

Wildfires strike Greece, 60 dead

ALANA GIBSON | STAFF WRITER

As Guilford students attempt to preserve water because of Greensboro's continuing drought, Greece has also felt the bitter effects of the dry August heat.

Greece recently declared a nationwide state of emergency as forest fires roared through the country leaving more than 60 people dead and hundreds of other residents left to start over. Among the victims were volunteer firefighters, residents caught in their homes, or escapees who could not get away.

Territories affected by the wildfires include Ileia, Messinia, Lakonia, Arkadia, Corinth, Attiki, and Aitolia kai Akarnania. The region hit worst by these massive fires was the town of Zaharo.

Residents pleaded desperately, via phone to radio and television stations, in hopes of being rescued. By land and by sea, authorities were able to evacuate 26 villages trapped in the flames. However, many residents refused to flee their properties, hoping to save irreplaceable remnants of their lives.

Approximately 300 tourists, mostly from France, were also evacuated from the surrounding

hotels and resorts.

As with most disasters it does not take long before the blaming begins. Many residents including members of the government believe that the fires were intentionally set by dishonest property developers.

"So many fires breaking out simultaneously in so many parts of the country cannot be a coincidence," said Prime Minister Costas Karamanlis to the International Herald Tribune. "The state will do everything it can to find those responsible and punish them."

A natural disaster is also a viable explanation for these fires since the land is dry, the hills are thickly wooded, and the winds made extinguishing fire even more difficult.

Xavier Pathoulas, a Greek-French architect said to the Associated Press, "If the wind doesn't turn tonight we will burn."

The best weapon proved to be large water-bombing aircrafts. Hovering dangerously close to the fires these aircrafts release a flood of water compensating for the lack of rain Greece endures in late August.

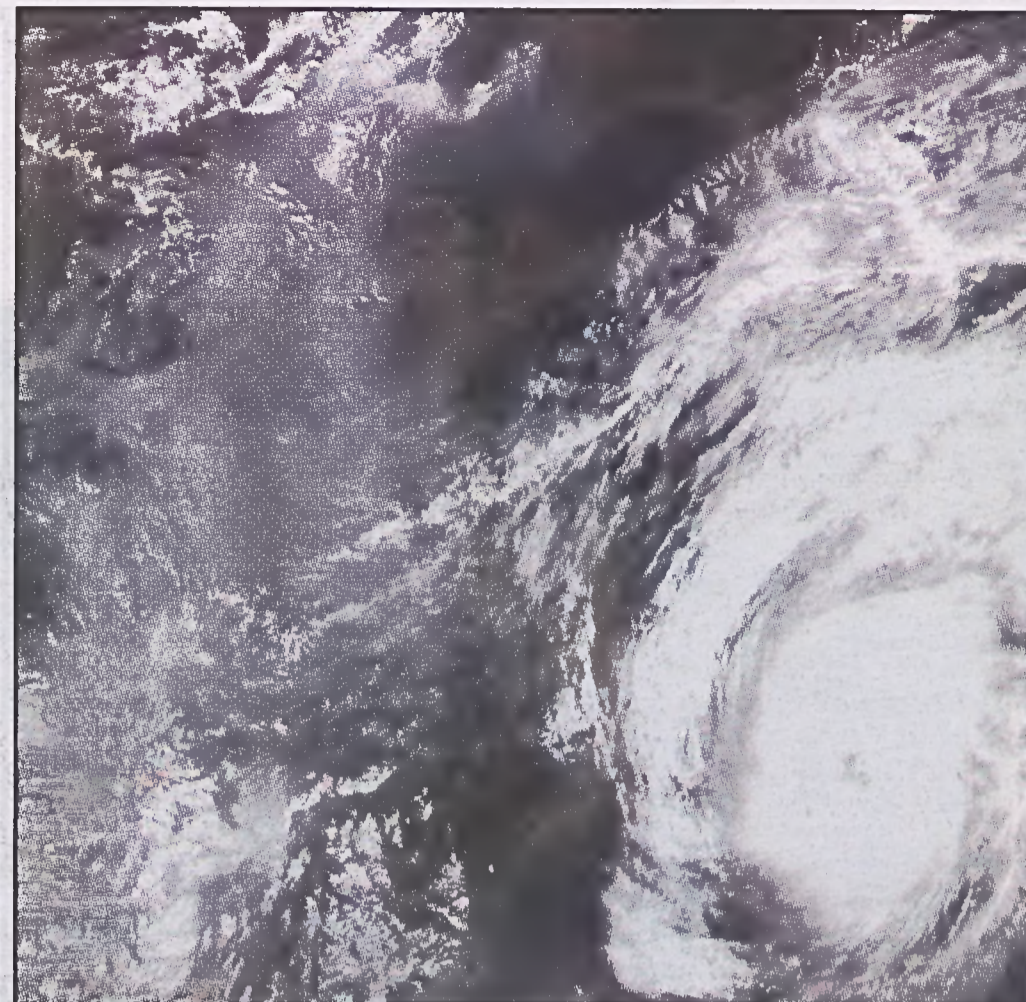
Greece's focus now is to develop plans for reconstruction. European Union institutions are willing to

speed up procedures in order that Greece can possibly benefit from the European Solidarity fund.

"All of us across Europe have been developing this deeper and deeper feeling of solidarity with burning Greece," said Danuta Hübner, the European commissioner for regional policy, to Athens News Agency. "I am here to do very concrete things, because I believe that after the solidarity shown by all European states in the first days of the unprecedented disaster today, the time has come to accelerate the work on how to cope with the mid-term and long-term consequences of this disaster."

Members of the Guilford community also offered solace to Greece. Becky Gibson, lecturer and professional tutor, spent two weeks in Athens this past May and was also devastated by news of the horrific fires.

"When I saw the picture of the trees," said Gibson, "it broke my heart because this is what these people live on and these trees are hundreds of years old. They provide a livelihood for these people. They take seven to ten years to bear fruit. It will be decades before they are restored. In the picture they looked like fossils."



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PARTICULATE POLLUTION (LEFT) FROM EASTERN CHINA, WHERE EMISSIONS STANDARDS AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTIONS ARE STILL IN INFANCY.

Exporting emissions to the poor

PADDY LEHANE | STAFF WRITER

The head of the U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change, Yvo de Boer, has suggested that rich nations should be exempt from cutting up to 100 percent of their harmful emissions if they pay poor nations to do it for them.

"I feel like that's saying to the world, 'Do our dirty work for us.' That's absolutely ridiculous," junior Hannah Gordon said.

De Boer cites this idea as being the best way to deal with an urgent and very dangerous problem. De Boer claims that over the past several years, industrialized nations have made great strides to curb emissions, strides that are often costly, but less has been done to decrease emissions in poor nations.

De Boer said that from an economic as well as environmental standpoint, cutting emissions in underprivileged nations will be just as helpful as in wealthy nations.

"We have been reducing emissions and making energy use more efficient in industrialized countries for a long time, so it is quite expensive in these nations to reduce emissions any more," de Boer said to BBC News. He continued to say that it would become economically attractive for foreign firms to reduce emissions in poor countries.

Environmental groups have decried de Boer's comments as being a preposterous and dangerous attempt at solving a major problem facing the future of the planet. They believe that industrialized and wealthy nations, in addition to poor nations, need to be cutting

their emissions now.

Signatories of the Kyoto Protocol, which include a plethora of nations both rich and poor, are required to decrease their emissions. Environmentalists insist on this important aspect of the protocol being implemented and enforced. Without the cooperation of all nations, the global climate debacle cannot be solved, environmental groups argue.

Guilford students have reacted strongly to the controversy as well. While many see the need for a drastic cutback on emissions, students see this as a global problem and not one that will be solved by rich nations defaulting on their responsibilities.

"If the richer nations have different standards than poorer nations it devalues the problem. Just paying for other people to take care of our problems isn't enough; we have to do it ourselves," senior Brennan Kahl said.

Many people agree that the world is at a crossroads for its future. According to some scientific estimates, by 2050, carbon dioxide emissions must be reduced by 50-80 percent in order to retain global sustainability.

Leading environmental groups argue that the help of all nations, particularly large, industrialized polluters like the United States, is needed to save the planet from impending disaster. De Boer senses the urgency as well, but has a clearly different approach.

To BBC News de Boer said, "The atmosphere does not care where emissions are reduced as long as they are reduced."

Gonzales, Rove leave office as election year ramps up

ELYSA POLOVIN | STAFF WRITER

"The balance of power is tipping," said Assistant Professor of Sociology Martha Lang.

Two of Americas leading political powers, Karl Rove and Alberto Gonzalez, recently resigned leaving the president in a weakened state. These recent resignations marked an immense leap forward for Democrats.

Gonzalez had spent 13 years in office as President Bush's attorney general, and was often said to be one of the president's closest advisors. Karl Rove worked hand in hand with Gonzalez as the White House's chief deputy of staff

and one of George W. Bush's chief strategists.

The fact that the inner circle of leading power in America is jumping ship just as a presidential term is coming to a close makes some American citizens wonder what this could mean for their future. As the elections of 2008 creep closer, it seems as if the core circle of leading politicians is slowly beginning to crumble beneath its own power.

"The analogy of Iraq leading a sinking ship comes to mind," said Robert Duncan, assistant professor of political science.

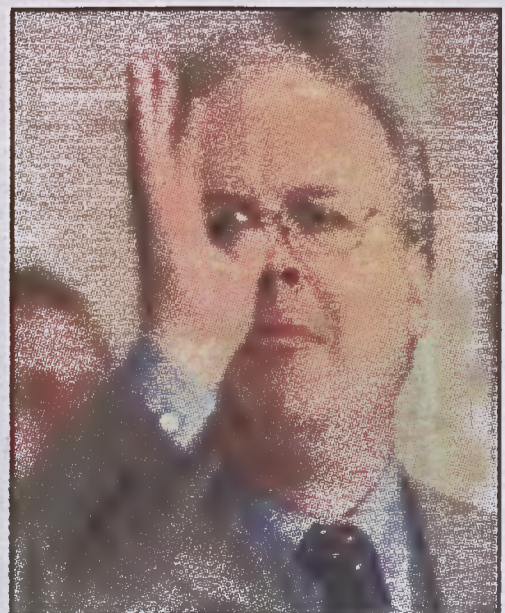
Rove and Gonzalez were leading supporters of the Iraq war and have now left President Bush and other members of office to continue alone. According to BBC News, Karl Rove said that he left for the sake of his family, yet also revealed that he has been consistently under investigations dealing with the leaking of a CIA agent's identity, and various "underhanded political tactics" throughout the years.

Rove said of President Bush to Fox News, "I have seen a man of far-sighted courage put America on a war footing to protect us against a brutal enemy in a dangerous conflict that will shape this new century."

The echoes of this controversy have forced people to think about

the possibilities that lay within the upcoming election. Most Americans are hoping for leaders that will stay in office and follow through with their actions, no matter what political party they belong to. For many students at Guilford this will be the first presidential election they are able to vote in, and for many it will be a difficult decision.

"I think it's an obligation of every citizen who can vote to do their research, to find a candidate that reflects their beliefs regardless of political party and support them, not just on election day," said Duncan. "You get what you work for."



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GONZALEZ RESIGNS AS WELL