

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PAGE 2

1,000 dead in Colombia quake

Citizens search for food, supplies, coffins as government looks for aid

ARMENIA, Colombia (AP) — The death toll from the worst earthquake to hit the area in more than a century surpassed 1,000 on Tuesday as survivors anxiously awaited relief supplies and prayed for signs of life under the rubble.

Those hopes were dashed again and again.

Monday's 6-magnitude earthquake devastated cities and villages across western Colombia, a vast Andean terrain where much of the world's coffee is grown. The tremor shook buildings as far away as the capital, Bogota, 140 miles from the epicenter.

A small aftershock shook the region Tuesday afternoon, causing little damage but sending panicked residents running into the rubble-littered streets. It was one of about 15 aftershocks.

With hundreds of people believed still buried beneath the rubble, mayhem reigned Tuesday in the streets of Armenia, a city of 300,000.

Rescue teams had recovered nearly 650 bodies in the country by noon and estimated that at least 2,700 were injured — but warned this was only a partial accounting.

Capt. Ciro Antonio Guiza, Armenia's deputy fire chief, said rescue workers were so strapped that many bodies remained on the streets uncollected. "There are more than 1,000 dead, perhaps more than 2,000 in Armenia alone," he said.

Two-thirds of the city's buildings were rendered uninhabitable. People wandered about desperately looking for relatives. There was no electricity or running water in most of the city, and food was in dangerously short supply. An estimated 180,000 people were left homeless in Armenia alone.

Coffins have become a coveted commodity.

"I've been looking for five coffins for relatives since 8 o'clock this morn-

ing and I couldn't find any, so we're going to have to bury them in plastic," said 34-year-old Diego Ruiz, who lost his grandmother, a sister and three nieces.

Rescue workers scrambled to evacuate the thousands of injured and to locate survivors. At the city's small airport, ambulances arrived every 15 minutes with more victims, who were airlifted to hospitals in Bogota, Medellin and Cali.

"There is a danger of epidemics, because we have more than 200 bodies and we have no refrigerated trucks," said Carlos Gilberto Giraldo, a top Colombian Red Cross official.

Two members of Colombia's professional soccer club Atletico Quindio — Diego Montenegro and Ruben Buires, both from Argentina — were found dead. Witnesses said the two were holding onto each other in the ruins of a downtown hotel. Another four players are

feared dead.

Authorities say they need help, tons of it: tents, food, forklifts, backhoes, antibiotics, generators — and body bags.

Colombians, eager to help, formed long lines at blood banks. The government set up a bank account to receive donations, and by noon more than \$125,000 had been deposited. The European Commission promised \$1.1 million, Colombian officials said Tuesday.

What was needed, though, was far more — maybe hundreds of millions of dollars.

"We're going to need a great deal of international aid because the government by itself does not have enough resources," said Piedad Correal Rubiano, the ombudsman of Quindio state, whose capital is Armenia.

First lady Nohora Pastrana went on national television to promise Colombians that relief was on the way.

World and Nation DATELINES

■ Jordan King to be treated in U.S. for possible cancer

AMMAN, Jordan (AP) — King Hussein left for the United States Tuesday for urgent medical treatment after suffering what his doctor described as a possible recurrence of cancer.

The 63-year-old king departed hours after naming his eldest son, Abdullah, as his future successor.

Lt. Gen. Samir Farraj, Hussein's private physician, said the monarch suffered from "low blood counts and fever and I, as well as doctors from the Mayo Clinic, thought it is best to send him back to the clinic for check-ups and treatment."

■ Great Britain

Lawyers say torture is not an international crime

LONDON (AP) — Lawyers asking Britain's highest court to free former Chilean dictator Gen. Augusto Pinochet argued Tuesday that torture and hostage-taking are not international crimes.

"They are crimes that give rise to international concern, which is not the same thing," lawyer Clare Montgomery told a seven-judge panel in the House of Lords. "They are national crimes."

Pinochet was arrested Oct. 16 in London at the request of a Spanish magistrate seeking his extradition on charges of murder, torture and kidnapping during his 17-year regime.

■ Yugoslavia

Evidence-tampering may hide truth about deaths

PRISTINA, Yugoslavia (AP) — Finnish forensic experts investigating how 45 ethnic Albanian villagers were killed may be unable to determine whether they were massacred or shot in battle because of the possibility of evidence-tampering, the lead pathologist said Tuesday.

The remarks by Helena Ranta suggest the world may never learn for sure the truth of the Racak village killings, which sparked international outrage and renewed calls for NATO action against the government of Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic.

■ Antarctica

Father-son team reaches South Pole

SCOTT BASE, Antarctica (AP) — Hauling 395-pound sleds, Peter Hillary, son of Mount Everest conqueror Sir Edmund Hillary, reached the South Pole with two other ski trekkers Tuesday after an Antarctic journey beset by problems.

Hillary and his father, who was also part of a trans-Antarctica expedition in the 1950s, are the first father and son to reach the bottom of the world.

"Now that I've got here, everything seems worth it," he said after his team reached the United States' Amundsen-Scott base. "I wouldn't want to be anywhere else."

Britain's Queen Elizabeth II also praised the trio "on your notable achievement," in a message read to them on their Iridium mobile phone as they stood at the pole.

Pentagon admits to Iraq missile mistake

■ Officials say they can't
back up Iraq's claims of
fatalities and casualties.

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Pentagon acknowledged for the first time Tuesday that an Air Force missile considered to be among its most accurate went astray during an attack on Iraqi air defenses and struck a residential area. Iraq has claimed it killed a number of civilians.

Kenneth Bacon, spokesman for Defense Secretary William Cohen, said a rocket-powered missile known as the AGM-130, one of the Air Force's newest weapons, "did miss its target" by a few miles. He said the Air Force had not yet determined what went wrong.

The missile landed in the al-Jumhuriya neighborhood outside of Basra, a port city in southern Iraq where U.S. planes have attacked air defenses almost daily in response to increased Iraqi challenges to enforcement of a "no-fly" zone.

Reporters who visited the neighborhood Monday said four homes were completely destroyed and six

were damaged. Iraq reported an unspecified number of casualties there; it said a total of three American missiles killed 11 civilians in a series of attacks.

Bacon said only one U.S. missile went astray.

"It created some damage, we realize that and we regret any civilian casualties, but this was done in response to a provocative attack against our planes by Saddam Hussein," he said.

"We don't have any independent estimate of casualties or fatalities that can back up what the Iraqis have said about this," Bacon said.

In a related development, Bacon and other administration officials acknowledged Tuesday that American warplanes patrolling the skies over northern and southern Iraq are operating under new guidance that authorizes more aggressive action against Iraqi air defenses.

"We're acting here in self-defense and in response to concerted attacks by Saddam Hussein," Sandy Berger, the president's national security adviser, said in an interview with defense reporters.

House prosecutors push for Lewinsky subpoena

WASHINGTON (AP) — House prosecutors pleaded with the Senate on Tuesday to issue subpoenas for "a pitiful three" impeachment trial witnesses — Monica Lewinsky and two others — and to request that President Clinton answer questions under oath.

As the Senate went behind closed doors to debate the witness issue, the White House said Clinton has no intention of submitting to questioning, even if the Senate votes to request it. "It's time to wrap this up," presidential spokesman Joe Lockhart said of the trial, in its third week.

Clinton's lawyers, joined by Senate Democrats, also warned that the issuance of any subpoenas for witness depositions would raise the possibility of long delays in the proceedings.

Lewinsky, summoned to Washington over the weekend to be interviewed by the House prosecutors, checked out of her hotel and flew home to California. Her lawyer said she would return if ordered to answer further questions.

The prosecutors said they had trimmed their list to pass Senate muster. "A pitiful three, and I would think you would want to proceed with that minimum testimony," said Rep. Henry Hyde, the lead prosecutor.

Democratic leader Tom Daschle conceded that the Republicans, with a

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HENRY HYDE
leading House prosecutor

55-45 majority, were likely to prevail when the roll is called on Wednesday, forcing approval of subpoenas for Lewinsky, presidential friend Vernon Jordan and White House aide Sidney Blumenthal. "I think it's going to be virtually a party-line vote, unfortunately," he said.

All witnesses would be questioned under oath at private depositions about the facts concerning allegations of perjury and obstruction of justice by the president in connection with his efforts to conceal a sexual relationship with Lewinsky. Guidelines for the questioning remain to be worked out.

Tuesday's closed-door Senate session was the second in as many nights. As was the case on Monday, a request by Democratic Sens. Tom Harkin of Iowa and Paul Wellstone of Minnesota to open the doors was rejected.

Pope set for St. Louis visit

MEXICO CITY (AP) — Pope John Paul II headed for St. Louis and a meeting with President Clinton on Tuesday after a heartfelt "adios" from tens of thousands of Mexican faithful capped his triumphant, five-day Mexico visit.

The visit to St. Louis was the second leg of a mission to give new direction to his flock on the eve of the millennium and to strengthen ties between Roman Catholics in North and Latin America.

Upon arriving, he was scheduled to meet with President Clinton in an airport hangar — a day after the Vatican condemned the latest U.S. bombing raids on Iraq.

In a statement, spokesman Joaquin Navarro-Valls said the U.S. bombing "confirms once again" the pope's view that military measures "don't resolve problems in themselves; rather, they aggravate them."

The pope has criticized U.S. policy on the death penalty, abortion and economic sanctions against Cuba and Iraq.

The differences shouldn't dampen the pope's welcome for the 30-hour visit, his seventh stop on U.S. soil during his 20-year papacy. As many as 600,000 people were expected to turn out.

Tuesday's schedule in St. Louis includes a youth rally, a fitting event because the pope is counting on young Catholics to battle what he calls a "culture of death."

The 78-year-old pontiff used his Mexico visit to outline church strategy throughout the Americas for the start of the new millennium.

He signed a declaration containing that strategy. It also condemned the evils of exploitative capitalism, abortion, euthanasia and capital punishment.

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