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World and Nation

Fire at Belmont
 Up to \$5 million worth of thoroughbreds killed

Associated Press

ELMONT, N.Y. — A fire Sunday swept through a Belmont Park Race-track barn where a sprinkler system had broken down just days earlier, killing 45 thoroughbred horses worth up to \$5 million and injuring two firefighters, authorities said.

"It looked like a fireball in the middle of the barn. It was tough to make a decision not to charge in there and try to get the horses out," Assistant Fire Chief John Loser said.

Flames shot 50 feet into the air from the 400-foot-long barn and it took 200 firefighters more than an hour to contain the early morning blaze, Fire Chief James Snadecky said.

Most of the horses suffocated in their 12-foot-by-12-foot stalls where they were tied up for the night, Loser said.

Two horses were rescued. One was Pleasant Sea, an offspring of Pleasant Colony, which won the Kentucky Derby and the Preakness in 1981.

Track officials issued a statement estimating the loss at \$1 million for the barn and from \$500,000 to \$5 million for the horses. Nassau County police officer Howard Burt estimated the loss at up to \$10 million.

The track is the annual home of the Belmont Stakes, the third leg of the Triple Crown, horse racing's most prestigious honor. The horses were among more than 2,000 kept in 64 barns at the 430-acre complex on Long Island.

The fire was first spotted by a night watchman who "saw flames coming out of a stall in the middle of the barn," said John Keenan, vice president of operations for the New York Racing Association.

Although some of the horses might have been able to break out of their stalls, Keenan said that would have been unusual.

"The nature of a horse is he considers that stable his home, and something happens, he's more inclined to go into it than out," he said.

Keenan said the sprinkler system pipes burst last week when the temperature fell to near zero.

The barn contained a hay rack and Keenan said it was possible hay caught fire through spontaneous combustion, an occasional hazard with stored hay.

The cause of the fire was undetermined, but authorities found "evidence that indicates it would be serious," said the head of the Nassau County arson squad Detective William Guttersloh.

Horse owners indicated "a portion of the horses were not insured, and they will have substantial losses," Guttersloh said.

South Yemen's civil war continues

Associated Press

QURAIISH BORDER POST, South Yemen — Palestinian forces heading for Aden to try to arrange a cease-fire were barred from crossing this frontier post Sunday, and indications were that rebel troops may have seized control of South Yemen in this Marxist country's civil war.

Diplomatic sources based along the Persian Gulf said Sunday there were signs that President Ali Nasser Mohammed had been ousted, basing their assessment on reports received from their Aden missions and a transmission on the government radio wave length describing the president as "irresponsible."

But the British Broadcasting Corp. and an Israeli television monitor said Mohammed was on his way back to the capital, Aden, after fleeing to Ethiopia Saturday.

A radio station which said it was transmitting from Aden on behalf of an unidentified new leadership broadcast a communique Sunday indicating that rebels had ousted Mohammed after a week of fighting, a news report said.

Frontier guards at Quraish Border Post said fighting "is still continuing" in the capital.

"It is dangerous to proceed further because of the fighting, and anyway, nobody is allowed through," said the officer in charge of the post, who refused to give his name.

Fighting has shut down international communications with South Yemen, and there has been no way to verify most reports. Diplomats in the region said the situation appeared ambiguous.

The BBC reported without attribution Sunday that Mohammed was on his way back to Aden after fleeing to Ethiopia in his personal plane Saturday.

In Tel Aviv, radio and television monitor Mickey Gurdus said he heard Ethiopian state television announce that Mohammed left Addis Ababa for Aden Sunday afternoon.

The South Yemen fighting broke out Jan. 13, apparently after a coup attempt by hardline Marxists opposed to Mohammed's reported desire to liberalize the economy of his pro-Soviet nation and to improve relations with Western-backed Arab countries. The rebels reportedly are lead by former President Abdul-Rahman Ismail.

The Soviet Union has important bases in Aden and nearby Socatra land and in 1979 signed a 20-year friendship treaty with South Yemen, strategically located at the mouth of the Red Sea. Reported Kremlin-sponsored peace talks apparently have failed to achieve a lasting truce.

A convoy of about 30 green-painted military trucks carrying about 300 troops of the Palestine Liberation Organization was stopped at Raheda, about 12 miles from this border post.

The trucks, each flying a large white flag, pulled off the main highway linking the two countries and were still there late Sunday afternoon.

The fighting apparently erupted in Aden and then spread to South Yemen's six provinces, with the stronghold reportedly in the city of Lahaj, about 32 miles north of Aden.

In London, the British government said the royal yacht Britannia headed back to South Yemen Saturday after heavy fighting forced it to cut short its rescue mission Saturday.

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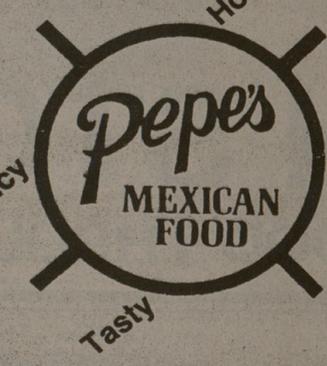
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