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WORLD & NATION

Thursday, October 11, 1990

Air accidents in Saudi increase; official soldier death toll now 24

DHAHRAN, Saudi Arabia (AP) — After two months in which military officials marveled at the low rate of accidents among American forces in Saudi Arabia, a sudden spate of air crashes has left four dead and eight missing.

The official death toll for Operation Desert Shield rose Wednesday to 24 when an Air Force F-111 fighter-bomber crashed on a training mission in the Arabian Peninsula, killing both crew members, U.S. military spokesmen said.

The plane was the fourth U.S. military aircraft involved in an accident in three days. But an Air Force spokesman, Capt. Jack Giese, said there was no single factor linking the crashes.

He said that while pilots were training intensively, they were not being subjected to extra stress or fatigue that might affect cockpit performance. In some cases, however, they were flying longer than normal hours.

"Standards on crew rest and flying hours are followed into the training schedule," Giese said.

"Nobody is jumping from one aircraft with a sweaty brow and flying off in another."

— Capt. Jack Giese, Air Force spokesman

"Nobody is jumping from one aircraft with a sweaty brow and flying off in another."

A summary issued by the U.S. Command on Wednesday said 23 Americans had been killed in accidents and one Marine died of a self-inflicted wound since the deployment began following Iraq's Aug. 2 invasion of Kuwait.

The toll included 13 Air Force crewmen killed in the Aug. 29 crash of a C-5A cargo plane in Germany. The aircraft was carrying supplies destined for U.S. forces in the Persian Gulf.

Two pilots were killed Monday in the crash of

an Air Force F-4 Phantom reconnaissance jet at the southern Arabian Peninsula, also during training exercise. That plane was part of an Alabama Air National Guard unit.

Just hours earlier, two Marine Corps UH-1 helicopters, each carrying four crew members, crashed over the northern Arabian Sea while on a night training mission.

Navy spokesmen said voice and radar contact with the helicopters was lost just before dawn, miles from their ship, the amphibious assault carrier USS Okinawa.

Search vessels found debris but no sign of the crew members, they said. The search for survivors was suspended Wednesday, but the eight were still listed as missing.

The swing-wing F-111, known by its nickname "The Aardvark," was assigned to the 48th Tactical Fighter Wing, based at Royal Air Force Base Lakenheath in England. The unit was deployed to Turkey early on in the U.S. military buildup.

Slain singer's song sends message of peace World remembers John

NEW YORK (AP) — John Lennon's worldwide message of peace was delivered Tuesday as his song "Imagine" was played simultaneously for 1 billion people in 130 countries to celebrate what would have been his 50th birthday.

"A dream we dream alone is only a dream, but the dream we dream together is reality. Happy birthday, John. The world is better today for sharing a time with you," Yoko Ono said at a United Nations ceremony before the playing of "Imagine."

The slain former Beatle himself issued a call for harmony in a taped message that served as an introduction to the music.

"We all want peace, whatever sort of job we have. ... Think of your children. Do you want them to be killed or don't you? And that's the choice

we have in front of us. War or peace," said Lennon, whose son Sean turned 15 Tuesday.

None of the other Beatles attended the U.N. ceremony, but a tribute came from Lennon's old songwriting partner, Paul McCartney, who released a live version of the Beatles' tune "Birthday." The song, originally on "The Beatles," more commonly known as the White Album, is the first Lennon-McCartney single released by a member of the four-man band since the Beatles broke up in 1970.

"The release date and John's birthday is just a happy coincidence, but it's also a nod and a wink to my old mate," said McCartney, 47.

Other observances were held from Liverpool to Moscow to Los Angeles. In Liverpool, Lennon's

hometown in England, fans gathered at the former site of the Cavern Club, where the Beatles were discovered.

More than 1,000 radio stations and networks from 50 countries broadcast the 10-minute event.

U.S. Armed Forces television and radio beamed it to 80-plus other countries. MTV televised the "Imagine" video in 25 countries, Andrea Smith, a spokeswoman for the network said.

In Moscow, about 1,000 Soviets gathered at the Moscow Electrical Lamp Factory's cultural hall to listen to Lennon's music, snap up his albums and posters and reflect on his life.

Lennon was shot to death by a deranged fan outside his Manhattan apartment building on Dec. 8, 1980.

Shuttle Discovery lands safely; flight boosts morale at NASA

EDWARDS AIR FORCE BASE, Calif. (AP) — Shuttle Discovery sailed out of orbit and landed Wednesday after a four-day flight that boosted NASA's confidence and sent a spacecraft on a five-year mission to explore the sun's poles.

"If you criticize our mistakes, then you must also acknowledge our successes," space shuttle director and former astronaut Robert Crippen said after completion of the first shuttle flight in nearly six months.

"I'm elated," he added. "It's been a long hot summer, I'll tell you that. It's nice to be back flying again. It is a high day for us."

About 5,500 spectators cheered as Discovery touched down at 8:57 a.m. CDT, just seconds before the sun rose over hills to the east. It was the third smallest crowd for any shuttle landing open to public viewing.

"Congratulations on a picture-perfect mission," Mission Control's Brian Duffy told the five astronauts.

The astronauts stepped out of the shuttle into sunshine 57 minutes after the landing. Shuttle commander Dick Richards, pilot Robert Cabana and mission specialists Bill Shepherd, Bruce Melnick and Tom Akers then prepared for a jet ride home to Houston.

Discovery's 1.7 million-mile flight was the first since April — the longest gap between shuttle missions since they resumed after the 1986 explosion that destroyed

Challenger and killed seven crew members.

The latest flight helped bolster morale at the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, which has been plagued by hydrogen fuel leaks in the shuttles Columbia and Atlantis and by a flawed mirror that severely impaired the \$1.5 billion Hubble Space Telescope.

Six hours after they lifted off from Cape Canaveral, Fla., on Saturday, Discovery's astronauts deployed the Ulysses spacecraft on its 1.86-billion-mile mission to study the sun's high latitudes and poles.

Ulysses "seems to be working perfectly well," said Roger Bonnet, director of scientific programs for the European Space Agency, which operates the \$250 million solar explorer in a joint mission with NASA.

Bonnet praised the \$750 million mission as "a symbol of future cooperation between Europe and the United States."

About an hour before touchdown, Discovery's twin braking rockets fired, allowing the shuttle to plunge out of orbit and dash through Earth's atmosphere.

The shuttle's twin sonic booms cracked loudly, waking Santa Barbara and Ventura residents as Discovery crossed the coast and descended toward the 15,000-foot-long concrete runway 22 on Rogers Dry Lake in the Mojave Desert.

Gulf residents prepare for tropical storm

MIAMI (AP) — Some worried owners hauled their boats from Gulf Coast harbors Wednesday as an expanding Tropical Storm Marco climbed up the edge of the Florida peninsula with 45 mph wind, heavy rain and strong tides.

"We're prepared, as prepared as we're going to be," Sanibel Marina owner Myton Ireland said after pulling nine boats, all 40 ft or longer, onto land. "If we wait too late and then it blows that we're in trouble."

Marco could gain some strength, but not enough to reach the hurricane threshold of 74 mph, said forecaster Bob Case at the National Hurricane Center's suburban Coral Gables.

"Coastal flooding and beach erosion will probably be the major problem that it will produce," he said. "The further north the system goes, the closer it will get to the coast."

But aside from the possible damage, Case looked at Marco as beneficial for the drought-parched region.

"We've got a tap on the tropics," he said. "We've got a mechanism here where we can bring tropical air up over the southeastern United States and have the mechanism squeeze it like you would a sponge."

The storm sat 50-75 miles off the coast Wednesday afternoon but was expected to resume a northwesterly heading later in the day. That would put the center ashore Thursday night or Friday between Apalachicola and the Big Bend, a lightly populated region where the peninsula joins the Panhandle.

At 3 p.m. EDT, Marco was centered at latitude 25.1 degrees north, longitude 82.6 degrees west, or 70 miles northwest of Key West. Storm warnings were in effect from the Dry Tortugas through Key Largo, including Florida Bay.

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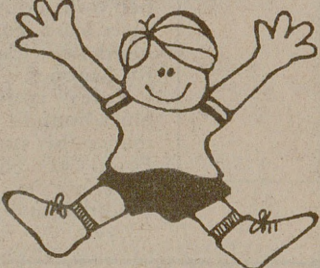
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Bargain hunters comb Exxon's clean-up gear

ANCHORAGE, Alaska (AP) — Bargain hunters by the thousands descended on an Anchorage industrial lot Tuesday to pick through acres of gear unloaded by Exxon after two summers of oil-spill cleanup.

"You really realize the size of the spill by all the garbage that came out of it," said Anchorage aviation mechanic Rod Meeks, who bought two outboard boat motors at the auction.

Many failed to find the deals they had hoped for, however, and blamed it on the crowd.

"We were looking for anything, but there's too many people bidding high," said Doug Parr, a construction consultant who flew to Anchorage from Seattle for the three-day sale. He hoped prices would come down after the first day.

It looked like the day before Christmas at the world's biggest bargain basement.

Parked cars lined the roads for miles in all directions. Ritchie Bros. Auctioneers International, which bought the merchandise last month from Exxon Corp. for a price Ritchie officials would only describe as "millions," ran shuttle buses into the site.

There, an auctioneer was driven through the throngs in a booth atop a truck, stopping here to sell dozens of all-terrain vehicles, there for pallet after pallet of brand-new fishing nets, somewhere else for containers

filled with flotsam, from life jackets to tables and chairs.

Half the yard seemed filled with boats — aluminum skiffs, inflatable power boats. Inside a hangar, pallets reached to the ceiling contained door thermometers, clothing, and kitty litter.

The site was just one of the filled with surplus merchandise from the Exxon Valdez oil-spill cleanup effort.

The tanker ran aground in Alaska's Prince William Sound in March 1989 and spewed nearly 11 million gallons of crude oil in the largest oil spill. Exxon crews worked that summer and then returned in spring for a shoreline survey.

Exxon officials said they do sell any equipment that could be used for additional clean-up.

Ritchie Bros. wouldn't say much it expects the merchandise to bring, although an early estimate of \$10 million is said to be low. No 8,000 potential bidders had signed up by midday Tuesday.

A 1966 turboprop float plane, an old Esso tiger painted on its side, sold for \$435,000 to an undisclosed bidder. New, the plane would have sold for \$700,000, several air-taxi company officials in the crowd said.

Four used television sets sold for \$2,000 — a price some frustrated buyers said was too high.