

## Ten campers killed by explosion, 'ball of fire'

**THE ASSOCIATED PRESS**

**CARLSBAD, N.M.** — On one side of the Pecos River are three charred pickup trucks, remnants of a weekend camping trip. Beyond the other bank are clusters of blackened trees.

An explosion of a natural gas pipeline just before dawn Saturday swept flames down the river's banks and through the tents of two families, killing 10 people and leaving two critically burned.

The only survivors, a man and his daughter-in-law, were in critical condition Sunday at a Lubbock, Texas, hospital.

"They were consumed by a huge ball of fire," said state police Lt. Larry Rogers.

Officials described the ruptured line as a massive flame-thrower that showered burning fuel on the victims.

The victims were members of two southeastern New Mexico families who had been camping along the river in an unmarked but popular camping site for area fishermen, said state police Capt. John Balderston.

Five were under the age of 6, including infant twins.

Some had been fishing along the river's banks, their lanterns set up to light their way, officials said. Others had been asleep. They had no chance to escape the flash of fire, caught between the river and the ruptured gas line.

One survivor recalled being awakened by shouts to find herself and everything around her on fire, Balderston said. She jumped in the river, then found she couldn't get back to the children because of the intensity of the flames.

By the river's edge, investigators found sleeping bags and the melted geometric shapes that once were tents. The trucks looked as though they had taken a direct hit from a bomb.

A nearby bridge carries the 30-inch natural gas pipeline across the river, then the pipeline goes underground, said Norma Dunn, spokeswoman for El Paso Natural Gas Co.

The pipeline was five to six feet under-

ground at the rupture point, Dunn said.

The force of its explosion carved out a crater that authorities said measured about 86-feet long, 46-feet wide and 20-feet deep.

The fire burned 40 minutes to an hour and was visible from Carlsbad, 20 miles to the north, Balderston said.

On Sunday, investigators from the National Transportation Safety Board were trying to determine what caused the pipeline to rupture and explode.

"There is no indication it was third-party damage or foul play," said John Somerhalder, president of the pipeline group for El Paso Energy. "This was a very major tragedy."

## Submarine survivors unlikely

The query's focus shifts to the whys. Officials say the vessel was flooded shortly after sinking.

**THE ASSOCIATED PRESS**

**MOSCOW** — Norwegian divers struggled to open the escape hatch on a nuclear submarine that sank with 118 men aboard, but they found no sign of life Sunday as Russian officials said most of the vessel was flooded in minutes when it went down.

The Russian navy has all but ruled out hope that any of the crew remains alive nine days after the Kursk sank, crippled by a massive explosion.

President Vladimir Putin, widely criticized for his slow and low-key public response to the crisis, pledged Sunday that "until the last minute, we will do everything to save everyone who could be saved."

The divers worked for most of the day and well into the night. They tried several times to wrest the hatch open with a crane but failed, Russia's RTR television network reported.

The divers found signs that some of the 118 crewmen may have tried to get out but were unable to open the escape hatch, Deputy Prime Minister Ilya Klebanov said on RTR.

The divers, working 350 feet below the surface of the Barents Sea, were moving slowly because of the depth. Each dive was taking several hours, navy officials said.

No decision had been made on whether a British mini-submarine that arrived Saturday would be used in the rescue operation. Klebanov said the escape hatch was so badly damaged that it was unlikely the British vessel could latch on.

Conflicting signals emerged from the three-nation rescue operation over the state of the hatch.

New details emerged Sunday of how severely the Kursk was shattered in the first few minutes. For days, the Russian navy had insisted the submarine was in good condition.

"Water almost instantly flooded the submarine's hull up to the fifth or sixth compartments."

"The crew in those sections died almost instantaneously and the submarine became uncontrollable," Klebanov said. Some of the crew may have survived for a time in the three aft compartments.

## Cub's tale reminiscent of Smokey the Bear

The as-yet unnamed bear was apparently orphaned by the still-raging U.S. wildfires.

**THE ASSOCIATED PRESS**

Like the original Smokey the Bear, a small cub has emerged burned but alive from the wildfires that have charred forest and rangeland across Montana.

The cub, apparently orphaned and weighing only about 20 pounds, was in a veterinary clinic being treated for burns on all four paws.

"He'll be a little tender-footed for awhile, but he should be fine," said the state wildlife warden who rescued the animal, Joe Jacquith.

There were 98 major fires burning Sunday in Arizona, California, Florida, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Oregon, Texas, Utah, Washington and Wyoming, according to the National Interagency Fire Center in Boise, Idaho.

They had blackened a total of about 1.3 million acres, it reported.

In Montana, the 30 most significant fires had burned about 600,000 acres, the fire center reported.

The Bitterroot Valley remained Montana's worst fire zone, accounting for more than a third of the state's burned land.

Hundreds of evacuees have been forced from their homes, and some have been unable to return for more than two weeks.

A blaze near Toston, between Helena and Bozeman, remained the greatest challenge for firefighters.

Estimates of the size of the fire ranged from 100,000 acres to less than half that.

Smoke prevented a precise mapping of the fire, said Graver



A branch of the Ryan Gulch fire burns a hillside near Missoula, Mont., on Friday. The Ryan Gulch fire has consumed 17,404 acres according to the National Interagency Fire Center and is estimated at 40 percent containment. The Ryan Gulch fire is only one of 27 fires in Montana that have burned 458,244 acres.

Johnson, a Gallatin County emergency services official.

Ranchers still had no word on cattle that had been grazing in the area that could not be removed after the fire started Tuesday in a grain field.

Because of that fire, one of two major power lines that carry electricity from a Montana power plant to the West Coast was idled Sunday for more fire-related repairs, but service to consumers was not interrupted, Montana Power Co. reported.

The two power lines had shut down automatically when the Toston fire burned underneath them but were restored to service Saturday.

The bear cub, who has not been named, was spotted in the Bitterroot Valley on Friday by a landowner, said Jacquith, who believes the cub's mother was probably killed by fire.

Jacquith set a trap for the cub in a burned area southeast of Darby. He said the cub was "skin and bones" but had gotten water from a creek and meat from the carcass of a burned deer.

Jacquith said the cub is too young to spend the winter alone in the wild and may be moved to a Helena wildlife shelter after veterinary care in Hamilton.

He said the cub eventually will be released into the wild.

In 1950, a bear rescued by firefighters in the Lincoln National Forest near Capitan, N.M., was named Smokey the Bear and became the national fire-prevention mascot. Smokey died in 1976.

Elsewhere in Montana, crews returned on Sunday to a blaze 20 miles south of Big Sky and 12 miles west of Yellowstone National Park, after being pulled back Saturday because of high wind.

That fire, started by lightning Aug. 11, had burned an estimated 6,000 acres, information officer Tom Lavagnino said. Several ranches had been evacuated in the area, he said.

## Basque group blamed for fatal Spain car bombing

**THE ASSOCIATED PRESS**

*"It's a day of pain, ... these deaths will be a stimulus in the fight against ETA."*

**Santiago Lopez Valdivieso**  
Civil Guard

**MADRID, Spain** — Two Civil Guard agents were killed Sunday in a bomb attack that police blamed on a Basque separatist group — the latest in a string of deadly attacks since ETA ended a truce last year.

A bomb that had been attached to the agents' patrol car

virtually demolished the vehicle, police said. A female agent died instantly; the other agent, a man, died in the hospital.

The attack, in the eastern town of Sallent de Gallego, on the border of France, came just after 6 a.m. There was no immediate claim of responsibility or comment from ETA, whose name is a Basque-language acronym for Basque Homeland and Freedom.

Since ETA ended its ceasefire last December, it has been blamed for the deaths of 11 people — four of them since July. Victims have included politicians, businessmen, police and a

soldier.

One of the victims Sunday, Irene Fernandez Pereda, 32, was the first female Civil Guard agent killed in separatist violence, according to the state news agency Efe. The 22-year-old man, Jose Angel de Jesus Encinas, had been on the force for three months.

"The car was absolutely pulverized," said Jose Luis Sanchez, the mayor of Sallent de Gallego.

Sanchez said residents near the bomb blast heard a vehicle driving fast in the area an hour before the explosion.

He said the bomb exploded

as the pair started the vehicle to begin the day's patrol.

The Basque separatist group blamed in Sunday's killing is believed to have killed about 800 people in its 32-year-old war for independence on Spain's northern Basque region on the border with France.

Santiago Lopez Valdivieso, director general of the Civil Guard, pledged an intensified crackdown on ETA.

"It's a day of pain, but you can be convinced that, starting tomorrow, these deaths will be a stimulus in the fight against ETA. We will end up winning," he said.

## Early McCain findings positive

**THE ASSOCIATED PRESS**

If John McCain could have his way, he'd blaze through his recovery from skin cancer surgery and return to campaigning for the Republican Party as soon as possible.

"Obviously Sen. McCain would like to get back to the campaign trail tomorrow, but it depends on his recovery time," McCain spokeswoman Nancy Ives said Sunday.

The Arizona senator was expected to remain at the Mayo Clinic Hospital through today or Tuesday while recovering from Saturday's surgery to remove two melanomas from his left temple and left arm, said a statement released from McCain's office. Melanoma is the most serious form of skin cancer.

Preliminary findings showed that the cancer has not spread to McCain's lymph nodes and that all melanoma was removed during the surgery, said McCain's internist, Dr. John Eckstein. It would take several days to fully evaluate test results from the removed tissue, but

McCain's doctors were "very optimistic" about his future, Eckstein said.

McCain was eating normally Sunday and was experiencing little discomfort. McCain also was visiting with his staff both in person and by phone and was receiving news updates and discussing usual Senate business.

The news of his cancer came during the Democratic National Convention and just days after he toured Western states with Texas Gov. George W. Bush, who won the GOP presidential nomination after a primary battle with McCain.

McCain told reporters on Friday that he hoped to be campaigning again by Labor Day, but Eckstein said Saturday it was unclear whether doctors would clear him by then.

McCain has canceled about a dozen campaign events with GOP congressional candidates since learning of the skin cancer diagnosis. Republican leaders had counted on McCain's help to win independent voters and keep the GOP majorities in the House and Senate.

### World/Nation Briefs

The Associated Press

#### Philippines

**Rebels release workers held as hostages**

**OLO** — Three Malaysian resort workers held for four months by Philippine Muslim rebels headed home Sunday, and Libya said it will keep working with European countries to win the release of the 24 other people in captivity on the same island.

"I'm very happy," said freed hostage Ken Fong Yin Ken, as he hugged his father, the pilot of the Malaysian plane that flew to remote Jolo island to take him and two others home.

The three Malaysians were released Friday, but they temporarily stayed with another rebel faction for safety after their van ran out of gasoline. The Abu Sayyaf rebels who ransomed them still hold 24 other hostages, including 12 Westerners, in their remote jungle camp.

The rebels, who seek an independent Islamic state in the southern Philippines, reneged on a plan to release all the hostages Saturday.

#### Jerusalem

**Palestinian cabinet: We will not compromise**

The Palestinian cabinet insisted there will be no compromise with Israel on the key issue of Jerusalem, in a tough statement Sunday coinciding with U.S. envoy Dennis Ross's efforts to revive Mideast peace talks.

The tone of the debate became more acrimonious as Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak said it was now up to the Palestinians to make the next move in peace efforts, while a Palestinian official warned that Jewish settlers in the West Bank and Gaza could become hostages if a crisis erupted.

The Palestinian cabinet said Israel must withdraw from east Jerusalem, which would become the Palestinian capital.

"The Jerusalem issue is not negotiable and cannot be so today, tomorrow or in the future," the cabinet said in a communique distributed by Wafa, the Palestinian news agency.

#### Venezuela

**Government, U.S. seize five tons of cocaine in raid**

**CARACAS** — Venezuelan forces seized five tons of cocaine and arrested at least seven people in a remote jungle region in the eastern coast during the country's largest drug bust to date, authorities said Sunday.

The raid, which took place Friday, was the result of a six-month investigation financed by the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency. The National Guard recovered 173 packages of cocaine about to be shipped to Europe, National Guard Officer Eduardo Sanchez said.

Agents are still in pursuit of at least two suspected leaders of the Los Mellizos drug ring who fled into the Orinoco jungle during a gun battle that preceded the raid.

The probe, known as "Orinoco 2000," used telephone bugging equipment, more than 200 anti-drug officers, three planes, three helicopters and eight boats. Colombia, France, Britain, Italy, Greece and Panama also collaborated with the operation, the paper said.

Venezuela is a key trafficking route for Colombian cocaine en route to the United States and Europe.

#### Morocco

**Oil, gas field discovered near eastern border**

**RABAT** — Moroccan King Mohammed VI said late Sunday that a large field of oil and gas had been discovered near the kingdom's eastern border, the official news agency said.

The king said the find "was good-quality and abundant," but he did not put a figure on the amount discovered near Talsint, about 60 miles from the border with gas-rich Algeria, the MAP agency reported.

This spring, some independent Moroccan media speculated that the underground store could contain up to 20 billion barrels of oil.

But Moroccan Energy Minister Youssef Tahiri in July called the reports "fantastic and premature," saying only that there were encouraging signs of oil finds.

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