

NEWS DIGEST

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Search for crash survivors ends

Large piece of EgyptAir flight wreckage found, debris search continues

NEWPORT, R.I. (AP) — Coast Guard search crews gave up hope Monday of finding anyone alive from EgyptAir Flight 990 but found a large piece of wreckage and detected a signal believed to be from one of the plane's black boxes.

If Navy divers can retrieve the flight data recorder and cockpit voice recorder from the ocean floor off Nantucket, the devices could provide vital clues for investigators who as yet have no explanation for the crash.

Jim Hall, chairman of the National Transportation Safety Board, cautioned that the investigation could be long. And he said the hunt for the black boxes would be difficult.

"Remember that we are dealing with water 250 feet deep, and recovering and locating small objects like recorders is a daunting effort," he said at search headquarters in Newport.

Because terrorism has not been ruled out, the FBI said it is sending bomb experts and other investigators to Newport. But authorities stressed there was no evidence of foul play.

"Nothing has been ruled in. Nothing has been ruled out," President Clinton said in Oslo, Norway, where he was attending Middle East peace talks.

The Cairo-bound Boeing 767 was

carrying 217 people when it plunged into the Atlantic from 33,000 feet early Sunday, a half-hour after leaving New York's Kennedy Airport. The plane went down without a distress call or any other indication of trouble from the pilots.

Among the passengers were about 30 Egyptian military officers, mostly pilots who had been training in the United States, Pentagon spokesman Kenneth Bacon said. The passengers also included 106 Americans, including 54 people bound for a two-week trip to Egypt and the Nile.

The debris collected so far — some of it by student sailors from the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy — included shoes, purses and teddy bears.

None of the retrieved debris has any burn marks that might indicate a fire or explosion, search officials said.

The Coast Guard, fearing bad weather today, stepped up its search for debris and human remains.

"It is in everyone's best interest to no longer expect we will find survivors," said Coast Guard Rear Adm. Richard M. Larrabee.

Larrabee, speaking 35 hours after the crash, said the decision was based partly on the chilly water. The average life expectancy in water of 58 degrees

"is five to six hours.

Searchers found what Larrabee called a "significant piece" of the aircraft, large enough to require a crane. They also located a signal, most likely one of the plane's black boxes, while scouring the search area south of Nantucket.

The Navy will use underwater sonar equipment to try to pinpoint the wreckage and the black boxes. The USS Grapple, a sonar-equipped salvage ship that helped retrieve wreckage from the 1996 crash of TWA Flight 800 off Long Island and the 1998 crash of Swissair Flight 111 off Nova Scotia, was expected to arrive from Virginia today.

As of midday Monday, only one body had been recovered, but Larrabee said searchers had "begun to see evidence of further human remains." He would not elaborate.

Flights were being arranged to

carry victims' relatives to Rhode Island so they could be close to the search operation.

After the crash, investigators were sent to check on the EgyptAir ground crew at Kennedy.

"As far as my knowledge goes, everyone seems to have checked out, and everyone cooperated," said Robert Kelly, general manager of aviation for the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, which operates the airport.

The plane's co-pilot, Adel Anwar, had been on his way back to Egypt to get married on Friday. Eager to help with wedding preparations, he had swapped shifts and had taken a colleague's place in the cockpit that fatal night.

"It was just another regular flight," Anwar's tearful brother, Tarek, said in Cairo. "Or so we thought."

World and Nation

Datelines

■ Wyoming

'Panic' defense ruled out in Shepard murder case

LARAMIE, Wyo. (AP) — The judge in the Matthew Shepard murder case barred the man on trial Monday from using a "gay panic" defense.

Lawyers for Aaron McKinney rested their case several hours later.

District Judge Barton Voigt ruled that the strategy adopted by McKinney's lawyers in the beating death of the gay college student is akin to temporary insanity or a diminished-capacity defense — both of which are prohibited under Wyoming law.

"What the defendant is trying to do is to raise a mental status defense that is not recognized by Wyoming law, and of which there has been no notice and no opportunity for the court or opposing counsel to consider before trial," he said. "Even if relevant, the evidence will mislead and confuse the jury."

McKinney, 22, could get the death penalty if convicted of murdering Shepard, who was lashed to a fence and left to die on the prairie last year.

A "gay panic" or "homosexual panic" defense is built on the theory that a person with latent gay tendencies will have an uncontrollable, violent reaction when propositioned by a homosexual.

McKinney's lawyers have said McKinney flew into a drug-induced rage after a sexual advance by Shepard triggered memories of traumatic, youthful homosexual episodes.

■ Washington

Supreme Court to rule on pat-down search question

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Supreme Court said Monday it will decide whether police can stop and frisk someone based on an anonymous tip that a person of matching clothing and location is carrying a concealed gun.

The justices said they will hear Florida prosecutors' argument that anonymous tips about possession of concealed weapons create a "unique situation" and a pat-down search was only a minimal intrusion on privacy. A ruling is expected by next summer.

The Florida Supreme Court ruled that such a tip did not justify a warrantless search of three youths standing on a Miami street corner who were not engaging in any suspicious conduct.

■ Washington

Washington high school cancels classes after threat

REDMOND, Wash. (AP) — Classes were canceled Monday at a high school after threats were made in an Internet chat room to kill everyone in the school.

The threats were violent enough and specific enough to be taken seriously, Lake Washington School District spokesman Richard Duval said. King County Sheriff's detectives are investigating.

"I've got a feeling it's not going to take very long until we find out who's responsible," sheriff's spokesman John Urquhart said.

Officials planned to search the school again before deciding whether to reopen it today.

Clinton offers to help in Middle East peace

OSLO, Norway (AP) — Clinton offered strong encouragement Monday to help Israeli-Palestinian negotiations to resolve "the really hard part" of their decades-old conflict.

"I wouldn't rule out anything," said Clinton, eager to crown his checkered presidency with a historic peace agreement. "There is nothing I would not do if I thought it would genuinely help to build a lasting peace in the Middle East."

The president met separately with Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak and Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat on the eve of a three-way meeting among them.

Visiting Oslo's hilltop palace, Clinton reviewed troops with King Harald.

Committed to reaching a final peace agreement by next September, Barak suggested Oslo could set a date

for a Camp David-type negotiating session early next year, possibly in Washington.

Arafat said he could go along with that idea. For Clinton to agree, he would "have to see that there would be engagement on substance that showed some promise," a senior administration official said.

It was in Oslo, during Rabin's administration, that secret negotiations produced a breakthrough agreement between Israel and the Palestinians, feuding since Jewish settlers started going to Palestine 100 years ago.

By mid-February, negotiators are to present the outlines of an agreement. The final accord is to be reached by September 2000. The two sides are to meet Monday to begin the first round of final status talks.

Flooding in India devastates region

■ Aid arrives for people without food, shelter or drinking water.

LESHWAR, India (AP) — Bodies were hanging from trees and floating through towns Monday when rescuers finally arrived with aid for survivors of one of the most powerful cyclones ever to strike India, where thousands were feared dead.

After three days without food, shelter or clean drinking water, villagers in eastern Orissa state looked to the skies when helicopters showed up to drop packets of protein-rich food.

Military boats appeared on the horizon in the Bay of Bengal to evacuate those marooned on houseboats and hilltops.

"This is the worst flooding in 100 years. I would say it is the worst in India's history," said Asim Kumar Vaishnav, chief administrator of Baleshwar, the state capital.

With heavy rains abating, officials started to count the dead and search for the missing from the cyclone, which crashed into the coast on Friday with winds of 155 mph after building steam in the bay for five days.

Meteorologists classified the storm as a supercyclone, one of the strongest in the region this century.

United News of India quoted an unidentified official as estimating the death toll at 3,000 to 5,000. But the hardest hit areas remained inaccessible, indicating the death toll could be much higher.

Millions of people were left homeless by the cyclone, which stirred up tidal surges that inundated 87 miles of Orissa's coast. In Bhubaneswar, 200,000 people — nearly one of every six residents — lost their homes. Entire slums were washed away, Press Trust of India said.

With the weather improving, air,

rail and road links were slowly restored to major cities, but telephone and electric lines remained inoperable. The cyclone destroyed major industrial plants in the city of Cuttack, just north of the state capital.

Food riots erupted in Bhubaneswar, which had no power, drinking water or fresh food, Press Trust reported.

Residents stopped vehicles carrying emergency relief and looted them, the agency said.

Desperate farmers ripped a 300-foot gash in the main coastal highway to try to drain their fields of sea water. The water gushing through the breach was 15 feet deep and would take days to repair, highway engineer A.K. Parhy said.

Human bodies and animal carcasses floated on a huge expanse of water in the port town of Paradip, 50 miles east of Bhubaneswar, Press Trust of India reported. Almost all the town's mud houses were wiped away, and a high voltage transmission tower was a mangled heap of steel. The railroad tracks leading to the port were under water.

About 50 miles north of Paradip, P.L. Panda, a minister in Orissa's state government, saw seven bodies hanging from trees during a survey of his rural district of Bhadrak, said an aide, R.P. Behera. Elsewhere in the district, three people were electrocuted by submerged electric poles, he told The Associated Press.

Naval and coast guard vessels searched the rough seas for at least 20 missing fishing trawlers carrying at least 200 men.

Soldiers in motor boats and oar-powered, flat-bottom rafts scoured the waters for marooned civilians who sought shelter on patches of high ground or the roofs of their homes.

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