

## Thrill-seekers, scientists watch eclipse

ATOP MAUNA KEA, Hawaii (AP) — The moon slipped over the sun Thursday in the ageless celestial ceremony of the eclipse, turning day into night for thousands of thrill-seekers.

Clouds and fog interfered with the view for many, however.

Thousands of thrill-seekers and scientists came to see the moon line up between the sun and Earth and plunge into darkness a 160-mile-wide swath stretching from Hawaii to Mexico's Baja Peninsula, central and southern Mexico, Central America, Colombia and Brazil.

As totality arrived at sea level on Mauna Kea, the sun was hidden by clouds. It still got dark, but the clouds disappointed about 500 people gathered on the driving range at the Mauna Lani resort in south Kohala. Their hopes had fallen and risen in the previous hour as the clouds came and went.

"I came especially for this, and hope we get to see it," said Margaret MacLeod, a mathematics and science teacher from Manhattan Beach, Calif., shortly before the eclipse. "If we don't get to see it, I may have to go to Iraq for the next one."

At the astronomy observatory at the top of the mountain, the view was better, and television pictures of a disappearing sun were beamed statewide. But high cirrus clouds put scientific experiments in doubt.

Even thin clouds affect the scientists' efforts to gather knowledge from the eclipse. The ice crystals that make up cirrus clouds could scatter some of the light from the sun's corona and also could affect some infrared



Children look at an image of the solar eclipse projected through a camera at the Brazos Valley Museum Thursday afternoon. The museum hosted a program describing what happens during an eclipse.

RICHARD S. JAMES/The Battalion

experiments, scientists said. Donald Hall, director of the University of Hawaii's astronomy institute, said that if the intermittent fog conditions didn't improve by the time of totality, scientific experiments could be severely affected.

In spite of the threat of clouds, Fred and Nancy Tom, who made the two-hour drive from their home in Hilo, were among hundreds of people who spent the night camped out along the western coast of the "Big Island" of Hawaii.

"It's a once-in-a-lifetime event, and we didn't want to take a chance on the weather," Mrs. Tom said. "Hilo is often rainy and cloudy in the morning." Eclipse mania gripped Hawaii and Mexico, which offered the best viewing spots.

## Guilty pleas disrupt CIA proceedings

About 500 astronomers and tens of thousands of amateurs arrived in recent weeks. Entrepreneurs peddled T-shirts and other paraphernalia. Events ranged from ancient eclipse rituals to a wedding atop a man-made waterfall in Hawaii.

Only a partial eclipse would be visible in the mainland United States and southern Canada. The best viewing spots in the continental United States were in the Southwest and southern California.

But in some places, part of an eclipse was nearly as good as a whole one.

In El Paso, summer school students planned to watch during lunch. "It'll be right over the lunch hour which is real convenient," said John Peterson, school district planetarium director. "It's like this thing was scheduled just for us."

In Mexico City, a ritual depicting the moon attempting to eat the sun was planned at the Anthropology Museum. Guatemalan Indian villagers, who worry during eclipses that the sun will disappear forever, were to ring church bells and bang pots and pans to resurrect it.

Observers were warned not to look directly at the sun because of the risk of eye damage from any bright light and radiation not blocked by the eclipse.

Vendors selling protective glasses were doing a brisk business, but the American Academy of Ophthalmology said they weren't foolproof and suggested ways to view the eclipse indirectly, such as through homemade pinhole cameras.

A local wit in Mexico City joked, "Be safe: Listen to the eclipse on the radio."

WASHINGTON (AP) — Allegations that CIA officials knew more than they admitted about the Iran-Contra affair have created a "brushfire" that will complicate the confirmation hearings on Robert M. Gates as CIA director, a Senate Republican said Wednesday.

The revelations also have thrown into doubt the timing of the hearings, which had been expected to begin Monday. Sources who asked to remain anonymous said that at a closed-door Senate Intelligence Committee meeting on Wednesday there was considerable hesitation about going ahead with the hearings.

Afterward, Chairman David Boren issued a cryptic statement saying a decision on the timing of the hearings would come on Thursday, after he has consulted all panel members.

"Obviously the committee, in order to be thorough in its work, must allot sufficient time to consider the information" arising from Tuesday's guilty pleas by former agency official Alan D. Fiers, Boren said in the statement.

"We are now trying to determine how long it will take us to analyze this information," he said.



Robert M. Gates' confirmation hearings as CIA director may be delayed.

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## Fighting erupts in El Salvador as peace talks push for end

SAN SALVADOR, El Salvador (AP) — Scores of leftist guerrillas and government forces were killed or wounded in fighting that erupted as the two sides resumed peace talks, officials said Wednesday.

Representatives of the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front, FMLN and the U.S.-backed rightist government of President Alfredo Cristiani have been meeting for the past 14 months in an effort to end the 11-year-old civil war.

The U.N.-mediated peace negotiations resumed in Mexico City late Tuesday.

The heaviest fighting was reported in Nueva Concepcion, a town 30 miles north of San Salvador. Combat raged there for more than 12 hours Tuesday, and reporters who visited the town said they saw the bodies of 11 government troops and one civilian.

The FMLN said in a clandestine radio broadcast that a total of 153 government troops were killed or wounded in fighting Tuesday in seven of the country's 14 provinces.

## Explosion rips ammo depot, injures U.S. troops in Kuwait

KUWAIT CITY (AP) — An explosion ripped through a U.S. ammunition depot Thursday, showering soldiers with artillery and shrapnel and engulfing vehicles in flames. At least 50 U.S. troops and six British troops were injured, officials said.

"It was raining metal," said Spc. Mark Alexander, a 23-year-old firefighter from Norwich, Conn., who was hospitalized with smoke inhalation. "I saw a dude with half his hand off."

The chain-reaction blasts at the Blackhorse Camp in Doha apparently began with an electrical fire on an ammo truck carrying 155 howitzer shells, military officials said. The U.S. Embassy issued a statement ruling out sabotage.

The ammunition, stored on pallets in a large open-air compound, included tank rounds, artillery and various types of bullets, officers said. It sits near a British mess hall, which was empty at the time of the 11 a.m. blast.

"It was blowing out shrapnel so we had to pull back, and then it went off," Alexander said.

"It tossed people around as they were trying to get away. That's why you have got a lot of these guys with broken ankles, broken arms."

## Bush denies filling racial quota, predicts Thomas will win approval

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Bush said Wednesday he is not filling a racial quota by picking Clarence Thomas for the Supreme Court, calling his nomination of the black jurist "the right thing at the right time."

Predicting Thomas will win Senate confirmation, Bush told a news conference he expects widespread public support for the nomination despite criticism from some civil rights groups.

"We're taking on some water on this," the president said. But, he added, "I think it... is well received. I have an innate confidence that this man will be confirmed and the reason he will be is that he deserves to be confirmed."

Bush was asked about remarks Monday by Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell, D-Maine, who said the president is opposed to quotas except when

it comes to selecting a nominee to the high court.

Thomas would be the second black on the court, replacing the first — retiring Justice Thurgood Marshall, 83. Thomas is an outspoken conservative on many racial issues, espousing self-help for blacks and minorities.

Marshall is a leading liberal who has championed government efforts to overcome racial discrimination.

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