

Child shot, killed in school

MOUNT MORRIS TOWNSHIP, Mich. (AP) — A 6-year-old boy shot a schoolmate to death Tuesday in their first-grade classroom, authorities said. Police were investigating reports that the two youngsters may have had a playground scuffle the previous day.

A single shot was fired inside a classroom at Buell Elementary School near Flint, Mich., about 10 a.m., Police Chief Eric King said.

It was not immediately clear if the shooting was accidental or intentional, but Genesee County Prosecutor Arthur A. Busch said authorities were investigating reports that a playground fight preceded the shooting.

"It would appear from the investigation so far that there may have been some sort of scuffle or quarrel on the playground the day before the shooting between this little boy and this little girl," Busch said.

The 6-year-old girl died about 10:30 a.m., hospital spokeswoman Stephanie Motschenbacher said.

The boy was in the custody of the

state Family Independence Agency, Busch said, adding that regardless of what an investigation reveals, it may be impossible to bring charges against the boy.

"There is a presumption in law that a child ... is not criminally responsible and can't form an intent to kill," he said. "Obviously, he has done a very terrible thing today, but legally, he can't be held criminally responsible."

President Clinton, in Florida for a Democratic National Committee fund-raiser, decried the shooting and challenged Americans to take gun safety into consideration during this year's presidential elections.

"How did that child get that gun? Why could the child fire the gun?" Clinton said. "If we have the technology today to put in these child safety locks, why don't we do it?"

Buell Elementary third-grader Corey Sutton, 9, said he heard a bang and thought a desk had fallen this morning.

"If we have the technology today to put in these child safety locks, why don't we do it?"

President Bill Clinton

Then, "The principal came over the PA system and told teachers to shut their doors and lock them.

"I was scared, my heart was pounding," he said.

The teacher told students to line up and get their coats on, and then "she told us what happened. A girl got shot, and the teacher started crying."

About 22 pupils were inside the classroom when the shot was fired. About 500 children attend Buell Elementary.

Police closed off nearby streets, and parents picked up their children from a church across the street. The pupils who were in the classroom where the shooting happened were

being questioned by police.

Crystal Watson, 8, who was in her third-grade class this morning, said she didn't know anything had happened until hearing sirens.

"We were told to stay in our class and stay calm," she told The Flint Journal. "A couple of boys were crying, but everyone else was staying calm."

A fourth-grader, Christopher Burch, 9, was upset because he has relatives in the first grade.

"My teacher told me a first-grader shot another first-grader, and I started crying because I thought it was my cousin or sister," he said. He found out in minutes his relatives were not shot.

U.S. teens face murder charge

American youths in Germany allegedly threw rocks at cars from a bridge.

DARMSTADT, Germany (AP) — With thousands of U.S. military personnel in Germany, police are used to dealing with the occasional Army brat who runs a red light or lifts beer from a supermarket.

But three teen-age Americans who allegedly spent their nights hurling rocks at cars from a pedestrian bridge are facing something far more serious — murder charges for the deaths of two drivers.

This community was on edge Tuesday as tabloids blared demands for justice. Military families worried about anti-American backlash.

"They were American soldiers' sons — the killer kids from Darmstadt," screamed a banner headline in Bild, the nation's top-selling daily, which devoted half the front page to the story.

On television, German psychologists and commentators tried to

explain the mindset behind the attacks. They focused on the sense of isolation felt by U.S. military personnel in Germany and a lack of direction among today's teen-agers.

"Germans get their main perception of American soldiers when they go into town, get drunk and get out of hand," said Army Spec. Richard Tennant, who has been based in Darmstadt for 2½ years. "Now they'll think their kids are just as bad. I'm definitely ashamed."

The three teen-agers, whose names were withheld by authorities, were arrested Monday night by German and U.S. military police at the U.S. Army's Lincoln housing area near Darmstadt, a sleepy suburb of 140,000 just south of Frankfurt.

Darmstadt police say the three confessed to hurling volleyball-sized stones — some weighing 20 pounds — late Sunday from a pedestrian bridge at cars on the four-lane highway underneath.

They had met regularly for the last four to six weeks to do so, developing a "tradition," police said. But things turned deadly Sunday, when

stones shattered the windshields of two passing cars, striking their drivers in the head and killing them.

The boys allegedly threw stones at four other cars, injuring five more people. One of those killed, a 41-year-old mother of two, was on her way to the train station to pick up her husband. The second victim was a 20-year-old Darmstadt woman riding with her grandparents. Both the grandparents were injured.

A German judge ruled Tuesday that the boys — ages 14, 17 and 18 — will sit behind bars until the prosecutor officially charges them with murder and causing an accident with intent, which could take weeks.

In Washington, the Pentagon said it had no statistics on murder charges against dependents of U.S. military members.

The three suspects have lived in Germany for at least 1½ years and reside in Darmstadt, where Americans had prided themselves on friendly relations with the Germans — from the city's annual German-American Festival to the pickup basketball games at off-base parks.

Germans living amid the 10,000 Americans at Darmstadt and the nearby bases at Babenhausen had mixed feelings about the attacks.

"What kind of person throws rocks at cars? It's no tradition my German friends partake in," said German high school student Denise Barbosa Pereira, 17, eating at the local McDonalds with her friends.

Others took a more measured approach.

"I think it's a generational problem with the youth of today, with young people who don't know what to do with their lives and are seeking for direction," said Claus Buehs, a marketing consultant who works near the U.S. housing project. "It's not a specific American problem."

Indeed, since 1990 there have been at least 10 cases of Germans throwing heavy objects at cars, resulting in three deaths and murder convictions of two of the throwers, according to a report in the Frankfurter Rundschau newspaper.

German criminologist Arthur Kreuzer said life in a foreign country can be isolating for young people.

Bush, Gore score victories in primaries

ARLINGTON, Va. (AP) — George W. Bush coasted past John McCain in Virginia's Republican primary Tuesday, buoyed by the religious right and party faithful to fatten his delegate count in advance of next week's 13-state "Super Tuesday" showdown.

In the Democratic race, Vice President Al Gore beat Bill Bradley in a popular-vote Washington state primary that yielded no delegates.

The 2-1 landslide was a severe blow for the former New Jersey senator, who had invested heavily in the political "beauty pageant" in hopes of rejuvenating his sagging campaign.

Gore had 70 percent of the votes, and Bradley had 30 percent, with 50 percent of the precincts reporting.

Bush also won in North Dakota with 76 percent of the votes. McCain had 19 percent.

Bush won all 56 delegates with his victory in Virginia, and 14 delegates in North Dakota, giving him a total 163 compared to McCain's 100 so far. A candidate needs 1,034 delegates to win the Republican nomination.

"I've proven I can bring

Republicans out in big numbers," Bush told The Associated Press in a telephone interview. In a slap at McCain, who blasted evangelical leaders Pat Robertson and Jerry Falwell on Monday, the governor told supporters in Cincinnati, "We are expanding our base without destroying our foundations."

McCain congratulated Bush, but dismissed the victory as part of "a Southern strategy" for a candidate who won't win elsewhere. Looking ahead to next week's "Super Tuesday" voting, the Arizona senator told AP: "We have a broad section, a cross-section of America voting all on the same day."

The Texas governor won because Republican voters overwhelmed independents and Democrats who crossed party lines in support of McCain, a warning sign for the Arizona senator as he prepares for New York, California and Ohio and 10 other states conducting GOP contests.

One day after McCain labeled certain evangelical leaders "agents of intolerance," religious conservatives accounted for 20 percent of the Virginia vote. They backed Bush 8-1.

World and Nation

Datelines

Russia

Russian forces get control of last Chechen stronghold

STARIYE ATAGI, Russia (AP) — Russian forces claimed control of Chechen rebels' last major stronghold Tuesday, and soldiers elsewhere in the breakaway republic embraced and toasted each other in the belief that the move heralds the end of the war.

But although troops raised the Russian flag over the town of Shatoi, fighting persisted in the mountains outside town, and some rebels ventured out of the mountains to launch attacks in the plains that Russia seized weeks ago.

Most of the rebels who escaped the Chechen capital of Grozny were believed to have headed into the mountains to join comrades.

Washington, D.C.

E.coli more common than previously thought

WASHINGTON (AP) — About half the cattle at the nation's feed lots carry the deadly E. coli bacteria during the summer — making it at least 10 times more common than previously thought, government research shows.

The study by Agriculture Department scientists doesn't mean that E. coli O157:H7 is any more likely to show up in the supermarket. But USDA officials, who outlined the findings Tuesday, said they are considering new controls on cattle production and beef processing.

The research "requires us to re-examine our policies and standards for dealing with this difficult organism," Thomas Billy, administrator of USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service, said.

Washington, D.C.

Clinton says he's still fighting to bring China into WTO

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Clinton said Tuesday he is not losing the fight to bring China into the World Trade Organization.

"I do not sense that this vote is slipping away," Clinton said of his effort to persuade Congress to grant permanent normal trading status to China.

Clinton also played down the effect that China's recent bellicose rhetoric about Taiwan might dampen congressional support for the China trade deal.

The trade vote would end the yearly fights in Congress over Chinese trade, human rights and other policies and is a key step toward bringing China into the WTO, the global trade regulating body.

Florida

Gov. Bush says he wants names of wrongly executed

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. (AP) — Gov. Jeb Bush wants a former state Supreme Court justice to reveal the identities of inmates he believes may have been wrongly executed.

"Over the course of the last several weeks, you have again been quoted as believing that innocent individuals were executed," Bush's deputy general counsel, Reginald J. Brown, wrote last week to retired justice Gerald Kogan.

"This is a very serious charge, which cannot be examined unless you are prepared to identify the names of the individuals you believe were wrongfully executed," Brown said.

WEATHER

TODAY

Partly cloudy
high 53, low 29

TOMORROW

Showers
high 50, low 33

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The Daily Nebraskan (USPS 144-080) is published by the UNL Publications Board, Nebraska Union 20, 1400 R St., Lincoln, NE 68588-0448, Monday through Friday during the academic year; weekly during the summer sessions. The public has access to the Publications Board. Readers are encouraged to submit story ideas and comments to the Daily Nebraskan by calling (402) 472-2588.

Subscriptions are \$60 for one year.

Postmaster: Send address changes to the Daily Nebraskan, Nebraska Union 20, 1400 R St., Lincoln NE 68588-0448. Periodical postage paid at Lincoln, NE.

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