

Mine blast in Russia kills 42

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

OSINNIKI, Russia — The coal-blackened faces of exhausted rescuers and the red-rimmed eyes of anxious relatives told a grim story of disappearing hope Sunday, a day after a methane blast tore through a Siberian mine, killing at least 42 miners.

Five miners remained missing in the latest disaster to strike Russia's hard-scrabble coal country. "Most likely, they will all be corpses," said the head of a commission dealing with the disaster.

The blast occurred early Saturday about 1,840 feet down in the Taizhina mine in a coal-rich strip of western Siberia called the Kuzbass.

On Sunday, emergency officials plotted rescue and recovery strategies at one end of the mine's Soviet-era administration building, which is topped by a red star, while griev-

ing relatives sat or milled nervously in a rundown auditorium dominated by a painting of a strong, smiling miner carrying flowers.

"They told me to wait," said Tatyana Fatykhova, 34, whose husband, Rashid, was underground when the blast occurred.

"They've pulled up some bodies, but they haven't identified them yet."

Her husband's name was not on the list of identified victims posted by the stairwell.

The head of a government commission created to deal with the disaster, Sergei Ovanesyan, said it was "practically impossible" that any of those still missing would be found alive.

"Most likely, they will all be corpses," he said.

Of the 42 bodies found, 36 had been retrieved, and 29 of those had been identified, said officials over-

seeing the recovery effort.

More than 600 miners work at the mine in the city of Osinniki, according to ITAR-Tass. Taizhina opened in 1998 but was built on the foundation of a closed mine, and the equipment shown on Russian television stations appeared to be run-down.

Rescue workers dug underground toward the blast site from two sides: Taizhina and an adjacent mine in Osinniki, a sprawling community of ramshackle homes and crumbling, derelict buildings set amid barren hills streaked with snow.

A handful of rescue workers discarded oxygen tanks and lit up cigarettes after a shift underground.

Asked if there was hope of finding anyone alive, one of the rescuers shook his head to mean "no." The men refused to talk about the conditions underground, but the

Interfax News Agency said the area was filled with carbon dioxide, and Ekho Moskvy radio said work was hampered by heavy smoke.

Deputy Prosecutor General Valentin Simuchenkov said the blast occurred after the concentration of methane gas in the mine increased by roughly 10-fold in a short period of time.

Investigators will try to determine what made the methane level increase so quickly and what triggered the blast, Simuchenkov said, adding that an earthquake or the shifting of coal plates were among the potential causes of the buildup.

A criminal investigation was opened into suspicions of safety violations, he said. Accidents are common in the Russian coal industry, but Saturday's disaster was the deadliest in the Kuzbass since 1997, when a methane blast nearby killed 67 people.

9-11 panel probes old FBI divisions

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The legal wall that for years divided FBI intelligence and criminal agents is blamed largely for the government's failure to grasp the threat posed by al-Qaida inside the United States before the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks.

One FBI agent, frustrated at his inability to track two soon-to-be hijackers known to be in the United States, wrote in an August 2001 e-mail that "someday someone will die, and wall or not, the public will not understand why we were not more effective and throwing every resource at certain problems."

The problem, since resolved, is expected to be among the topics when current and former Justice Department and FBI officials testify Tuesday and Wednesday before the independent commission investigating the Sept. 11 attacks.

Former FBI Director Louis Freeh, former Attorney General Janet Reno, Attorney General John Ashcroft and FBI Director

Robert Mueller are among those scheduled to appear.

In the months after the Sept. 11 attacks, the wall was dismantled by the USA PATRIOT Act and a court ruling allowing the FBI to seek special warrants allowing agents to wiretap phones and conduct other secret surveillance inside the United States of suspected foreign terrorists, government agents and spies.

Former Sen. Slade Gorton, R-Wash., a commission member, said Sunday the FBI's lack of internal communication, not just the intelligence-criminal wall, will be the principal topic of this week's hearings.

Exhibit A will be President Bush's daily briefing of Aug. 6, 2001, which the White House declassified and made public Saturday night, he said.

"The most important feature of the PDB ... is the line that the FBI is conducting 70 full field investigations," Gorton said on "Fox News Sunday." "I don't know where those 70 full field investigations were."

Israel: Hezbollah backs Palestinians

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

JERUSALEM — The Islamic group Hezbollah has become a key sponsor of Palestinian violence, funding suicide bombings that have killed dozens of Israelis in recent months, Israeli intelligence sources, Palestinian Authority officials and militants have told The Associated Press.

The Iranian-backed group, based in Lebanon, first earned a foothold in the 3 1/2-year-old Palestinian uprising by giving money to Hamas and Islamic Jihad, ideological allies that also seek the destruction of Israel.

In recent months, it has pulled off something akin to a hostile takeover of some of cells of the Al Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades, wrenching them away from Yasser Arafat's secular Fatah movement and turn-

ing them into a proxy army.

Al Aqsa members in the West Bank city of Nablus say they speak with their Hezbollah handlers by phone almost daily. Israeli security officials say Hezbollah trains some Palestinian militants abroad, instructing them in weapons and bomb-making.

Hezbollah does not seem to be issuing specific instructions about targets or timing. One Al Aqsa member said his Hezbollah contact urges him to carry out attacks whenever the opportunity arises, in "any way possible."

Israeli officials say Hezbollah helps coordinate joint shootings and bombings by the three Palestinian militant groups and has been trying to spur Israel's Arab citizens, who have mostly stayed out of the uprising, to join in.

Israel's Shin Bet security service says that since 2003, six Hezbollah cells have been discovered among Israeli Arabs.

Hezbollah doesn't elaborate on what support it gives, but after the assassination of Hamas founder Sheik Ahmed Yassin in March, it promised to do whatever possible to help Hamas exact revenge.

A senior Israeli military official, speaking on condition of anonymity, described Hezbollah's involvement in the Palestinian intefadeh, or uprising, as "immense."

"They are all over the place and they give a lot of money," the official said, adding that Iran might be using Hezbollah to fund Palestinian militants. Many Palestinians admire Hezbollah, crediting its 18-year guerrilla war with having forced Israel to with-

draw from southern Lebanon in 2000, a model Palestinian militants would like to emulate.

In Lebanon, Hezbollah, meaning "Party of God," is seen not only as a militant group, but also as an influential and legitimate political force, with schools, clinics, a TV station and Parliament members.

Hezbollah still launches occasional attacks on Israel over a minor border dispute, but the issue inspires little passion. Its search for new relevance has led it to the Palestinians, said Ibrahim Bayram, an analyst with Lebanon's An-Nahar daily.

"Whether here or in Palestine, Hezbollah considers resisting the Israeli occupation to be part of its own struggle," he said. "If the intefadeh ends, the justification for its (military) existence ends too."

Officials, families wait for release of hostages in Iraq

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

TOKYO — Japan waited anxiously Monday for the release of three Japanese civilians taken hostage in Iraq as the government struggled to determine whether the gunmen holding them planned to set them free.

In the United States, relatives of Thomas Hamill, a U.S. civilian held by militants in Iraq, said they were praying for his safe return.

At least one hostage was released Sunday, and more were expected to be freed. Britain's Foreign Office said Gary Teeley, a British man who reportedly had been kidnapped in the southern city of Nasiriyah, was safe and in the hands of coalition forces.

Al-Jazeera reported Sunday that kidnappers said they would release eight other foreign hostages: two Turks, three Pakistanis, a Nepalese, a Filipino and an Indian. Their captors claimed the men were truck drivers for the U.S.-led coalition.

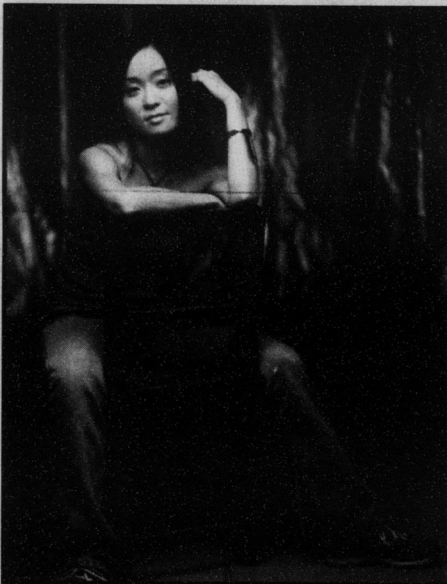
In a video of the eight hostages,

a spokesman for the kidnappers said they were being released. But it was unclear if the men actually were freed.

Japanese officials in Jordan said they were talking with unidentified people in Iraq to gain the Japanese hostages' release. A negotiator told the Japanese government the three civilians were unharmed, held near Fallujah, Kyodo News reported, citing unidentified government sources.

The American, Hamill, 43, was snatched Friday by gunmen who attacked a fuel convoy he was guarding. His captors threatened to kill him unless U.S. troops ended their assault on the city of Fallujah. The deadline passed Sunday morning with no word on Hamill's fate.

Hamill, a Mississippi native, works for the Houston-based engineering and construction company Kellogg, Brown & Root, a division of Halliburton, his wife, Kellie, told The Associated Press.



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Wednesday April 14

Keynote address by Flora Singer
7:00 pm, Carroll 111

Wednesday April 14 to Thursday April 15

24 Hour Reading of the Names of Holocaust Victims
8:15 pm to 8:15 pm, in front of the Carolina Union

Thursday April 15

Discussion with Christopher Browning
author of *The Origins of the Final Solution*
7:30 pm, Toy Lounge
presented by the Carolina Center for Jewish Studies



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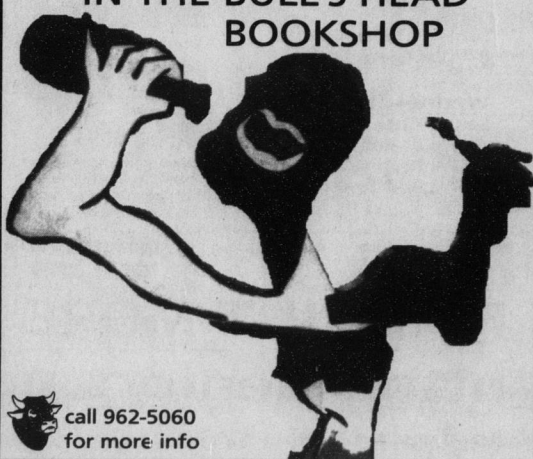
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