

## Landslides kill over 200 in Indonesia

REUTERS, Jakarta

Indonesian rescuers scoured mud-filled homes for bodies and some survivors suffered diarrhoea and skin diseases after landslides and floods on eastern Sulawesi island killed 210 people, officials said on Thursday.

A search-and-rescue operation has been underway in South Sulawesi province after two days of heavy rain at the beginning of the week, but officials said some areas were inaccessible because roads and bridges had been damaged.

Another 104 people were missing in Sinjai regency, the worst-hit area after flooding early on Tuesday that turned swathes of land into vast lakes.

The Indonesian military, police and civilian search and rescue teams have been scouring the affected areas trying to recover bodies and digging into mud from landslides or left behind by the

floods to look for survivors.

Rahman Bando, South Sulawesi branch head of the Indonesian Red Cross, said 180 people had died in Sinjai alone and 30 had died in other regencies in the province.

"We have provided public kitchens and our volunteers are looking for victims. Several areas are unreachable. Bridges and roads are broken. We walk in the rivers," he told Reuters by phone from the provincial capital of Makassar.

Makassar is about 1,400 km east of Jakarta.

Torrential rains and landslides are regular features of tropical Indonesia.

"Water is receding. Search and rescue teams keep searching in homes filled with mud," said Moersen Buana of the disaster task force in Makassar.

"Sanitation is becoming a problem. People can't use regular toilets because water systems are totally destroyed," he added.



Rescue workers drag the body of a victim who died in flash flood and landslide in Sinjai, South Sulawesi province yesterday. The death toll after floods and landslides in Indonesia's South Sulawesi province approached 200 as workers trawled through mud and scoured nearby islands for more bodies and survivors.

## Israel to continue Gaza raids after botched strikes

AFP, Jerusalem

Israel vowed Thursday to continue air attacks in the Gaza Strip, despite a global outcry over the killing of civilians in botched raids, as the Israeli and Palestinian leaders met in Jordan.

Fourteen Palestinian civilians, including five children, have been killed in air strikes over Gaza in nine days, following an upsurge in cross-border violence that has seen nearly 150 rockets fired at Israel in two weeks.

Two air attacks carried out in the past 48 hours missed their targets of presumed Palestinian militants and instead killed three children on Tuesday and another two civilians on Wednesday, one of them a pregnant woman.

Israeli air force commander General Eliezer Shkedi quickly counselled extreme caution to ensure that civilians were not harmed, but vowed that air strikes would continue as the most effective tool against militants.

"In the current circumstances, it

is the most efficient tactic against terrorists who fire rockets at Israel," he told army radio.

Israel withdrew all its ground troops from Gaza in September after a 38-hour occupation. Shkedi said the air force had, since the beginning of 2006, carried out five times the number of air strikes as last year.

"We are acting with extreme caution... I think that at this time we have to make a very big effort to try everything possible to avoid harming those who are not involved," the general said.

## US confirms Heathrow hijack plot

BBC NEWS ONLINE

An official US report has confirmed al-Qaeda planned to hijack flights from Heathrow and fly planes into the airport and a Canary Wharf skyscraper.

Reports of such a plot had surfaced in the media before but have not previously been confirmed.

It is believed the plot was disrupted by security services, although arrests are not thought to have been made.

The report lists nine attempts by al-Qaeda - aside from 11 September - to attack aviation targets worldwide.

One of these is the plot to fly into Canary Wharf. Another is an attempt in the summer of 2003 to use camera flash attachments as stun guns as well as cameras to disguise bomb components.

In this plot, the airliners were to be crashed into targets in the east coast of the US, Australia, Britain and Italy.

Other plots are well known, including that of the so-called shoe-bomber Richard Reid and attempts to use portable surface to air missiles to attack planes, including in Kenya.

The original reports of a possible plot against Canary Wharf emerged in late 2004, but the details were murky and officials declined to confirm them.

In February 2003, tanks were also deployed to Heathrow Airport

to deal with a suspected terrorist threat, a move which proved controversial. It is not believed the deployment of the tanks was linked to the same Canary Wharf plot confirmed by the US report.

The Department of Homeland Security report, dated 16 June 2006 and marked unclassified, was first reported by ABC News in the US and has since also been seen by BBC.

It makes clear that al-Qaeda remains interested in attacking aviation targets and "likely desires a successful repeat of a 2001 suicide hijacking against the United States".

It lists a number of ways that it could use aircraft as weapons or target different parts of the industry. Amongst the areas of concern are the use of lasers to blind or distract pilots.

Three hundred and eleven possible laser incidents have occurred since late November 2004 although the number has recently declined.

Another fear is the transfer of a particular tactic used in Iraq to attack US military helicopters being used against commercial helicopters elsewhere.

Improved security has helped protect aviation, although al-Qaeda also continually appears to be searching for new approaches and probing for vulnerabilities, for instance trying to take advantage of less effective security screening in some countries.

## US marines charged with murdering Iraqi civilian

REUTERS, Washington

The military on Wednesday charged seven Marines and a Navy medic with premeditated murder and other crimes in the April 26 killing of an Iraqi civilian in a village west of Baghdad, the US Marine Corps said.

All eight men face the possibility of the death penalty if convicted. All were charged with premeditated murder, larceny, conspiracy, housebreaking, assault, kidnapping and obstruction of justice, while five also were charged with making false official statements.

"The Marine Corps takes allegations of wrongdoing by its members very seriously and is committed to thoroughly investigating such allegations. The Marine Corps also prides itself on holding its members accountable for their actions," Col. Stewart Navarre told reporters at Camp Pendleton, California, where the men are jailed.

The incident took place in the town of Hamdania in central Iraq and is a separate case from the November 19 killing of 24 civilians in Haditha in which other Marines are suspected.

Military investigators examined

whether the servicemen fatally took a 52-year-old disabled Iraqi man, identified as Hashim Ibrahim Awad, from his home, shot him in the face, then planted an AK-47 assault rifle and a shovel next to his body to make it appear he was an insurgent placing a roadside bomb.

Those charged were: Marines Sgt. Lawrence Hutchins, Cpl. Trent Thomas, Lance Cpl. Tyler Jackson, Pfc. John Jodka, Lance Cpl. Jerry Shumate, Lance Cpl. Robert Pennington, Cpl. Marshall Maginacalda, and Navy Hospitalman Third Class Melson Bacos.

There have been a number of cases of misconduct by US troops in Iraq, although military leaders maintain the vast majority of American troops have conducted themselves honorably.

The eight men have been held in pretrial confinement at the Camp Pendleton brig since May 24. Their next step is a hearing to determine whether their cases go to court-martial, which would be held at Camp Pendleton.

Defense lawyers have asserted that investigators extracted incriminating statements by using inappropriate interrogation methods.

In another case, the military

said a fourth Army soldier, Spc. Justin Graber, had been charged with premeditated murder in connection with the shooting deaths of three detainees in Iraq on May 9. The military said on Monday three other soldiers were charged in the same killings and with threatening to kill a fellow soldier if he told authorities the truth about the case.

All four soldiers also face a possible death penalty.

Joseph Casas, a lawyer representing Jodka, said his client was innocent and that military investigators used inappropriate methods to obtain statements from the troops.

Casas said the statements were not "confessions" and that he would seek to have them suppressed at trial.

"I can tell you with regard to my client, he was subjected to at least three interrogations, one of which lasted about eight hours without any food, water, restroom breaks, you name it," Casas said.

Defense lawyers also questioned how the military could charge the troops with premeditation, saying the troops were on a mission and the Iraqi's death came amid combat.

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