

Presidential troubleshooter tours scene of hard fighting with Indian rebels in Mexico

By ANITA SNOW
Associated Press Writer

OCOSINGO, Mexico (AP) — A presidential troubleshooter toured the scene of some of the fiercest fighting in a rebel uprising in southern Mexico hours after President Carlos Salinas de Gortari announced a cease-fire.

Manuel Camacho Solis, the special commissioner appointed to mediate the conflict in Chiapas state, reiterated his desire Wednesday to meet with the Indian rebels.

"I am willing to meet with the representatives of the organization when they think it is convenient," he said before traveling by car to Ocosingo.

The government news agency Notimex said without elaborating that Camacho has already established preliminary contacts with the rebels.

He was accompanied by Monsignor Samuel Ruiz, the Roman Catholic bishop of the Chiapas city of San Cristobal de las Casas and an outspoken advocate of Indian rights.

Earlier in the day, a tired-looking Salinas announced a unilateral cease-fire in southern Mexico after the army gained most of the control over the area previously dominated by the rebels.

Salinas said soldiers would fire only if they are attacked by the Zapatista National Liberation Army, which staged a New Year's uprising in Chiapas state on behalf of poor Mayan Indians.

He also called on the rebels to turn in their weapons and promised to pardon them in return.

The rebels have said they would talk to the government if they stop bombing, withdraw troops and recognize their movement. The government's initiative has prompted no immediate response from the rebels, though there also was no new fighting after the government's announcement.

The rebels have vowed to carry their war to Mexico City, a metropolis of 18 million people, if their demands are not met. The guerrillas have been blamed for a series of bombings last week in the capital and in the Pacific resort of Acapulco.

In the capital, about 11,000 people marched through the streets denouncing Salinas and calling for a peaceful solution to the conflict.

"Dialogue yes, bombs no!" the marchers shouted.

The president leaves office this election year and the uprising, the first in Mexico in two decades, casts a shadow over his six-year term. It also coincided with the entrance Jan. 1 of the North American Free Trade Agreement, Salinas' crowning achievement.

The rebels had said the accord linking the economies of the United States, Mexico and Canada, is a "death sentence" for the country's indigenous and farming communities.

Salinas said army troops achieved their first goal to drive out the rebels, who had retreated to mountain and jungle hideouts after soldiers rooted them out of towns they seized.

About 14,000 government soldiers are stationed in Chiapas, compared to rebels' estimated 1,000 to 2,000 fighters.

Officials say 107 people have died in the fighting, although church groups put the number higher.

In Ocosingo, Camacho was swarmed by townsfolk as he toured the market where just a week ago lay the bodies of many of the 60 people killed here following the uprising.

"It was an historic day for the people of Chiapas," Ruiz, the bishop, told reporters after returning to San Cristobal. "We can't solve all the problems, but we understand them and are working on them."

Wednesday was the first day in a week that reporters could visit the hard-hit towns off the southbound highway and the first day people who live in those towns could travel out. Telephone service and electricity remains cut off to most of the towns and food and water supplies are low.

In the village of Oxchuc, about 700 people from the nearby mountain town of Tobilja that suffered government aerial attacks last week have sought refuge in the village school.

The refugees, all Indians, were too frightened to give their names to visiting members of the government's National Commission on Human Rights.

Rebels occupied the towns for days, saying they were fighting for better living conditions and an end to exploitation and oppression of Mexico's Indians.

Golden Agers tribute



Those attending the monthly Golden Agers luncheon sponsored by The Salvation Army received a special treat this week — a huge cake baked by Maggie Ivey, who serves as secretary for the Pampa Salvation Army office. Above left, Audi Kendrick, left, and Dessie Jackson cut



the cake, which was made to thank and compliment the Nona S. Payne Foundation for providing a grant to help pay for the monthly luncheons for the senior citizens this year. Above right, Kendrick, who is in her 90s, receives a hug from Ivey. (Pampa News photos by Darlene Holmes)

USDA projects tighter supplies for corn and soybeans

By ROBERT GREENE
AP Farm Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The 1993 corn and soybean crop fell short of the previous year's record harvest, and cattle and hog producers could see their profits drop as a result, the Agriculture Department says.

The department on Wednesday again lowered its estimate of the 1993 corn crop, beset by drought and floods. The lower crop estimate caused the department also to lower its estimate of the surpluses coming into the harvest.

The department estimated the corn harvest at 6.34 billion bushels, 33 percent below the record 1992 crop and 2 percent below its forecast from last November.

The department also reported that supplies coming into the next harvest will be 802 million bushels, down from the 886 million bushels indicated in December. Those are the lowest

carryover stocks since the mid-1970s. That leaves little room for bad weather in the year ahead.

Cattle and hog producers could begin to feel a drain on their profits in the coming months from the higher prices and tighter feed supplies, the department noted.

"It's certainly something they can get through provided we do come back with a normal crop next year," said Gary Adams, economist at the University of Missouri's Food and Agricultural Policy Research Institute.

Adams also said that if the weather acts up again in the Farm Belt, "you're really going to start putting some pressure that consumers will start to feel."

The department's new estimate of the soybean harvest was 1.81 billion bushels, down 1 percent from the November forecast of 1.83 billion bushels. The new estimate means the harvest is 17 percent below last year.

Because of the smaller crop, soy-

bean stocks are projected at 150 million bushels, down from 165 million projected last month, creating a similar situation to that with corn.

As a result of the projected harvest, corn farmers could get \$2.85 a bushel for the rest of the year, the department said. Soybean prices could range between \$6.10 and \$7.10 a bushel, up 10 cents from the previous month's estimate.

"For farmers with grain, it's going to be a very good time," said Pete Wenstrand of Essex, Iowa, president National Corn Growers Association. "For those who don't have the grain, it certainly is a bitter, missed opportunity."

Higher prices for corn and for wheat will make it easier for Agriculture Secretary Mike Espy to raise the price support loan rates for those crops. That's the amount growers can borrow from the government against the future sale of their crops.

An announcement could come Fri-

day at American Agriculture Movement's national convention in Lubbock, Texas, where Espy plans to speak.

In other annual reports, the department put the cotton production at 16.2 million bales, down 42,900 bales from 1992.

Hay was put at 149 million tons, down slightly from 1992; sorghum for grain at 568 million bushels, down 36 percent from a year ago and the lowest since 1983; and rice at 156 million hundredweight, down 13 percent from 1992.

In a monthly report, the department estimated all orange production for this current season at 10.5 million tons, up 2 percent from last month but down 5 percent from last season.

In yet another report Wednesday, the department estimated winter wheat plantings at 50.6 million acres, down 2 percent from 1993, and the lowest seeded area since 1988. Plantings began in August.

GAO reinvestigating UFO case

ALBUQUERQUE (AP) — U.S. Rep. Steve Schiff has prompted the re-opening of a well-known New Mexico UFO case.

Schiff, R-N.M., asked the General Accounting Office to investigate whether a government cover-up followed the crash of a mysterious object near the ranch town of Corona on July 2, 1947.

And the GAO, the investigative arm of Congress, agreed to take a look.

"It's not a light thing to ask a government agency to look into something, but the government has been accused of a cover-up," Schiff said Wednesday. "The issue is whether the government is being forthright with the American people, and that is a serious issue to me."

The 1947 crash, known as the "Roswell Incident" because it happened about 75 miles northwest of Roswell, has been the focus of UFO books and buffs for years. They claim a flying saucer crashed on a ranch owned by Mac Brazel and that government teams whisked away the wreckage and perhaps the bodies of aliens.

They allege the remains of the crash were taken first to Fort Worth, Texas, then to what is now Wright-Patterson

Air Force Base in Ohio.

The Air Force said the day after the recovery that the material was from a weather balloon equipped with a radar reflecting gadget.

But UFO believers say the incident was the beginning of a government secrecy program that has hidden proof of the existence of extraterrestrial visitors for more than four decades.

"For sort of all-around thoroughness, Roswell's the best case we've got," said Michael Lindemann, a UFO researcher from Santa Barbara, Calif. "If we had no other UFO case at all, the elements of the Roswell case would go a very, very long way to proving we have had alien visitation."

But UFO debunker Philip J. Klass of Washington, D.C., said there "isn't a shred of evidence" that a flying saucer was recovered at Roswell.

Schiff said he decided to look into the allegations after receiving letters from people interested in UFOs, including a couple from people who claimed to have personally witnessed the wreckage at the crash site.

Schiff said he was told a few days ago that a GAO investigator had nothing yet to report and was "getting stonewalled" by the Department of Defense.

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Gender barrier cracks at Citadel

CHARLESTON, S.C. (AP) — The gates of The Citadel opened to a woman armed with a court order Wednesday. But after Shannon Faulkner registered to take day classes, the nation's top judge blocked her from attending them.

At the request of the 151-year-old military college, Chief Justice William Rehnquist granted a stay to keep the 18-year-old student from attending classes Thursday.

The Citadel and Virginia Military Institute are the nation's only all-male, state-supported military colleges. Admissions policies at both are the target of federal lawsuits.

Ms. Faulkner, who plans to major in education, walked several hundred yards through a driving rain and a horde of reporters to register in Bond Hall, the turreted administration building that dominates one end of The Citadel's parade ground.

"I didn't expect all of this and I didn't really expect to be here," Faulkner said as she advanced through the crush to meet her academic adviser, register and pay tuition. "I actually expected the battle to be a lot longer."

She said she was treated nicely by college officials and signed up for biology, math, English, history and education. But she said she felt "overwhelmed" by the attention.

"Everybody is saying, 'You're making history,'" she said.

Though cadets promised to treat

her with respect, they kept hoping for a last-minute reprieve.

"We don't want the class of 1994 to be labeled as the year of Shannon Faulkner," senior Will Benton said.

Faulkner initially was accepted by the college after she had references to her gender deleted from her high school transcript. The Citadel rejected her application when it discovered she was a woman, and she sued, challenging the constitutionality of the all-male admissions policy.

Last August, a federal judge said Faulkner could attend classes, but not join the corps of cadets, while her lawsuit proceeds. The 4th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals refused to overturn the order.

Faulkner, who is from Powder-sville, said she hoped to become a full-fledged member of the grey-uniformed corps of cadets within a year.

"I don't think you can get the full Citadel experience without being a cadet," she said.

Since Faulkner sued, five incidents of vandalism have been directed against her and her family — the most recent when vandals poured sand, rotten eggs and spoiled food on her car.

U.S. Attorney J.P. Strom said the FBI was investigating threats against Faulkner's "personal safety" and unspecified threats against her family and attorneys.

Experts: Repaired Hubble keen enough to prove black holes

By PAUL RECER
AP Science Writer

ARLINGTON, Va. (AP) — The repaired Hubble Space Telescope has vision keen enough to finally prove the existence of black holes by measuring the velocity of stars being sucked into the center of galaxies, experts say.

Astronomers at a national meeting of the American Astronomical Society said the December space shuttle mission to correct the blurred vision of the \$1.6 billion Hubble has been successful and the orbiting telescope will soon be able to conduct an unprecedented search for black holes.

"The search for black holes is a top priority for the Hubble space telescope and our efforts have been frustrated by the (blurred image)," said Gary Bower of the Space Telescope Institute.

Asked if the repair effort corrected Hubble's view sufficiently to now prove the existence of black holes, Bower said, "Yes, it will."

The Hubble has been undergoing a checkout since its repair in December, and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration is to formally announce today whether the fix-it job was successful.

Astronomers who have gotten reports on the work, however, indicated Wednesday at a national meeting of the American Astronomical Society that the Hubble now has 20-20 eyesight.

"The checkout has gone far better than anyone had hoped," said an astronomer connected with the astronomy program. He asked not to be identified, but said that "everything has been done right on time in the tests."

At a news conference Wednesday, Bower said

that the Hubble will be able to provide final proof about the existence of black holes by measuring how fast stars are being pulled into the center of galaxies by immense gravitational force.

A black hole is thought to be an ancient star, at least three times the size of the sun, that has collapsed into a single point only a few miles across. Matter is so dense that it creates a powerful gravitational force that draws everything nearby, including stars, into its center. Gravity becomes so intense in a black hole that nothing escapes, including light. Hence, the object is dark and cannot be viewed directly.

'The search for black holes is a top priority for the Hubble space telescope ...'

Instead, astronomers measure the movement of objects and gas nearby and determine from their velocity the power of the gravitational point.

Bower said that based on measurements made by the Hubble before its repair and by ground-based telescopes, astronomers have found about 20 galaxies that may have black holes at their center. But no final proof has been found.

"We seem to be getting closer and closer," said Bower.

The problem, he said, is that instruments, including the defective Hubble, have not been able to measure velocities of stars as they approach the cusp of a black hole. As matter

moves faster and faster, it heats up and releases bursts of light and radiation that blot out the view. As a result, earlier instruments could not observe stars in their final dash to oblivion.

Bower said the repaired Hubble will provide that capability.

Proof of a black hole will come if stars near the galactic center are found to be moving at about 250,000 miles an hour. If stars move more slowly in that region, said Bower, it would be evidence of no black hole.

Earlier Hubble studies have detected stars clustered about the center of galaxy M81, suggesting strongly that this galaxy 12 million light years away contains a black hole, he said.

"We are convinced that this suggests that M81 contains ... a black hole," said Bower. He estimated that the black hole has a about 10 million times more mass than the sun.

But final proof will await observations by the repaired Hubble.

The Hubble Space Telescope was designed to be able to see farther out into the universe than any telescope ever built. But after it was in orbit, scientists discovered that its mirror had been ground too flat at the edges. In effect, the mirror was cut to the wrong prescription.

As a result, the image it produced was slightly blurred, limiting the range of the Hubble's vision.

Early in December, a space shuttle crew, in a series of space walks, installed new optics in the Hubble that are designed to sharpen the telescope's view. The astronauts also installed a new camera with corrective optics.

NASA announced that the repair job was a success, but scientists have spent the weeks since testing the refurbished telescope. Those results will be announced today.



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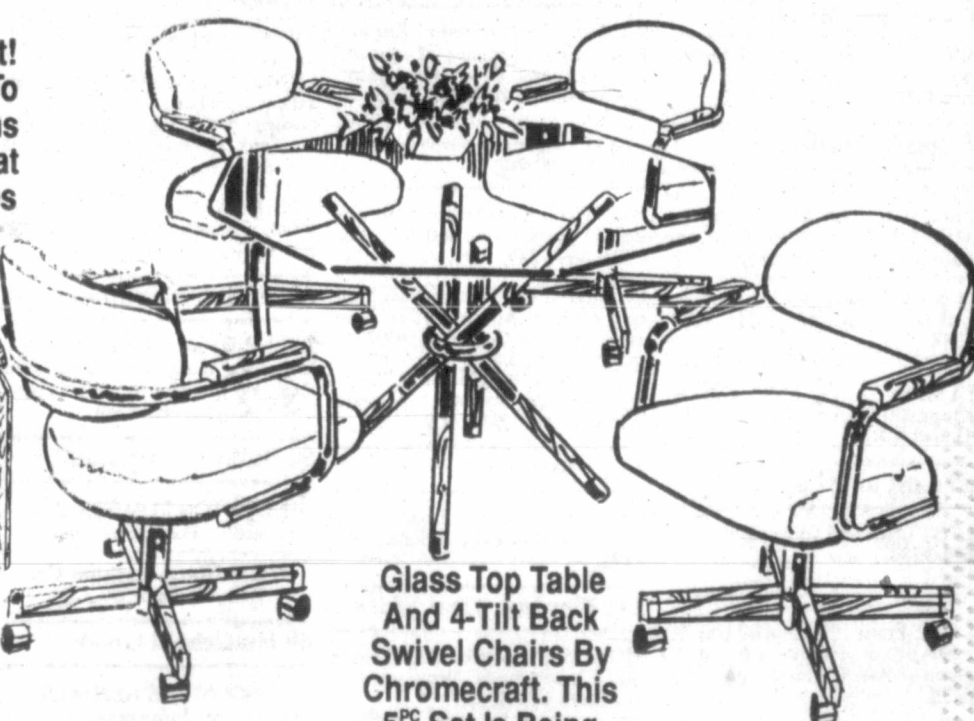
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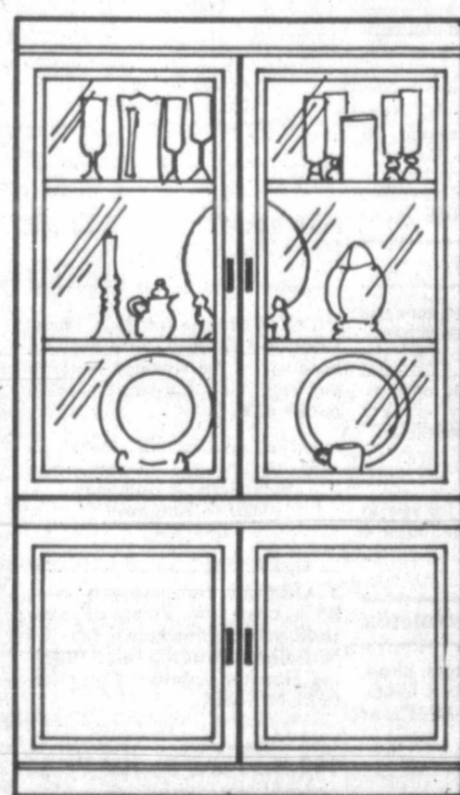
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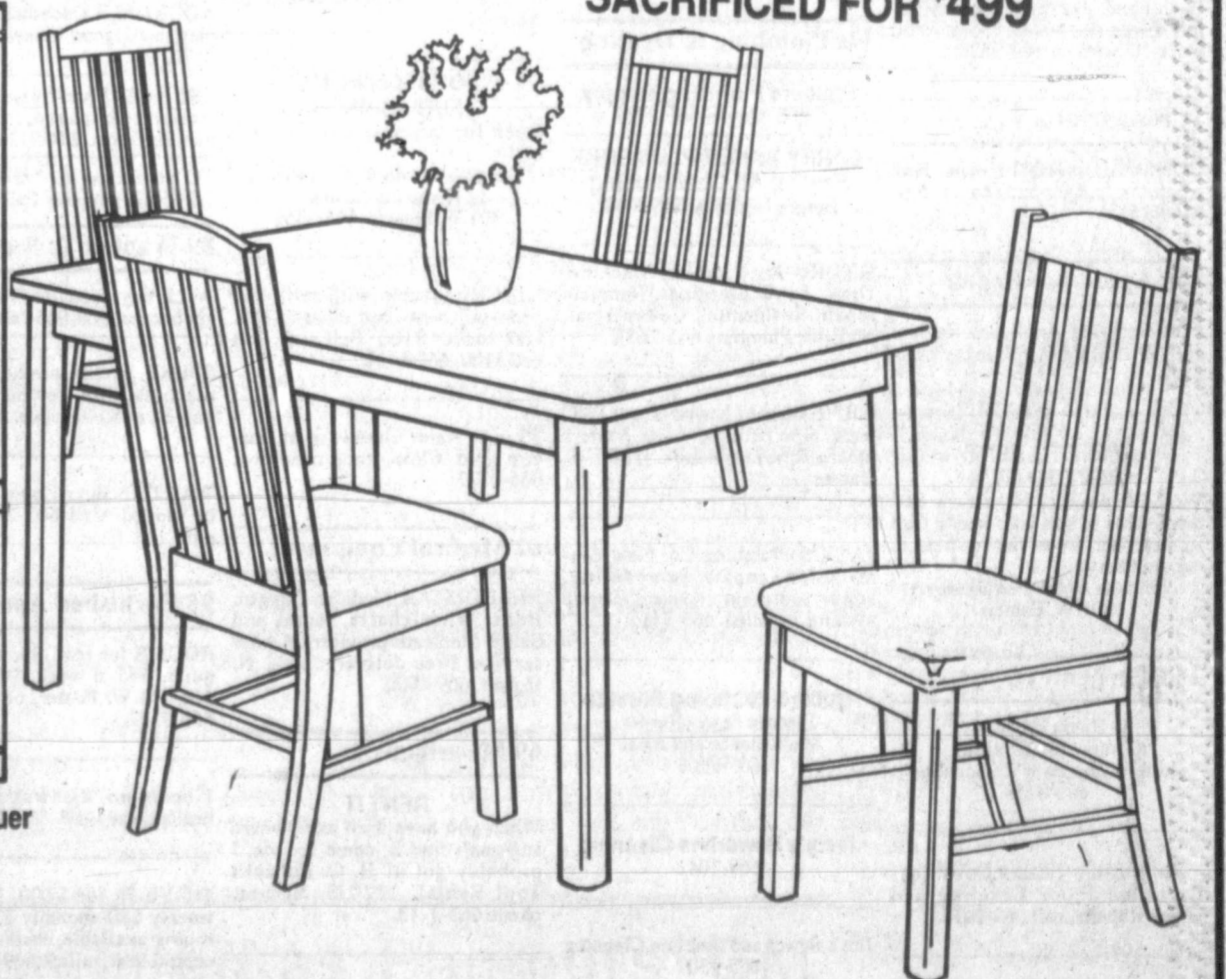
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