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Leaders In Crisis

MSC SCONA 45 1999-2000

Student Conference on National Affairs Registration Deadline: March 17, 2000

Late Registration: March 24, 2000

Current Speakers

- Dr. Robert Gates: Former Director of the CIA, Dr. Al Meredith: Senior Pastor for Wedgwood Baptist Church in Fort Worth, Omar Barzani: President of the American Branch of the Kurdish Relief Foundation

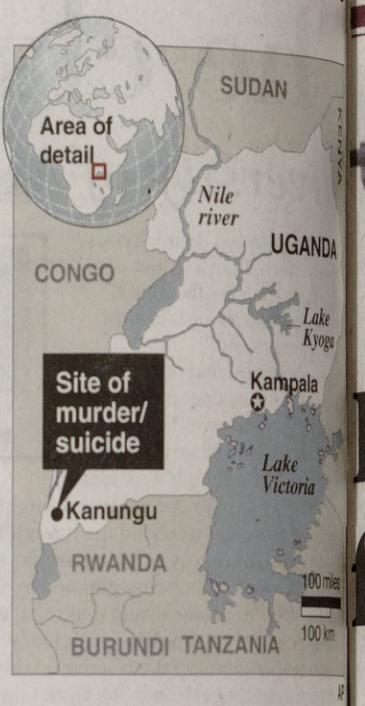
Registration Online at http://scona.tamu.edu

March 30-April 1, 2000

470 die in Uganda cult mass suicide

KANUNGU, Uganda (AP) — Rutemba Didas heard what sounded like an explosion, then saw black smoke billowing from the brick structure on a hilltop compound where members of a religious cult had been living for several years. The farmer and his neighbors heard screams coming from the chapel, but they couldn't get close to the new building inside the compound where members of the Movement for the Restoration of Ten Commandments of God lived in this remote corner of southwestern Uganda. Police said Sunday it may take them a week to determine how many people died in the Friday morning fire, but they believe there were as many as 470 victims — of mass suicide or mass murder. "We did not see any person running away. We really don't know what happened to the leaders," Didas said, standing a short distance from where charred bodies lay spread across the floor of a 120-foot by 30-foot structure. Circumstances surrounding the deaths — who the dead were and how the fire was started — remain foggy.

Little was known about the cult, although it appeared to incorporate Christian beliefs and local farmers said it was led by a former prostitute. Syncretic Christian religious sects are mushrooming across Africa as many people become disillusioned with the inability of politicians to improve their lives. In one case, also in Uganda, a sect turned into a guerrilla movement that used claims of religious powers to attract fighters. In Kanungu, cult members locked themselves in the chapel early Friday and nailed doors and windows closed, then sang for a few hours before dousing themselves in gasoline and paraffin and setting themselves ablaze, said David Sseppuuya, deputy editor-in-chief of the government-owned New Vision newspaper, quoting investigators. "According to an eyewitness on the site, they came around and bid farewell to the people and they heard that the Virgin Mary would appear on Friday, so they did expect to die on Friday," Sseppuuya said. Didas said the cult was established in 1994 by former prostitute Credonia Mwerinde at her family's compound. He said members of the cult did not socialize with others in the area and communicated only by gesture, although they did sing and pray aloud. The women wore white veils, and the men wore black, green or red shirts, he said. Local leaders said members of the sect slaughtered their cattle and feasted for a week before the fire, drinking a large supply of soft drinks and singing religious songs, according to the independent newspaper The Monitor. Cult members from inside and outside the compound had been invited to a ceremony Friday to inaugurate the chapel, which had recently been built by Mwerinde on the graves of her parents, Didas said. In other buildings on the compound, there were images of the Virgin Mary and several rosaries. Didas, whose farm adjoins the compound, said two men, one identified as Joseph Kibwetere and the other an unidentified Catholic priest, were Mwerinde's deputies. It was not known if any of the three had died in the blaze.



Clinton visits South Asia, first in 22 years

NEW DELHI, India (AP) — President Clinton opened the first visit by an American president to South Asia in 22 years Sunday night, hoping to curb the nuclear-weapon rivalry between India and Pakistan and cool territorial tensions in "perhaps the most dangerous place in the world today." Before his arrival, protesters in the capital burned an effigy of the president. In the northern region of Kashmir, police beat back separatists seeking to reach New Delhi and draw attention to their cause. Clinton stepped off Air Force One with his daughter Chelsea on his arm, followed by his mother-in-law, Dorothy Rodham. It was a cool night illuminated by a full moon. Hillary Rodham Clinton stayed home to campaign for a Senate seat. Clinton's six-day journey to India, Bangladesh and Pakistan brought him to one of the poorest regions of the world struggling with population growth, malnutrition, illiteracy and poor health. Adding to the suffering, India entered the new century with more AIDS cases than any other nation — 4 million people are HIV positive. In the capital, the protesters chanted, "Death to Bill Clinton. Death to the imperialism of multinationals." While most Indians welcome Clinton's visit, several nationalist and communist groups protest that he will push

American economic interests at India's expense. In Kashmir, Indian police lobbed tear gas against the separatists. Clinton will spend most of his time in India — five cities in five days — seeking a new relationship to replace Cold War suspicions. He will take a side trip to Bangladesh at the start and make a short stop in military-ruled Pakistan on his way home. White House officials say there is a possibility Clinton will stop in Geneva to meet Syrian President Hafez al-Assad on March 26, but the chief of staff, John Podesta, refused comment. Clinton is the first U.S. president to visit Bangladesh, a Muslim nation about the size of Wisconsin with 120 million people. He planned to salute its efforts to combat poverty and build an inclusive democracy.

The president was to lay a wreath Monday at a monument honoring those killed in Bangladesh's war of independence from Pakistan that led to freedom in 1971. He also was to visit a rural village northwest of Dhaka, the capital, tour a girl's school and see the fruit of a small-lending program that helps women. Searching for foreign policy achievements as his presidency winds down, Clinton has been frustrated trying to promote peace in the Middle East and Northern Ireland. He faces huge obstacles, as well, in trying to narrow differences between India and Pakistan. They have fought two wars over the last half century over rival claims for the Himalayan territory of Kashmir. They clashed again last summer when Pakistan-based fighters seized mountain peaks inside India. More than 1,000 combatants died before Clinton persuaded then-Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif of Pakistan to withdraw the forces. Ignoring world pressure, India and Pakistan tested nuclear devices in 1998, dramatically heightening the stakes of their old feud. Clinton acknowledged the dimensions of the threat when he described the region as "perhaps the most dangerous place in the world today because of tensions over Kashmir and the possession of nuclear weapons."

"Death to Bill Clinton. Death to the imperialism of multinationals." — Indian protesters

Pope's journey receives criticism

JERUSALEM (AP) — The Holy Land awaits John Paul II, whose millennium pilgrimage in the steps of Jesus will take him across territory riven by fresh and ancient hatreds, among people desperate for an elusive peace. From Monday, until he rests on the seventh day, the frail and aged pope faces tasks of biblical proportions. His schedule alone is grueling, from a stadium Mass in Amman, Jordan, to final prayers at the site of Christ's resurrection in Jerusalem. He journeys from Bethlehem to Galilee and twice to the Jordan River. But Jews and Palestinians, and a world beyond, will be scrutinizing every word or gesture for signs that he has something specific in mind when calling for peace on earth. The pope will visit with Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak, Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat and the young Jordanian King Abdullah II, as well as the spiritual heads of Holy Land faiths. Countless thousands will attend his prayers and ceremonies, and press themselves, shouting and cheering, against crowd barriers manned by security forces on nervous full alert.

Israel is deploying 18,000 police officers and 4,000 soldiers, spending more than \$8 million on "Operation Old Friend." Pilgrims and tourists are expected to pump \$50 million into the national economy. Some expect miracles from the mortal pontiff. Far more say they think his visit at least offers renewed hope for better relations among disparate people who share holy but hard-scabble ground. At virtually every stop, bitter ironies shade the spiritual joy. For instance, competition among Israel and its neighbors for scarce water has left the lower Jordan a bare muddy trickle by the time it reaches the baptismal site that John Paul II will visit on both banks. "The water is so saline and polluted by the time it reaches the Dead Sea it is only good for papal ceremonies," observed Eran Feitelman, an Israeli environmental expert. Although "Christian" is used often here as a collective term, divisions remain among Roman Catholics, Orthodox churches, Protestants and countless others, not to mention Jews and Muslims.

News in Brief

Ex-guerrillas win majority in Congress

SAN SALVADOR, El Salvador (AP) — Former leftist rebels-turned politicians have for the first time won a greater number of seats in congress than the ruling party, according to final results from recent elections.

The Supreme Electoral Tribunal announced Saturday that the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front won 31 of the 84 contested seats in March 12 elections for the country's single-house National Assembly.

The leftist party's greatest triumph was in the capital, San Salvador, where FMLN Mayor Hector Silva, a Boston-born gynecologist, easily won re-election.

Altogether, the FMLN won 77 of 262 mayoral races, 60 percent more than the 48 mayoral seats it won in 1997. ARENA won 127 mayoral seats, 34 less than the 161 it took in 1997.

Earthquake hits Japan, no injuries

TOKYO (AP) — A moderate earthquake with a preliminary magnitude of 5.4 struck near the northern coast of Japan early Monday, but there were no reports of damage or injuries.

The quake hit under the seabed of the Pacific Ocean about 30 miles off the coast of rural Miyagi Prefecture, or state, the Meteorological Agency said.

Taiwan party president resigns

TAIPEI, Taiwan (AP) — Storming the Nationalist Party's headquarters, a stone-throwing crowd demanded — and got — President Lee Teng-hui's promise Sunday to quit as the party's leader, one day after its humiliating election defeat.

Many of the thousands of protesters blamed Lee for fielding a weak candidate who was trounced by the opposition in Saturday's presidential election.

A crowd of about 3,000 chanted "Step down president!" and surrounded the Nationalists' headquarters in downtown Taipei.

Some smashed the windows of limousines bringing party members to the building for an emergency meeting with Lee to respond to Vice President Lien Chan's loss in Saturday's vote.

China quiet after Taiwan election

BEIJING (AP) — After months of threats, China's government was eerily quiet after Taiwan's election, restraint could be saying, "Let's see." Beijing had laid out its bottom line to Taiwan before President Chen Shui-bian's victory Sunday: declare independence indefinitely resist talks on unification, and China might attack.

Chen's Democratic Progressive Party favors independence for Taiwan, which has governed since Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalists fled to the island ahead of Communist takeover of the mainland in 1949.

Chen offered a softer stance on independence during his campaign, saying no formal declaration would be necessary unless Taiwan was under attack.

Penberthy CoRec Active Softball Tournament. Registration: March 20-28. Event Dates: March 31-April 2. Entry Fee: \$20/team. Divisions: CoRec. Classes: A-Highly Skilled, B-Moderately Skilled, C-Average Skilled. Location: Penberthy Intramural Sports Center. Team REC SPORTS. Excitement recsports.tamu.edu

BY S Rachael Rh... College Station... er being char... \$110,000 from... Texas Aggriar... Ingram, a 2... of the credit ur... of theft of U.S... over \$100,000... shable by imp... 20 years and... \$10,000. Aggield... Gregg Baird sa... covered during... "We were... Conprin... to b... At least onc... major, prints... us computer la... the prints out eve... "I print some... 20 pages," he... The number o... r computer labs has al... er opened in Fa... will be made thi... associate provos... Cantrell said... currently pay... ated cost of pr... That deficit c... it does not ha... will continue to... restricted prin... "The current... not encourage... son has alread... that will be dor... Student Sen... Cantrell said... ment Senate to w... In Septembe... they print in the... tely or with a... Cantrell said... Cari Eggenb... al science maj... on the job, she f... "I had a guy... said. "When so... .. If we're all... being used for y... She said CIS... average amount... ble a fair quota... "Students wi... direct charges w... excessively," Ca... ties suggest th... more when direc... individuals will avoi... He estimates... Student... \$1,948,289 pa... \$559,79... Fiscal Year