

Nepal air crash: All bodies recovered

KATHMANDU, Aug 2: Rescue workers on Sunday found the bodies of all 18 people who were on board a small Nepali airliner which crashed on a hill west of Kathmandu, police said, reports Reuter.

The German-made Dornier aircraft, operated by Everest Air, one of the three private airlines in Nepal, was carrying 15 passengers and three crew members when it crashed on Saturday during a domestic flight.

"The plane may have hit the trees on the hilltop," said Gunj Man Lama, pilot of the army helicopter who first spotted the crash site. He saw several bodies and pieces of clothing hanging on trees.

The cause of the crash was not known. Nepal's officials news agency said the plane veered from its normal route minutes before it was to land at Bhaatpur, 100 km (60 miles) southwest of Kathmandu.

Bad weather and rough terrain delayed rescue operations on Saturday night and rescuers finally reached the wreckage site early on Sunday after a five-hour trek.

Police said 14 of the victims had been identified. The passengers included two Japanese and a Hungarian and the pilot was Indian, airport officials said.

US ready to go alone for military action in Bosnia

SHANNON, Ireland, Aug 2: The Clinton administration has told NATO allies that if European nations don't agree to tougher action on Bosnia, the United States is prepared to act alone, a State Department spokesman said Sunday, reports AP.

"We cannot allow the strangulation of Sarajevo to continue," said spokesman Mike McCurry.

He spoke to reporters on the eve of a meeting in Brussels of the North Atlantic Council, the political arm of NATO.

The briefing took place on Secretary of State Warren Christopher's plane en route to the Middle East. Christopher is not attending the NATO meeting.

"The United States is determined to act," said McCurry. "We prefer to act in a multilateral fashion."

"We certainly believe it is possible we will act within the NATO framework," he said. But at the same time "we have made it clear we are determined to act."

The administration came under harsh criticism last May when it proposed tough action in Bosnia then quickly backed off when European allies refused to go along.

As for the timing of any Western military action, McCurry said, "We're certainly not talking months, probably not weeks, more like a matter of days."

The United States is pressing its allies to agree to a far more aggressive use of air power to pressure Bosnian Serbs to lift the siege of Sarajevo and permit the free flow of humanitarian aid.

So far, the only agreement

among allies has been for the use of NATO air power to retaliate if United Nations peacekeeping forces in Bosnia are attacked, as has occurred at least twice in the last week.

McCurry said the administration believes the use of air power can place "significant pressure on the Serbs to adhere to agreements reached in political negotiations now under way in Geneva."

Late last week, leaders of Bosnian Serbs, Croats and Muslims agreed in Geneva to partition the former Yugoslav Republic into three ethnic states. They coupled that agreement with a call for a

ceasefire in Bosnia while they continue work on the details of partition.

Initial reports from Bosnia indicated a dramatic quieting in the fighting but McCurry voiced US skepticism on the prospects that ceasefire would hold.

"We've been down this road before," he said, blaming "intransigence on the part of the Serbs" for derailing earlier ceasefires.

The spokesman said the administration hopes a credible threat of force will cause the Serbs to change their tactics.

"In the best of all worlds, we would not have to use this force," he said.

The use of air power as now proposed by the United States could require US forces on the ground in Bosnia in support roles such as spotters to guide pilots striking at Serbian positions.



The mother and father of a Bosnian soldier killed in combat crying at his grave on Sunday after he was buried in the cemetery of Sarajevo. —AFP photo

Asked if the administration was backing away from its determination to avoid involvement of US ground forces in the conflict, McCurry replied, "I would caution you against speculating on the unilateral role."

He said Christopher over the past few days has had significant consultation with European friends and allies.

In the past, Russia has been cool to the idea of using military force against the Serbs. McCurry said Christopher recently talked to Russian Foreign Minister Andre Kozyrev and "I don't think that will be a significant problem."

He described Monday's NATO meeting as an "initial technical presentation" of how the US plan would be implemented.

Off the Record

She is keen to go

HONG KONG: Madonna has said she wants to perform in China to support Beijing's bid for the 2000 Olympics, a newspaper here said Monday, reports AP.

Li Juan, anchorwoman for China's state-run television, said Madonna's management contacted her to discuss concert possibilities and asked her to go to Hollywood to meet the star in person. Wen Wei Po said in a report reprinted from the Hong Kong China News Agency. Both are China-funded.



"Madonna indicated that she is very keen to go to China to perform and support Beijing's bid for the 2000 Olympics," Li said.

Li said Chinese officials were seriously considering Madonna's wish to perform because "she indicated that she would respect and accept conditions and demands laid down by the Chinese side," the newspaper said.

Journey by bamboo raft

TOKYO: A British explorer left Japan on a bamboo raft Monday for a non-stop Pacific crossing intended to prove that Chinese mariners could have reached North America more than 1,700 years before Columbus, reports AP.

Tim Severin, 52, who started his voyage in Hong Kong on May 13, set out for the longest portion after a ceremony at Shimoda 130 kilometers (78 miles) southwest of Tokyo.

The raft, made of 220 giant bamboo logs lashed together, was expected to reach Mendocino, California in three months.

Severin was accompanied by four crew members — Trondur Patursson, 47, of Denmark, Britons Joe Beynon, 28, and Rex Warner, 29, and Vietnamese Viet Roi, 35, said Hiroshi Iwai of Media House in Tokyo, which has had regular contact with Severin.

Iwai said Severin will report daily either to Hong Kong or Tokyo via communications satellite during the voyage.

Severin first arrived in Japan on June 12, stopping on Miyako Island. He landed July 5 at Shingu, 500 kilometers (300 miles) southwest of Tokyo. The raft left there Shimoda July 10 and arrived July 23.

Priest steals

MELBOURNE: A Roman Catholic priest pleaded guilty Monday to stealing 1.8 million dollars (US dollar 1.25 million) from charities to pay for a lavish lifestyle, reports AP.

Father Vincent Kiss, 61, appeared in the County Court to seven charges of theft between 1984 and 1990.



PHNOM PENH: A chained baboon, part of a mobile circus show, holds a toy AK-47 rifle during a street show on Sunday. These shows, which were much more common in previous years, are disappearing as many animals are shipped out of the country and sold abroad. —AFP photo

BRIEFLY

US assumes UNSC presidency:

The United States on Sunday assumed the presidency of the UN Security Council for the month of August, Reuter reports from United Nations.

Washington's ambassador to the United Nations, Madeleine Albright the only woman permanent representative on the Council takes over the presidency for Sir David Hannay of Britain.

It will be Albright's first time in the chair since she assumed her post earlier this year.

The Security Council presidency rotates among its 15 members.

BBC reporter Flackes dead: Veteran radio reporter W.D. Flackes, who for decades integrated the troubles in Northern Ireland for British and BBC world service listeners, died in hospital on Sunday aged 72. Reuter reports from London.

Flackes, known as 'Billy Flackjacket' and one of the best-known broadcasters in the province, worked for the BBC (British Broadcasting Corporation) from the 1960s, when the Irish Republican Army renewed its struggle for a United Irish State, until he retired in 1982.

Christopher in Cairo:

US Secretary of State Warren Christopher arrived in Cairo Monday at the start of a tour of Egypt, Syria, Jordan, Israel and will be Lebanon to salvage Middle East peace talks, Reuter reports from Cairo.

Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr Mousa welcomed Christopher at Cairo airport but neither spoke to reporters.

UAE sets up ties with Bosnia:

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) said on Sunday it had established full diplomatic ties with Bosnia and Vietnam, Reuter reports from Abu Dhabi.

The emirates will exchange ambassadors with both countries, the official news agency said.

The UAE is a firm financial and political supporter of Muslims in Bosnia.

Athens forest fires kill 12:

Forest fires fanned by swirling winds swept through two Aegean islands and a tourist resort near Athens, killing 12 people and destroying scores of homes, police said Sunday, AP reports from Athens.

All of the victims were caught in the blaze on Ikaria off Turkey's western coast Saturday. Five of the dead were found in their car after they tried to escape the flames and smashed into a wall.

Tourists returning Sunday from Ikaria said the fire destroyed villas and most of the power lines on the island.

Landslides claim 12 in Japan:

At least 12 people have died and 11 people are missing following landslides caused by heavy rain in southern Japan, police said Monday, AFP reports from Tokyo.

More than 50 houses were completely or partially destroyed, and landslides had been recorded at 178 places in Kagoshima, Miyazaki and Kumamoto prefectures since Sunday, police said. Several local railway lines were stopped, railway official said.

Avalanche takes 8:

An avalanche Monday on the Italian side of Mont Blanc swept away a group of climbers, killing eight of them, Alpine rescuers said, AP reports from Aosta, Italy.

The Italian news agency ANSA said the dead included three Italians, three Germans and two French. Identities of victims were not immediately available. By late morning, three bodies had been recovered, ANSA said. The tragedy occurred on the Grandes Jorasses, a 4,200-meter-high (nearly 2.5-mile high) point. The avalanche struck a group of 18 climbers, ANSA said. Ten of them escaped without injuries.

Kuwait refuses to reconcile with Iraq

KAIRO, Aug 2: Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, in an interview published today, ruled out any reconciliation with Iraq while President Saddam Hussein remained in power, reports AFP.

He told the Cairo daily Al-Ahram that Kuwait "is not prepared at present to accept any formula for reconciliation" with the Iraqi regime.

Sheikh Sabah said reconciliation depended on the "emergence in Iraq of a government acceptable to all the Arab world."

He also underlined the need for Iraq to return Kuwaiti prisoners it still holds. They were "treated like animals and not like human beings," the minister said.

Kuwait says 627 Kuwaitis are prisoners of war or have disappeared in Iraq. Baghdad has denied holding any Kuwaitis against their will.

On Sunday, the Kuwaiti government said in a statement on the third anniversary of the Iraqi invasion, that securing the prisoners' release was a

"priority".

The statement cited by Kuna news agency said "efforts are underway at all levels to end this humanitarian tragedy".

and continued to do so."

In Baghdad, Saddam Hussein said Sunday that what happened three years ago "is now only a memory". He said "everything can be repaired. The main thing is that Iraq is still intact."

The government meanwhile reiterated its thanks to the US-led military alliance which drove the Iraqis out of Kuwait in February 1991. But in an allusion to such Arab countries as Jordan, Sudan, Yemen and the Palestine Liberation Organisation, it also said "Kuwait will not forget the position of those who supported the Iraqi regime

The Iraqi news agency INA on Sunday justified the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait saying it was "necessary" in the light of a US and Israeli campaign against Baghdad. INA referred to Iraq's "past and present rights to Kuwait."

DPRK may reopen N-sites to IAEA inspectors

SEOUL, Aug 2: North Korea, bowing to international pressure, is expected to reopen its registered nuclear facilities to outside inspections this week, Seoul officials said Monday, reports AP.

The resumption of inspections by the Vienna-based International Atomic Energy Agency could mean that the hard-line Communist state has formally decided to rejoin international nuclear controls.

In talks with the United States in June, North Korea said it would temporarily suspend its decision to quit the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, but did not say when it would reopen its facilities to outside inspections.

accused the IAEA of aiding US spying efforts.

In a second round of high-level talks with the United States in Geneva two weeks ago, North Korea promised to start discussions with the IAEA on inspection of the two sites at Yongbyon, he North's main nuclear complex.

North Korea said later, however, that the inspection would have to wait until the United States kept a promise to help convert the North's graphite-modulated nuclear reactors to light-water reactors.

Light-water reactors are

known to be more effective for power generation and less adaptable for production of plutonium.

The United States has made the opening of the North's two suspected nuclear sites a condition for considering the North's request for assistance in nuclear power generation.

Chang Jae-ryong, director-general of the South Korean Foreign Ministry's America Bureau, is to visit to Washington next week to consult with US officials on joint steps on the North Korean nuclear issue, officials said.

Couple held for running spy ring against NATO

BERLIN, Aug 2: A German man and his British wife who worked for NATO face charges of spying for East Germany and giving Western military secrets to the Soviet Bloc before the end of the Cold War, reports AP.

From 1979 to 1989 the man ran a spy ring codenamed "Topaz" that delivered 10,000 pages of NATO secret documents to the Communists, the federal prosecutors' office in Karlsruhe said Sunday in announcing the arrests.

The couple, who were identified only as Rainer R, 47, and Christine-Anne R, 45, were arrested Friday in Rhineland-Palatinate state in South-western Germany. They lived in the region of Brussels, the Belgian capital, where the North Atlantic Treaty Organization is headquartered.

German news reports said a high-ranking Bonn official was one of six people arrested Friday on espionage charges.

The arrests came amid expectations that more Western Germans will be unmasked as having spied for the Communists before the 1989-90 collapse of East Germany and the end of the Cold War in Europe.

The German government revealed in early July that it had received new secret files covering 2,000 cases of espionage by West Germans including politicians and industrialists.

Couple held for running spy ring against NATO

Zemin tries to cement ties with army

BEIJING, Aug 2: Communist Party chief Jiang Zemin, who has no military experience, has been working hard in the past three years to cement his ties with the armed forces, a powerful force in Chinese politics, reports AP.

A report Monday that nearly covered the front page of the Liberation Army Daily, the military newspaper, details Jiang's many visits with the troops since he was appointed head of the party and of the party's Central Military Commission in 1989.

The military appointment

was an attempt to bolster Jiang's position with the armed forces, which are an important power broker and in the past have been hostile to those without military experience.

The newspaper report, which came a day after the armed forces celebrated their 66th anniversary, said Jiang has visited an average of one military post each month in the past three years, covering the country from a station at an altitude of 4,100 meters (13,500 feet) in Tibet to ships in the South China Sea.

Gas leak in Manila: 36 hospitalised

MANILA, Aug 2: At least 36 people, mostly children, were hospitalized Monday after inhaling chlorine gas from a leaking tank at a suburban ice plant, police said, reports AP.

Police investigator Ernesto Manalo said the worst leak occurred at 9:30 am, when residents started vomiting and had difficulty in breathing. Some victims bled from the nose.

Chlorine gas has a disagreeable odor and is used as a bleaching agent and in water purification.

Manalo said an investigation would be conducted and no charges have been filed against the ice plant owners

earlier.

The patricidal war started a month later when Kim's troops crossed the border at dawn on June 25.

When the war ended in an inconclusive armistice in 1953, hundreds of thousands lay dead on the battlefield, including Koreans from both sides, Chinese, Americans and members of a 15-nation US-led UN detachment.

Stalin had expected the war to last one week, the report said.

The Soviet dictator had chosen Kim -- a soldier in the Soviet army in Siberia -- to become leader of North Korea in the closing stages of World War II. North Korea had been on

Kurdish rebels kill 20

ANKARA, Aug 2: Kurdish guerrillas killed 20 people including 17 paramilitary police commandos in east and south-east Turkey, security officials said on Sunday, reports Reuter.

Separatist Kurdistan Worker Party (PKK) guerrillas, armed with rocket launchers and automatic weapons, killed 10 commandos on Saturday night when they raided a military post in Cukurca town near the Iraqi border, security officials said.

Anatolian news agency said seven commandos were killed by the PKK rebels late on Saturday in another military post attack in the southeastern town of Sason. Sixteen other commandos were wounded in the raid.

Stalin prompted Kim to invade ROK?

WASHINGTON, Aug 2: Joseph Stalin prompted a reluctant North Korean leader Kim Il-Sung to invade capitalist South Korea in the summer of 1950, an event that led to the brutal, three-year Korean War, US News and World Report said, according to AFP.

The US magazine, tapping newly opened Russian files, also said that Stalin personally selected Kim to be the leader of the northern half of the Peninsula as it was being divided after World War II into a communist north and a capitalist south.

Kim, now 82 and still leader of the isolated state often described now as "Stalinist," made a secret visit to Moscow in February 1950. He told Stalin in a meeting

Ramos refuses to attend burial of Marcos

MANILA, Aug 2: Philippine President Fidel Ramos today ruled out attending next month's scheduled homeland burial of deposed dictator Ferdinand Marcos, saying "national interest" was more important than a symbolic gesture, reports AFP.

Ramos, a Marcos cousin who led a military revolt that sent the strongman to exile in 1986, told a news conference that his sister, Senator Leticia Shahani, would represent him and his family at the funeral.

Some Filipinos had been expecting Ramos to attend the funeral as a sign of national reconciliation seven years after the uprising.



that North Korea was not ready to launch the invasion, US news said.

Stalin was furious, the report said.

"Stalin told Kim that they were ready and couldn't wait," the report quoted former Soviet intelligence officer Gavril Korotkov as saying.

Stalin, who was to die three years later, told Kim to "Go sit down in the reception room and think it over," Korotkov said.

Kim waited for a long time, then was asked back in the room, where Stalin told him to be ready by May, no later. "Kim said he would be ready," the report said.

the verge of being over-run by Soviet troops after the defeat of Japan.

During a military meeting in the Soviet city of Khabarovsk in early 1945, the magazine said a Soviet general told Kim he had been chosen for a "new assignment" in North Korea. In September of that year, Kim turned up in North Korea escorted by Soviet military officers.

The magazine did not say why Kim was chosen, nor, most importantly who first conceived the attack on the south.

The weekly news magazine, in its August 9 edition, said a map drawn up by Joseph

Ramos refuses to attend burial of Marcos

Stalin's military advisors in 1950 and signed by the Soviet leader, showed how the North Koreans would invade South Korea.

In the article, a number of former Soviet officials involved in the Korean war described publicly for the first time the former Soviet Union's role.

The magazine said the Soviets provided massive military aid to North Korea between 1946 and 1949.

It also said it had confirmed earlier reports that Soviet pilots fought their US counterparts over Korea in planes secretly shipped to air bases along the Manchurian border.

The pilots wore Chinese uniforms and spoke on their radios in Chinese to hide their country's involvement in the war.

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