

Another shooting by border patrol results in death

By Ken Ellingwood
Los Angeles Times

SAN DIEGO -- In the second lethal shooting in 24 hours, a Border Patrol agent on Sunday night killed a suspected undocumented immigrant who allegedly threatened him with a rock, officials said.

The fatal shootings were the first involving Border Patrol agents in San Diego County since 1994 and the first since the Operation Gatekeeper border crackdown flooded the region with agents, according to Mexican consul officials in San Diego.

U.S. officials said Sunday's shooting occurred in Border Field State Park, a few miles west of the San Ysidro border crossing. The agent was checking for footprints when he was pelted by rocks, officials said. As the agent retreated to his vehicle, a man emerged from the

darkness wielding a rock and ignored orders to stop.

"Fearing for his life, (the agent) brings out the weapon and shoots this person, striking the person in the torso area," Border Patrol spokeswoman Gloria Chavez said.

San Diego Sheriff Lt. Jerry Lipscomb, who is investigating the shooting, said the agent fired "several shots." The man died at the scene of the 8:30 p.m. shooting.

Citing Border Patrol policy, Chavez did not identify the agent, who was placed on paid administrative leave while the matter is investigated.

The shooting came just a day after another agent fatally shot a suspected illegal border crosser trying to aid a fellow immigrant east of the San Ysidro port of entry. In that incident, which took place about 9 p.m. Saturday, U.S. officials said the agent was struggling with a migrant next to the

10-foot border fence when approached by a second person clutching a rock. The agent fired after the man ignored warnings to stop, according to the Border Patrol and San Diego police.

But Mexican authorities said witnesses interviewed by consular officials disputed reports that the man had a rock.

Mexico's consul general in San Diego, Luis Herrera-Lasso, expressed "deep concern" Monday over the two fatal shootings, plus two separate incidents last week in which Border Patrol agents elsewhere in San Diego County fired weapons at suspects who allegedly tried to run them over.

The Mexican diplomat said cases of rock-throwing are familiar to border agents and previously have not been answered with deadly force. He called for a full investigation.

Fathers' program largely failed, study shows

By Judith Havemann
The Washington Post

WASHINGTON-- The nation's most ambitious effort to help the fathers of children on welfare failed to increase the men's employment or earnings and had only modest success at forcing them to make child support payments, according to a extensive study to be released Tuesday.

Overall, men enrolled in the \$12 million program did no better in the job market than similar men who received no help.

The study represents the most comprehensive examination of fatherhood programs that have developed into a crucial component of the nation's social policy. When Congress rewrote the federal welfare laws two years ago, it ushered in a new crackdown on absent fathers, requiring states to track them down and force them to help pay for the support of their children.

As a result, numerous programs have proliferated around the country to help carry out this goal. But detailed results from the largest of these efforts offered dispiriting news about how these programs are working.

Called "Parents Fair Share", the program operates in seven cities across the country and reaches about 2,600 absent fathers. Half of the men lack a high school diploma and 70 percent have an arrest record.

The program rests on a tripod of agencies: Child support collection officials give the men a break on their monthly payments if they participate

in the programs, social service agencies conduct counseling sessions on what it takes to be a good father, and labor agencies offer job clubs and training classes to help the men land jobs.

But in its study of the program, the Manpower Demonstration and Research Corporation found that 78 percent of the men held jobs at some point during the 18-month period studied -- whether or not they were in the program. The New York-based research organization also discovered that the participants in Parents Fair Share earned an average of \$7,352, while a group of similar men made \$7,670 during the same period. Overall, 72 percent of the fathers in Parents Fair Share made at least one child support payment during the 18 months studied, compared with 69 percent of a similar group of fathers not enrolled in the program.

However, the total amount collected from both groups of fathers was almost the same. Two cities--Grand Rapids, Mich., and Dayton, Ohio -- had stronger results, partly because of better cooperation among the separate agencies, according to the report.

Although the services provided by the program seemed to have no effect, the screening process by which applicants were selected ended up spurring child support collections. Normally, the system rarely goes after welfare fathers for child support because states believe they will spend more going after them than they will collect in payments.

But when the states began their

fatherhood programs, they started asking more questions of these men, and ended up distinguishing those who couldn't pay from those who wouldn't. And overall, child support payments were about 19 percent higher for the men screened, whether or not they were selected to participate in the program.

Ron Mincy, a program officer at the Ford Foundation, which helps fund the program, said that while the men in the program received counseling and support, they received little actual training that might help them develop the skills that could land them better jobs.

A new program being launched by the foundation will provide targeted money for training low-income men in an effort to see whether this is more successful.

In all, 38 states have promised to spend some federal welfare money on fathers and Congress is considering whether to increase the money available.

"We don't have all the answers," said Rep. E. Clay Shaw, R-Fla., leading author of the welfare bill, "and we would have much preferred that the research told us we were on the right track. But we can't give up on these kids. They need fathers."

Finding the answer is critical, said Wendell Primus, director of income security at the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. "We can't have the women overemployed as breadwinners, caretakers and parents, and the men sitting idle," he said.

Evacuees flock to sports facility

By Susan Saulny
The Washington Post

NEW ORLEANS - As Hurricane Georges unleashed its initial flickers of fury on the New Orleans area, hundreds of residents rushed to the Louisiana Superdome, which city officials opened Sunday morning as "a shelter of last resort."

They came in droves pushing and shoving in a chaotic rush to safety as winds picked up speed and rain began to fall. They lugged plastic bags overflowing with clothes, blankets, food, toys and medical supplies, and carried jugs of water -- enough for days.

Whole families, elderly people in wheelchairs, mothers nursing babies, screaming children -- everyone was on the lookout for a few feet of space in the cavernous halls and rampways that just Saturday night were filled with fans watching Tulane beat Navy in a college football game.

Joseph Baptiste, 74, a former housing authority manager, rested his

head against a wall on the plaza level as he watched the crowds surge past him. "Better here than at home," he said.

Mayor Marc Morial opened the shelters of last resort -- including the New Orleans Convention Center and a vacant department store -- as the exodus out of New Orleans continued. It became obvious that a lot of people were going to be trapped in the city whether they wanted to ride out the storm at home or not. The highways closed at noon with the onset of high-speed winds.

"The dome was built to be a hurricane shelter," Morial said. "There's plenty of space and no windows. We feel we can adequately protect people there."

About 10,000 people had taken refuge by late afternoon in the Superdome, and 5,000 were in other shelters.

Officials planned to open the dome's seating area -- 69,000 spaces -- if the hall should fill.

As a last resort, there would be

the football field. "They really don't want people on the field, but this is a dire emergency," said Buzz Leininger, 54, who volunteered Sunday morning. "If water comes in, the field could be flooded. But nothing's out of the question."

That news excited Joe Veit, 27, an Air Force captain from Nebraska who was toting his pillows up an escalator. "Would they let us get out there really?" he asked, only to answer himself. "I doubt it."

The accommodations were far from luxurious. People spread their blankets and used their bags of supplies as dividers. Some came with nothing. They rested their heads against the bare floor.

By the escalator near an end zone, Baptiste and his wife Vivian, 54, said they were just happy to be out of the storm's way. "I'm glad to be here," she said. "I just hope when we get out of here that there's something to go home to."

Guatemalans train with weapons of peace

By Terri Shaw
The Washington Post

CHIMALTENANGO, Guatemala -- Francisco Vasquez was 17 when he left his Kaqchikel Indian village in the Guatemalan highlands to join guerrillas fighting the military government. That was in 1984. Today, Vasquez has set aside his rifle for carpentry tools, learning wood-working in a United Nations-sponsored program stemming from the 1996 peace agreement that ended the 36-year insurgency.

Vasquez's journey from mountain rebel to carpenter is emblematic of efforts by the Guatemalan government and international agencies to find a place in society for the nearly 3,000 onetime guerrillas who laid down their arms under terms of the peace agreement. The demobilization of the guerrillas, one diplomat said, was surprisingly peaceful: "It went off without a hitch."

But adjustment to civilian life has not always gone smoothly for the former guerrillas or their erstwhile enemies. Under the peace accords, one-third of the army is to be discharged and the paramilitary forces allied with it have been disbanded. Many former combatants returned to their homes, but others found that their villages had been virtually destroyed during the war or that they were no longer welcome there.

Several countries and international agencies have set up programs to teach the former rebels trades, such as tailoring and hair styling. But there are not enough opportunities for all, and the end of hostilities was accompanied by what the diplomat called "a massive, uncontrollable crime wave." Many Guatemalans and foreign observers believe that some of the armed men who no

longer have a war to fight have turned to robbery and kidnapping to support themselves.

But the former guerrillas who have settled in Chimaltenango, in a fertile farming area about 20 miles west of Guatemala City, seem to be

People in the village had never understood. They looked at me and made comments. They were afraid the (army) repression would begin again

Canadian army Capt. Claude Vadeboncoeur

adjusting well. One of them, Sylvia Arenas, who comes from a poor family in Guatemala City, began doing "small jobs" for the insurgents while studying social work at the state-run University of San Carlos. Then a Spanish priest working in Guatemala recruited her to work with a peasant organization in the highlands.

"My dream was to join the armed struggle," she said. And so, at age 19, she became a member of the Turcios Lima Front of the Guerrilla Army of the Poor. Now, she and her partner, Flavio Ruiz, run a modest diner not far from the small shop where Vasquez and six other single men are learning to be carpenters.

The guerrilla war ended on March 19, 1996. Vasquez and his unit received a message saying, "Military action is suspended." Some of his comrades were worried about what would come next -- especially those who had been fighting for 20 to 25 years, Vasquez recalled. But most reported to demobilization camps run by the United

Nations and turned in their weapons.

Canadian army Capt. Claude Vadeboncoeur, a member of the U.N. mission in Chimaltenango, observed the demobilization process, as he had at the end of civil conflicts in Nicaragua and El Salvador. He said the guerrillas and their supporters spent two months in the camps, where they received some training in how to adjust to civilian life. Many then returned to their former homes. But some, such as Vasquez, could not.

"The army had moved my family from their land to a place inside the village," he said. "My brother had to move to Guatemala City; he had been threatened. I was the first (former guerrilla) to come back. People in the village had never understood. They looked at me and made comments. They were afraid the (army) repression would begin again."

One source of frustration for the former guerrillas in Chimaltenango is a plan to build 100 houses for them and their families. The land has been purchased with the assistance of European countries and the United Nations, and the new owners plan to provide the unskilled labor themselves. But the project has become mired in bureaucratic and financial delays. Other residents of Chimaltenango are sometimes suspicious of the former guerrillas, said Juan Carlos Monge, a Costa Rican who heads the local U.N. office. "They ask, 'What are they going to live on? Where will they get water? What if the electricity goes out? What will they plant?'"

Under the final peace accords signed in December 1996, local committees have been formed throughout Guatemala to ease the

Demonstrators challenge authority of Malaysian leader

By David Lamb
Los Angeles Times

JAKARTA, Indonesia -- Demonstrators demanding reform clashed with police in Kuala

Lumpur for a second day Monday, challenging the authority of Malaysia's autocratic prime minister, Mahathir Mohamad, the longest-serving leader in Southeast Asia.

The clash, which came as Queen Elizabeth II was presiding over closing ceremonies at the 16th Commonwealth Games a few miles away, upped the ante in a dispute that started when Mahathir fired and arrested his deputy, Anwar Ibrahim, whom the demonstrators support.

Anwar, 51, was dumped Sept. 2 in a power struggle with the 73-year-old Mahathir amid allegations of sexual improprieties, attempted murder and corruption, all of which Anwar denies. Rather than go quietly, Anwar toured the country denouncing Mahathir. He was arrested at his home on Sunday.

Although few diplomats dare predict how the challenge to Mahathir's 17-year rule would play out in a country where dissent is unheard of, there was in Malaysia an unmistakable echo of events in nearby Indonesia. A popular reform movement in Indonesia toppled President Suharto in May after 32 years in power.

In both cases, there was an aging leader who brooked no criticism, unruly demonstrators on the streets shouting for reform, and a once-robust economy that had turned sour. But most political analysts doubt an Indonesian scenario in Malaysia.

In Indonesia, Suharto's fate hung on whose side the army would take; it ended up abandoning him. But Malaysia's military is not politicized and will support whomever is in power. Also, Mahathir's corruption and nepotism is far less grievous than Suharto's, and there is no groundswell of hatred for Mahathir as there was for Suharto.

With Mahathir exercising absolute control of the media, Anwar has no public forum to either defend himself or push his case for reform. Two men have been arrested for allegedly engaging in sodomy with Anwar. Sodomy is a crime in Malaysia, a Muslim country, and local newspapers have been full of steamy details provided by the government.

Anwar, who had not uttered the word reform until three weeks ago, has had a hard time making his argument that the Mahathir government is corrupt, has mismanaged the economy and is comparable, as he charged, to the Nazi Gestapo. As finance minister and deputy prime minister until Sept. 2, he played a major role in shaping official policy.

With police helicopters buzzing overhead, officers on Monday chased mobs of protesters down side streets and blocked roads in Kuala Lumpur. Several thousand more demonstrators took to the streets in other parts of the capital, where they were chased by riot police.

Although conceding more arrests are likely, Western diplomats said it is impossible to know whether the call for reform will take popular root as it did in Indonesia, or fade away now that its leader is in jail. Anwar is charged under the Internal Security Act, which allows detention without trial. Anwar's wife said she doesn't even know where he is being held.

But given the widespread strife in economically troubled Southeast Asia, the envoys agree that events in Kuala Lumpur are worrying.

Ever since 1969 riots against ethnic Chinese in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia has worked to maintain racial harmony by trying to include its Malay, Chinese and Indian citizens in sharing the benefits of national prosperity and peace. Civil unrest could split that coalition of Malaysia's 22 million people.

Read the
Beacon

Every Thursday