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Contras kidnap 29 Americans, 18 journalists

Associated Press

MANAGUA, Nicaragua — U.S.-backed rebels firing automatic weapons kidnapped 29 American peace activists and 18 journalists Wednesday from a boat on the river dividing Nicaragua and Costa Rica, spokesmen for the group and the government said.

Herb Gunn, of Fayetteville, Ark., deputy coordinator of the Witness for Peace group, told reporters in Managua he contacted the rebels by radio and was told the Americans were unharmed and were being held in the jungle. He said the guerrillas, who are fighting to overthrow the Nicaraguan government, wouldn't say exactly where the group was.

A Foreign Ministry spokesman blamed the United States for the incident and held the U.S. government responsible for the "physical integrity" of the kidnapped.

In Washington, a spokesman for the peace group gave a similar statement.

State Department spokesman Peter Martinez said the U.S. Embassy in Managua "was trying to send a small plane into the area

where we believe the group is. But as a result of heavy fog, the plane cannot get in. Therefore the embassy has sent three embassy officers by auto to the area."

The communique, broadcast by state radio, said 29 Americans of the peace group and 18 Nicaraguan and foreign journalists were kidnapped by Revolutionary Democratic Alliance rebels.

Lt. Mary Jane Mulligan, a Defense Ministry spokeswoman, also said reporters from two newspapers and a television station were aboard a Sandinista helicopter that flew over the area when the boat was seized and photographed the kidnapping.

She did not say how the government helicopter happened to reach the site precisely at the time the Contras allegedly kidnapped those aboard the boat.

The communique said the rebels intercepted the group at 7:45 a.m.

The Nicaraguan communique said the activists went to the area despite a threat by rebel leader Eden Pastora. Pastora's rebel group, the Revolutionary Democratic Alliance, is based in Costa Rica.



Practice Makes Perfect

Photo by DONNA COPELAND

Bill Wiseman shows Bernice Beck, a senior renewable natural resources major from San Antonio, how to shoot a target at 100 yards. Beck was at

Wiseman's Indian Lakes Shooting range in Bryan. Wiseman has been a gunsmith for the U.S. Olympic team for over ten years.

Four blacks shot, killed in South Africa

Associated Press

JOHANNESBURG, South Africa — Four blacks were killed Wednesday during a day of rioting in Durban in which officers fired on rioters who burned a mortuary, set up road blocks and attacked a police vehicle with gasoline bombs, authorities reported.

The report also said an Indian truckdriver died of injuries suffered when young blacks stoned his vehicle the night before. Gobin Singh was believed to be the first Indian killed in nearly a year of racial violence that has cost about 500 black lives.

In Pretoria, the capital, police said they had released more than a third of the 1,465 people picked up during the 18-day-old state of emergency imposed in an attempt to quell the violence.

The biggest single release was announced Wednesday. Police said 342 people were freed and 28 other anti-apartheid activists were detained. By police count, this meant 868 people still were held without charge.

Police said the mortuary was burned and the official car attacked in Durban's Umlazi township, but did not say where or how the blacks were killed. Durban and the rest of Natal province had been comparatively quiet during the months of riot and protest.

Police reported firing rubber bullets and tear gas at gangs during the night. No casualty figures were available.

Durban was not one of the 36 communities included in the state of emergency.

The violence, which spread to the nearby Natal provincial capital of Pietermaritzburg, was apparently sparked by the unsolved murder in Umlazi last week of black lawyer Victoria Nonyamezele Mxenge.

Opposition groups have charged that Mrs. Mxenge was killed by a pro-government death squad.

But Chief Gatsha Buthelezi, head of Natal's 5-million-strong Zulu tribe and a outspoken critic of both the government and the outlawed African National Congress, said Mrs. Mxenge's death was being exploited by other blacks to foment "this black on black confrontation."

Judge denies stay of lower court order

State will seek approval of special election

Associated Press

AUSTIN — State officials agreed Wednesday to seek federal approval of the special 1st District congressional election but also vowed to continue appealing what Attorney General Jim Mattox called "this important state's rights issue."

Without comment Wednesday, U.S. Supreme Court Justice Byron R. White turned down the state's request for a stay of a lower court order that directed Texas to obtain the Justice Department's OK.

After getting that news, Mattox and Secretary of State Myra McDaniel said the request would be sub-

mitted by Friday's deadline.

Gov. Mark White, who called the special election, said he remains "confident that eventually the higher court will rule in our favor."

Mattox and McDaniel said Texas will request approval of the June 29 special election and the runoff.

The state also will appeal to the full Supreme Court its argument that Justice Department permission isn't necessary for special elections, they said.

"We are submitting this information under protest, and we do intend to pursue this important state's rights issue," Mattox said.

"We will continue the appeal to

protect the integrity of future special elections and to protect the governor's statutory authority to set such elections," he said.

In Saturday's runoff, Democrat Jim Chapman edged Republican Edd Hargett by less than 2,000 votes. The runoff was scheduled after no candidate got a majority in the June 29 special election to replace Rep. Sam Hall, a Democrat who resigned to become a federal judge.

A three-judge federal court panel last week threatened to void the election results unless the state asks for Justice Department clearance.

When Justice White refused to block that order, McDaniel said

Texas was left with few options.

The Reagan administration challenged both the June special election and the runoff, contending Gov. White should have gotten Justice Department clearance because it is required by the federal Voting Rights Act.

That 1965 law, designed to protect minority voters, prohibits election changes in Southern states without federal approval. Justice Department lawyers said the election dates to fill the 1st District vacancy were different than those specified by Texas law for such cases.

But state officials disagree. "We feel we should not have to

preclear all future elections," McDaniel said.

Mattox charged that the Republican-run Justice Department challenged the special election for political reasons, hoping to confuse voters and reduce Democratic turnout in the Northeast Texas district where no Republican has won since Reconstruction.

Mattox predicted the election will win federal approval, adding, "The voters in the 1st Congressional District have spoken, despite the Justice Department's attempt to intimidate them."

Mortality

Black infants' high death rate linked to premature birth

Associated Press

BOSTON — Even with equal access to sophisticated hospital care, black infants have a significantly higher death rate than whites, largely because they are more apt to be born too early or too small, a Harvard study concludes.

The gap quickly diminishes, however, as children get older, and it disappears by adolescence.

One goal of U.S. medicine is to provide fast access to newborn intensive care to every mother and infant who needs it.

Yet researchers maintain that this will not wipe out the differences between the races in childhood survival.

"Today, changes in society as well as in family and personal habits are necessary to lower childhood mortality," Dr. Robert J. Haggerty, president of the American Academy of Pediatrics wrote in editorial in the journal.

"As important as it is, medical care has its limits."

The death rate was 24 percent higher for blacks than whites through age 19, according to the study, which was based on a detailed examination of death records in Boston over eight years and was published in Thursday's New England Journal of Medicine.

Nearly all the difference resulted from a sharply higher black death rate during the first year of life.

"There are still major problems that we need to address," said Dr. Paul H. Wise, who directed the study.

"We need to deal with prematurity, first and foremost."

In Boston, virtually everyone can get highly sophisticated medical care at hospitals affiliated with medical schools.

Income levels are also a factor, the study found. Poor youngsters had a higher death rate throughout childhood than did those in middle-class families.

But this did not completely explain the differences between blacks and whites, because even when family incomes were the same, more black babies died.

Most of the racial disparity occurred among infants. Among those under a month old, 90 percent of the excess deaths of black babies was attributed to prematurity and low birth weight.

No one knows precisely what causes prematurity and low birth weight, but poor living habits during pregnancy are believed to contribute. These may include smoking, drinking, taking drugs and failing to eat properly.

The study did not look into possible differences between blacks and whites in access to prenatal care, which could have contributed to the number of premature births and dangerously small babies.

Water tanks' roles in jet crash debated

Associated Press

GRAPEVINE — While one federal investigator says the water tanks hit by Delta Air Lines Flight 191 as it crashed may have saved lives, another says the death toll may have been increased by the twin containers.

But National Transportation Safety Board member Patrick Bursley said Wednesday the two views are like "comparing apples and oranges" and both probably are correct.

At a news conference Tuesday night, Bursley, who has been the chief spokesman for the investigation, said, "It's not impossible the catastrophe would have been worse in terms of fire and so on if the tanks hadn't been there, and the 31 people who survived would not have survived."

But NTSB's director of accident investigations, Terry Armentrout, said that had the water tanks not been there, the plane probably could have sustained

"Had it been a level, flat, hard-surfaced terrain field — no water, no rain, no obstructions — an . . . aircraft as strong as the 747 or the L-1011 could sustain that." — Terry Armentrout, the National Transportation Safety Board's director of accident investigations.

the crash without breaking up. It had already touched down once before clipping the water tanks.

"Had it been a level, flat, hard-surfaced terrain field — no water, no rain, no obstructions — an . . . aircraft as strong as the 747 or the L-1011 could sustain that," Armentrout said of the Friday crash at Dallas-Fort Worth International Airport.

Asked if that meant the main body of the plane might have emerged intact had it missed the water tanks, Armentrout replied, "Yes."

Contacted Wednesday, Bursley

said he didn't challenge Armentrout's comments, "but I'm not certain I would accept the context that nakedly. That plane was on the ground in a place where it is not normally going to be."

He said it was true the tanks caused the plane to break up. But on the other hand, had they not been there, the aircraft could have hit two or three other airplanes parked beyond the water tanks or a warehouse where people could have been working, Bursley said.

"If they had hit two parked airplanes with their fuel load, the

fire would have been perhaps worse," Bursley said. "If they had continued into the warehouse . . . the dimensions of the accident could have been even larger."

Almost all those who survived were in the plane's tail section, which snapped off when the plane hit the tanks, whipped completely around and came to rest at a steep angle.

The crash, which took place as Flight 191 arrived from Fort Lauderdale, Fla., killed 132 passengers and crew members and one person on the ground. Twenty-eight passengers and three crew members survived.

Bursley said the water tanks are well clear of the runway in accordance with Federal Aviation Administration rules.

"There's no question about their siting," he said. "They are fully within accepted criteria . . ."

False alarms a waste of time, money

By BRIAN PEARSON
Staff Writer

Pranksters intentionally tripping fire, smoke or burglar alarms in campus buildings may find it a not-so-humorous experience if they're caught.

Bob Wiatt, director of the University Police Department, said students caught causing false alarms at A&M face disciplinary action by the office of student affairs and pros-

ecution by the Brazos County Attorney's office.

Pulling a false alarm in Texas is a Class A Misdemeanor punishable by a fine of up to \$2,000 or up to one year in jail or both. Punishment by the University can range from conduct probation to expulsion.

"If that's somebody's idea of good humor and if we ever catch anybody like that, I guarantee you it will be the last of their humorous days," Wiatt said.

Recently, about five false fire alarms were pulled in various dorms on campus.

Wiatt said there are several ways to set off campus alarms. For example, pranksters sometimes tape smoking cigarettes to smoke alarms and run off. Some campus buildings, he said, have alarms set to go off after certain hours and if the doors to these buildings are shaken

violently, the alarms can be triggered.

After an alarm is triggered, campus police and sometimes city fire departments answer it.

Wiatt said false reports cost the department money in equipment and manpower used to answer the alarms. He said every alarm is answered.