

Nicaragua denies killing 2 U.S. journalists

By FREDDY CUEVAS
Associated Press Writer

TEGUCIGALPA, Honduras — Nicaragua denied yesterday that its forces shelled and killed two American journalists near the Nicaraguan border, and implied that Honduran gunners or U.S.-backed Nicaraguan rebels were responsible.

An air force helicopter flew into the capital with the bodies of the two — identified by military authorities as Dial Torgerson, Los Angeles Times bureau chief for Mexico and Central America, and free-lance photographer Richard Cross who had been on assignment for U.S. News & World Report.

Honduras accused Nicaragua of a cross-border attack, but the Sandinista government said "at no time has there been an attack against Honduras."

The Sandinistas accuse the U.S. and Honduran governments of supporting anti-governance Nicaraguan insurgents and allowing them to use Honduras as a base. Nicaragua also charges that the Honduran

military supports the insurgents with cross-border fire.

A statement from the Nicaraguan Foreign Ministry said "The false accusation made by the government of Honduras lies in the plans for escalation made by the Central Intelligence Agency of the United States, which has as its objective justifying greater aggression against Nicaragua."

Nicaraguan Foreign Minister Miguel D'Escoto appeared at a news conference and said the Honduran charges are "the most reprehensible cynicism."

"Everyone knows that it is the Honduran army, which supports the mercenaries directed and financed by the CIA to provoke Nicaragua, and I hold the governments of the United States and Honduras responsible for the death of the journalists," he said.

Foreign Minister Edgardo Paz Burns said Torgerson and Cross were killed around 5 p.m. EDT Tuesday, by anti-tank fire from Nicaraguan troops across the border. He said an anti-tank shell shattered the journalist's automobile as it drove a dirt

road a few yards from the border.

The road runs between the villages of Cifuentes and Las Trojes, about 75 miles directly east of Tegucigalpa — but 215 miles by car because of the winding, mountainous road to the region.

Fellow reporters said the newsmen left Tegucigalpa early Tuesday in a car that did not carry any of the "international press" or other precautionary signs that journalists use in El Salvador.

President Reagan was informed of the incident Tuesday night and said he "deeply regrets the loss of life of two outstanding journalists who were carrying out their professional responsibilities in a very difficult situation," White House spokesman Larry Speakes said.

He added, "The president joins with all who believe in a free press in paying tribute to these professionals who were the tragic and unfortunate victims of violence."

The Hondurans originally said Time magazine reporter William McWhirter also was killed because they thought he was traveling

with Torgerson and Cross. But it was learned later that McWhirter had flown to Miami Monday night, and Honduran officials retracted the report.

Twelve foreign journalists, including two other Americans, have been killed since revolution broke out in the region in 1978.

The army declared the area where the reporters were killed a zone of high danger yesterday and sent officials to warn people that it is dangerous to go there.

A protest note from Honduras said "the Honduran government... holds the government of Managua responsible for whatever incident that may occur as a consequence of the constant harassment by the Sandinista army against the territory and population of Honduras."

A brief ceremony was held at the air base, where military chief Gen. Gustavo Alvarez Martinez said, "The situation with Nicaragua is extremely serious. The Sandinistas are attacking us constantly without any justification. Because of that, we are going

to take actions rapidly."

He did not explain what those actions would be.

The bodies were taken to a funeral home to be turned over to relatives arriving from Mexico and the United States.

Torgerson was born April 19, 1928, in Southport, N.C., and was graduated from the University of Southern California in 1951. He had worked for "The Los Angeles Times" since 1967 and was named bureau chief for Mexico and Central America in March 1981 after foreign assignments in Africa and the Middle East. He worked for The Associated Press in Los Angeles from 1954-66.

Cross, 33, was born in Kansas City and worked through the photo agency Black Star for a number of publications, including Newsweek. He lived in Mexico City and had gone to Honduras last weekend on assignment for U.S. News & World Report. Cross was a free-lancer for the AP during the 1978-79 Sandinista revolution.

Banks sentenced to death

By LEE LINDER
Associated Press Writer

WILKES-BARRE — George Banks, a former prison guard convicted of killing 13 people, including five of his own children, was sentenced to death yesterday by the jury that had found him guilty.

After jury foreman Thomas Boory read the death sentence for each of 12 first-degree murder verdicts, the defense asked that the jury of eight men and four women be polled.

In all, the word "death" was spoken 156 times. One juror, Nancy Young, cried as she pronounced it.

Banks then cried out to the juror, "It's not your fault, you were lied to, ma'am."

Banks, who turned 41 yesterday, had said in pretrial interviews that he expected to receive the death sentence. Over his lawyers' objections, he had taken the stand to testify that he shot all 13 people, but that someone else had fired at least nine of the shots that proved fatal.

He was convicted Tuesday of 12 counts of first-degree murder for the premeditated slayings of the children, ages 1 to 6, the four women who bore them and three other people related to a former girlfriend.

He also was convicted of third-degree murder for gunning down bystander Raymond Hall, 24, in the street after shooting eight of the victims in his Wilkes-Barre home last Sept. 25. The third-degree conviction means the jury felt the death was not premeditated.

Luzerne County Court Judge Patrick Toole told Banks he had 10 days to file a motion for a new trial and for arrest of judgment. Otherwise, the verdicts and sentences will stand, he said.

District Attorney Robert Gillespie Jr. had sought the death penalty, telling jurors earlier in the day that Banks had shown "no mercy, no sympathy for his victims. Show him no sympathy, no mercy."

The defense had failed to convince the jury that Banks was insane, a defense attorney Al Freni Jr. said he was disappointed that the jury didn't vote for life imprisonment.

The state's last execution was in 1962, when Elmo Smith died for the rape and murder of a young girl.

Pennsylvania dismantled its electric chair before the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in 1972 that the death penalty was being applied unequally. Banks was sentenced under a capital punishment law approved by the state Legislature in 1978.



Antlers up!
Two plastic reindeer stands hold their ground yesterday as flood waters rise to three-foot levels in Gayland Brock's back yard in Garrett, Pa. Twenty-five homes were flooded but no one was injured in the rising waters.

Truce offered to PLO chief by rebel leader Abu Mousa

By FAROUK NASSAR
Associated Press Writer

BEIRUT, Lebanon — Rebel leader Saïd Mousa offered Palestine Liberation Organization chief Yasser Arafat a truce yesterday, saying the mutiny could be resolved by "democratic dialogue."

There was no immediate response from Arafat at his new headquarters in the north Lebanese port of Tripoli. But another spokesman for the mutineers, Jihad Saleh, charged that Arafat was regrouping his forces in northern Lebanon in preparation for "some action that will result in violence."

Tripoli already is the scene of a local civil war between pro-Syrian Alawite and anti-Syrian Sunni Muslim militias vying for dominance of Lebanon's second largest city. Police reported 10 people killed and 27 wounded in fighting from midnight to dawn.

In southern Lebanon, an Israeli

guard was killed and three were wounded when guerrillas ambushed a border patrol near the village of Arab Salim. It was the fourth attack on Israeli forces in Lebanon in two days.

Mousa, better known by his code name of Abu Mousa, told reporters at his headquarters in Hammara, in the Bekaa Valley, "there is no need for more fighting" between the mutineers in the Fatah faction of the PLO and those still loyal to Arafat.

"We advocate continued warfare against Israel," he declared. "We advocate continued Palestinian presence in Lebanon. We will never leave Lebanon as long as there is a vein throbbing in us."

Both Abu Mousa and the Syrian government news agency denied Arafat's charge that Syrian tanks led the mutineers early Tuesday when they seized the positions held by pro-Arafat forces along the Beirut-Damascus highway through the

central Bekaa Valley.

But Arafat's top military aide, Khalil Wazir, told a news conference in the Bekaa Valley town of Baalbek the local Syrian army command admitted the Syrian tank support for the mutineers' attack and told him it was "the result of the individual behavior of one Syrian officer."

"Arafat was preparing his forces to attack and overrun our positions," Abu Mousa said. "He then positioned forces to block our supply routes and began an advance toward our positions, so we staged a counterattack, throwing his forces back and reopening our supply routes. We threw them back very far."

After the attack Tuesday, the pro-Arafat majority on Al Fatah's Revolutionary Council authorized Arafat and the other 12 members of the Fatah central committee to do whatever was necessary to end the mutiny.



Three-year-old Lonnie Carney from Andover, N.Y., takes a few minutes yesterday to enjoy his toys. Lonnie and 12 other victims of progeria are vacationing in the Pocono Mountains courtesy of the Sunshine Foundation.

Foundation gives progeriacs a chance to share childhood

By BOB DVORCHAK
Associated Press Writer

HENRYVILLE, Pa. — Thirteen children who suffer from progeria, a rare premature aging condition with no known cure, are enjoying a vacation in the Pocono Mountains where they are forging friendships to ease the loneliness of the disease. "Being brought together brings a closeness. They are one big family unit. They live now as a group," said Bill Sample, a Philadelphia policeman who founded the Sunshine Foundation, a non-profit group that is sponsoring the week-long stay at a mountain resort in northeastern Pennsylvania.

"For the first time in their lives, they are allowed to be kids. They're having a ball," said Meg Casey, 27, of Milford, Conn., the oldest progeriac at the conference.

"I represent someone who's been there and gone through it — people

staring, not being invited to the prom when you're 16, and peer pressure. It's important for the parents, too, to treat them as normal as possible and to tell the kids how proud they are of them," Casey said in an interview session with reporters.

Last year, the Sunshine Foundation, which fulfills the wishes of terminally ill children, brought eight progeriacs together for the first time.

The Sunshine Foundation says there are only 18 reported cases of progeria in the world and only about 100 have been identified since the first case was reported in 1888. Victims of the genetic mutation die at an average age of 13. They display characteristics of aging and many have heart trouble and hardening of the arteries. They also show similar and unusual physical characteristics, such as dwarfism, wrinkled skin and baldness.

The gathering for the progeriacs, who were free to stay for as much of the week as they wanted, was a reunion for some old friends in addition to being an opportunity to meet new ones.

Francis Geringer, 10, of Orkney, South Africa, renewed his friendship with Mickey Hays, 11, of Hallsville, Texas. But Hays had to leave the conference yesterday.

"I don't want to go," he said before a tearful farewell with his friend. "Stay in touch."

The two originally met after news stories appeared about their illness.

"It changed his whole life. He can look the world in the face. He's not ashamed. Before, he was too shy to go to school," said Herman Geringer, holding his son on his shoulders during an interview.

Six of the eight children who attended last year's first conference are here this year.

state news briefs

Bill would prohibit teachers' strikes

HARRISBURG (AP) — The right to strike for public school teachers would be severely limited under legislation introduced yesterday in the House.

The seven-bill package is designed primarily to prevent teacher strikes. State employees would also be affected by some of the legislation's provisions.

Reps. Stephen Freind, R-Delaware County, and Joseph M. Gladeck, R-Montgomery County, said they "completely and unequivocally oppose" giving public employees the right to strike.

The legislation introduced yesterday would:

- Amend the state constitution by permitting contract settlements for all public employees by final, best-offer arbitration.
- Prohibit teachers from striking unless a court has ruled that a school board has been bargaining in bad faith.
- Impose strict fines on striking teachers.
- Make such issues as class size, school calendars, reductions in force and teacher evaluation matters of managerial policy, not subject to collective bargaining.

Floods cause \$10 million damages

BEDFORD (AP) — Bedford County officials yesterday estimated flash floods caused more than \$10 million in damage, including at least \$2 million in damage to the grounds of the historic Bedford Springs Hotel south of this Allegheny mountains community.

Officials asked state and federal governments to declare parts of Bedford County as disaster areas following cloudbursts that dropped more than four inches of water on central Pennsylvania before dawn Tuesday, according to National Weather Service estimates.

Rainfall in the Bedford area was measured unofficially at 5.26 inches.

No one was injured in the downpour and subsequent floods.

nation news briefs

AMA questions danger of dioxin

CHICAGO (AP) — There is no scientific evidence that dioxin contamination poses imminent danger to people, the American Medical Association said yesterday as it approved a publicity campaign to counter news reports about the chemical.

"The news media have made dioxin the focus of a witch hunt by disseminating rumors, hearsay and unconfirmed, unscientific reports," says the resolution approved on a voice vote by the AMA's 151-member House of Delegates.

The campaign is intended "to get accurate information before the public to prevent irrational reaction and unjustified public fright," it said.

However, one of the resolution's sponsors, Dr. George Bohigian, said dioxin's long-term effects on humans are not known.

Dr. Paul Wiesner, an assistant director of the Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta, said that while he couldn't comment on the AMA resolution because he hadn't seen it, "evidence is increasing that there is an association with a rare form of tumor called soft tissue sarcoma after occupational exposure (to dioxin)."

Wiesner also said studies clearly show that dioxin is poisonous to animals and that this suggests caution in human contact with it.

Possible herpes cure investigated

WASHINGTON (AP) — A New York pharmaceutical company said yesterday it will seek government clearance to sell, over the counter, a possible cure for genital and oral herpes. But at least one herpes researcher greeted that announcement with caution.

Arthur Colon, president of Dahn Pharmaceutical Co. of Farmingdale, N.Y., said that the product, known only as herpes formula 1423A, had been successful in treating the disease and preventing its recurrence when tested on more than 1,800 persons in the Bahamas.

Dr. Gregory Mertz, a researcher at the Herpes Research Clinic at the University of Washington, said he could not offer an evaluation of such a drug without having more specific information on it.

world news briefs

Public health doctors continue fast

TEL AVIV, Israel (AP) — Nearly half of Israel's 4,500 public health doctors were reported fasting for higher pay yesterday, and there was speculation that the army would put them on reserve duty to keep hospitals from shutting down.

The protesters said four of the 17 major hospitals — in Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, Haifa and the Galilee — were rapidly closing departments as almost 2,000 of the nation's public health doctors observed a water-only fast. Some began their hunger strike eight days ago.

Israel radio reported that the director-general of the Health Ministry, Dr. Baruch Modan, met with the directors of the nation's hospitals and the head of the army medical corps, stirring speculation that the army would order the doctors onto reserve duty to staff the hospitals.

The doctors vowed to go on fasting until the Treasury offered a substantial pay raise. Prime Minister Menachem Begin met with Finance Minister Yoram Aridor and a delegation of doctors during a heated debate in Parliament on a no-confidence motion over the strike that the government easily defeated.

South American storms rage on

RIO DE JANEIRO, Brazil (AP) — Unprecedented storms and drought have taken hundreds of lives and left millions without homes or jobs across South America.

Weather experts say they cannot predict when the freakish conditions will end.

"This pattern could continue until the end of the year, or even longer," said Meteorologist Vernon Koucky of Brazil's Space Research Institute. "There is simply no way to tell."

The mixture of cold air and warm water south of the jet stream unleashes punishing rain storms, and to the north little precipitation can break months or even years of drought.

Most of the damage in southern Brazil has been to agriculture. The grain crops are hard hit, and produce prices are rising sharply in Brazil's cities.

stock report

Market shows heavy trading

NEW YORK (AP) — The stock market turned in a mixed performance in heavy trading yesterday as broad indicators continued to shatter records while the Dow Jones average retreated from new heights.

Analysts said yesterday's session indicated that traders still remain wary about the course of the economy, despite a series of glowing reports that the recovery from recession is broadening.

Volume Shares	128,649,130
Issues Traded	1,981
Up	890
Unchanged	343
Down	748

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- Dow Jones Industrials 1,245.69 - 1.71

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