

Iraq

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because it was so much higher than previously accepted estimates.

No official count has ever been available. While the U.S. military says it does not track Iraqi deaths, it has challenged some news reports of tolls from shootings and bombings as exaggerated — indicating it does in fact monitor fatalities.

In November, a U.S. military official said the Pentagon was working with Iraqi authorities to better track civilian casualties. One goal is to avoid duplicate reports, said Col. Bill Rapp, a senior aide to the top U.S. commander in Iraq, Gen. David Petraeus.

The true toll may never be known because many deaths go unreported in the chaos that has gripped the country, or the numbers may be tainted by sectarian bias. The Iraqi security forces and government are led by Shiites. Muslim burial traditions add to difficulties — many families are believed to simply bury loved ones before sundown on the day of death without ever reporting the fatality.

Still, Iraq's minister of health, Dr. Salih Mahdi Motlab Al-Hasnawi, defended the new estimate in a telephone interview with reporters Wednesday.

"This is a very sound survey" with a large sample and good methods, he said.

Richard Brennan of the New York-Based International Rescue Committee, which has done similar research in Kosovo, Uganda and Congo, agreed.

"The goal is not to give an absolute, precise number of deaths. The goal is to give a sense of the magnitude of the problem," he said.

White House deputy press secretary Tony Fratto said White House officials had not seen the study, but called the deaths of Iraqi citizens or any troops "tragic."

"We mourn the deaths of all people in Iraq as the country fights to defeat extremists," he said, contending that last year's surge of troops is reducing civilian deaths.

The United Nations paid more than \$1.6 million for the new study. Results were published online Wednesday by the New England Journal of Medicine.

By any count, the toll is "massive," wrote Catherine and John Brownstein, statistics experts at Yale University and Harvard Medical School, respectively, in an accompanying essay. It likely still is low, because many Iraqis have fled and aren't there to report deaths and because some areas are too dangerous to survey.

A poignant example: One statistician was killed during the project and another, shortly afterward.

The survey was done by Iraq Ministry of Health employees during late 2006 and early 2007 in all 18 provinces, divided to get a valid sample of each area. But Iraqis hold a deep distrust of central authority, given the tribal nature of their society and the years they lived under Saddam Hussein, whose grip on power was built partially on a web of informers.

"We are dealing with surveys in a country where there is unrest and high insecurity situations," said Dr. Ties Boerma, a World Health Organization official. "Surveys are imperfect, no matter how well we do it."

Researchers asked families whether any deaths had occurred in their households, recorded details such as age and time and place of death, and assigned deaths as violence-related or not.

However, road accidents were not counted unless they were caused by a bomb — one of many ways that surveyors could have underestimated the true toll, some experts said.

Limiting the study to the time since the invasion in March 2003, and extrapolating results to the whole country, researchers arrived at the 151,000 estimate. The study authors say they are 95 percent certain the true number is between 104,000 and 223,000. Iraq's population is about 26 million.

"The goal is to give a sense of the magnitude of the problem."

Richard Brennan
International
Rescue
Committee



LEN VAUGHN-LAHMAN/MediaNews

Paul Dhaliwal attends the burial of friend Carlos Sousa Jr. at Calvary Catholic Cemetery on Tuesday.

Tiger victim describes attack

By JULIA PRODIS SULEK
MediaNews

The morning of Carlos Sousa Jr.'s funeral Mass, his mother telephoned Carlos' best friend, Paul Dhaliwal, and implored him to call her. She wanted to know what really happened at the San Francisco Zoo when her son was killed by the Siberian tiger and Paul and his older brother were mauled.

For the first time since the Christmas Day attack, the 19-year-old called her back, crying.

"How did it happen?" Marilza Sousa asked, her Portuguese accent thick.

It was quick, Dhaliwal said.

"Did you stick anything through the fence or taunt the tiger?" she asked him.

"No," he told her. "We never tried to taunt the animal. We were talking, laughing, walking, nothing else."

In an interview with the San Jose Mercury News on Wednesday, Marilza Sousa recounted the dramatic and heart-wrenching conversation she had with Dhaliwal — an account that at least one zoo spokesman is not quick to believe. The phone conversation provides the closest account so far of the attack that has become an international news story and has swirled with rumors that the trio must have taunted the tiger for it to leap from its enclosure.

A necropsy of Tatiana on Tuesday revealed that she had been shot by police three times, including once in the skull, and that the nails on her hind paws were "torn/frayed," perhaps suggesting she might have tried to get traction on the grotto wall to get out.

The stomach of the 250-pound animal — not 350 pounds as

MOM OF TEEN KILLED IN MAULING WANTED STORY FROM SON'S FRIEND

previously reported — was "full of undigested meat," apparently from an earlier feeding.

When Dhaliwal returned Sousa's call Monday morning, he said he was sorry for not calling in the two weeks since the attack, but "I didn't know what to say," he told her.

In the five-minute call, he laid it out for her:

While the three of them were talking and laughing, he said, the tiger sprang over the fence, attacking him first — not his 23-year-old brother, Kulbir, as has been reported — and ripping a long gash across his skull.

Carlos Sousa and Dhaliwal's older brother were waving their arms to distract the tiger when it turned on Sousa and "just grabbed him," Dhaliwal told Sousa's mother.

"The mouth of the tiger just opened and got the neck," he said, "and killed him right there."

That's apparently when the brothers ran to the gift shop, some 300 yards away.

"He said he's bleeding and screaming and there's no one to help," Sousa recounted.

Dhaliwal started crying on the phone again.

"All this is inside my heart," Dhaliwal told her, "and I can't sleep or close my eyes."

When he does, he told her, all he sees is the tiger's jaws clamping down on his best friend's neck. He hears the screams.

"He said he wished it was him" that was killed, she said, because the images replaying in his head are "harder than to be dead."

"OK, Paul," she told him. "I don't want to hear anymore. I don't want to know anymore."

For two weeks, rumors have circulated through the media that Sousa and the Dhaliwal brothers provoked the tiger, maybe using a slingshot to distract it. Police say no slingshot was found.

Sam Singer, who was hired as zoo spokesman after the attack, seemed skeptical of Dhaliwal's denial of taunting, saying, "If that's what he told Mrs. Sousa, that's what he told Mrs. Sousa."

In the 70-year history of the San Francisco Zoo, he said, what happened on Christmas Day was so unusual that "to our knowledge nothing like this has ever happened before. Animal experts have said as well that it's unusual for an animal to leave its enclosure unless it's been provoked."

The area around the tiger grotto was deemed a crime scene at the time by the San Francisco Police, which is still investigating the incident.

"A large rock, pine cones and other things that wouldn't normally have been in Tatiana's or the big cats' enclosure have been turned over to police to investigate as part of what might have happened," Singer said. "Everybody — the zoo, the police, the press, the public, the boys' attorney — everybody would like to know what happened."

Adding to the mystery is the fact that the Dhaliwals have never talked publicly about what happened, nor, until Monday, talked to the Sousa family, who

had left the Dhaliwal family several messages. The brothers also hired celebrity lawyer Mark Geragos.

The brothers refused requests by police to show them any photos or text messages on their cell phones from Christmas Day. After a war of words with Geragos, the city attorney won an emergency order Tuesday to keep the phones and the brothers' car, at least until a court hearing Friday. Police still don't have legal authority to examine the phones or car.

When contacted by the Mercury News on Wednesday, Paul Dhaliwal declined to comment on the conversation he had with Sousa, or to be interviewed about other aspects of the tiger attack.

"Thanks for giving me the opportunity," Dhaliwal said, "but I don't want to do it."

As far as Marilza Sousa is concerned, she believes Dhaliwal — that the trio didn't taunt the tiger.

At the end of their phone conversation, she asked him to come to the funeral. Although he didn't attend Monday's viewing or funeral Mass at Five Wounds Catholic Church, he and his brother went to a second viewing Tuesday morning at the mortuary and the entombment that followed at the Calvary Catholic Cemetery in East San Jose.

Sousa said she sat in the front row of the mortuary Tuesday morning as the brothers approached her son's open coffin. Her son's chin appeared to rest directly on his chest in the coffin because "my son doesn't have a neck at all," she said.

The brothers then embraced the family, in tears. Sousa hugged back.

Bush

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Iran jumped back into the spotlight Sunday when Iranian boats harassed and provoked three American Navy ships in the strategic Strait of Hormuz. U.S. officials said Iran threatened to explode the vessels, but the incident ended peacefully.

Bush said "all options are on the table" to protect U.S. ships. He said the Iranian boats "were very provocative and it was a dangerous gesture on their part. . . . And they know our position, and that is: There will be serious consequences if they attack our ships, pure and simple. And my advice to them is don't do it."

Bush already was on the defensive about Iran because a new U.S. intelligence report contradicted White House assertions that Tehran was building a nuclear weapon. The National Intelligence Estimate found Iran halted its program in 2003 under international pressure.

Iran is a particularly sensitive subject here because Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has repeatedly called for Israel's destruction, and Israelis wonder whether Bush has the resolve to deal with Tehran, especially in light of the new intelligence.

Saying he still regarded Iran as a dangerous threat, Bush said, "We'll continue to keep the pressure on the Iranians. And I believe we can solve this problem diplomatically."

After a red-carpet airport arrival in Tel Aviv, Bush flew by helicopter to Jerusalem for talks with Olmert and Israeli President Shimon Peres, who cautioned that peace negotiations "may be slow, but the progress can be sweet."

Olmert said Israel would not accept a peace agreement unless rocket attacks end from the Gaza Strip, controlled by Islamic militants dedicated to Israel's destruction. The U.S.-backed Palestinian president, Mahmoud Abbas, wields authority in the West Bank but not in Gaza, meaning the Palestinian population is effectively split between two governing entities.

"There will be no peace unless terror is stopped," Olmert told Bush. "And terror will have to be stopped everywhere. He said that 'Gaza must be part of the package and that as long as there will be terror from Gaza, it will be very, very hard to reach any peaceful understanding between us and the Palestinians.'"

The threat to Israel was underscored Wednesday when Palestinian militants in the Gaza bombarded southern Israel with rocket and mortar



PABLO MARTINEZ MONSIVAIS/AP

President Bush tells Prime Minister Ehud Olmert to stop unauthorized settlement activity during a visit to Israel.

fire.

Today, Bush will fly to the West Bank and question Abbas about just that.

"As to the rockets, my first question is going to be to President Abbas, 'What do you intend to do about them?'" Bush said.

"Because ultimately, in order for there to be the existence of a state, there has to be a firm commitment by a Palestinian government to deal with extremists and terrorists who might be willing to use Palestinian territory as a launching pad into Israel."

Stephen Hadley, Bush's national security adviser sounded pessimistic about Hamas joining the peace process.

"Nobody, unfortunately, is very optimistic that they will make that choice," Hadley said. "Hamas came to power in election; it will have to submit itself at some point to the people of Gaza in terms of their approval of the job they have done. And at this point, it's a pretty depressing situation in Hamas — in Gaza for all those people who live there."

The administration set low expectations for Bush's eight-day Mideast journey, which also includes stops in Kuwait, Bahrain, United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia and Egypt. Bush said it would be unproductive for him to "butt in and actually dictate the end result of the agreement."

He spoke about the settlement — outposts, anyway.

"In terms of outposts, yes, they ought to go," Bush said. "Look, I mean, we've been talking about it for four years. The agreement was, 'Get rid of outposts, illegal outposts,' and they ought to go."

Israel has established some 120 settlements in the West Bank, which are home to about 270,000 Israelis. In addition, there are more than 100 so-called settlement outposts, most of which are tiny encampments — built by hardline activists without authorization — meant to serve as the seeds of future settlements.

Ocean center

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ocean challenges we face," Thompson said.

For example, he said, the center might be called in when an endangered species is being overfished. The center could identify and bring together scientists, economists and legal experts to recommend management decisions or policies to keep both fish and fishery from going extinct.

This approach is unique, Thompson said, because it will both promote research and directly solve problems threatening oceans.

"The oceans urgently require our energy and focused problem solving," Caldwell said. "It's way overdue time that we give them the attention they deserve."

Recent studies found that

the oceans and their inhabitants are in grave danger. In a controversial prediction published in the journal Science in 2006, a panel of marine scientists said that most of the world's commercial fisheries will collapse within 50 years unless major changes are made to reverse global warming.

The center and its goals were endorsed by Leon Panetta of Carmel Valley, former White House chief of staff and past chairman of the Pew Oceans Commission.

"I grew up and live in Monterey," Panetta said in a written statement. "When the sardine industry collapsed, the lives and businesses that depended on that seemingly endless resource also collapsed. The Center for Ocean Solutions will go a long way in preventing that kind of devastation, which threatens other fishing communities along our coasts."

Kenney

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Nolan told the court that it was "unrealistic" to assume he could actually be ready for trial within 60 days but that he wanted a trial as quickly as possible for his aging client.

During a lengthy preliminary hearing, Nolan indicated he would argue that Kenney acted in self-defense when he shot the Grimeses, whom the defense portrayed as unstable and aggressive. The prosecution argued that Kenney masterminded the confrontation with the Grimeses and intended to kill them.

Sillman said he will name a presiding judge for the trial

before Kenney's next court hearing on Jan. 18. Kenney's trial will begin in Salinas, but later will be moved to a Marina courtroom, Sillman said.

During Wednesday's arraignment, Nolan told the court that he would not be able to represent Kenney in a death penalty case and suggested that the prosecution should make a decision on whether to pursue capital punishment within the next month. He added that he didn't believe the prosecution would seek the death penalty.

Kenney is being held in Monterey County Jail without bail.

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Violini Ranch

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came from private donations to the Big Sur Land Trust, which will hold the easement. The J.H. and H. Violini Co., the family concern headed by brothers Henry and Johnny Violini, retain ownership of the ranch. They can continue using the protected land for limited cattle grazing, hunting and other uses, Fischer said.

"My brother and I love this land and have spent decades exploring every part of it,

enjoying the views of the Salinas Valley, Monterey Bay and seeing bucks and other wildlife," Henry Violini said in a prepared statement. "We want to make sure that this land stays just the way it is — forever."

The ranch has been used sparingly for cattle grazing in the past dozen years, leaving it in excellent condition, Fischer said.

The Violinis grow spinach and other row crops in the Salinas Valley and have previously been leaders in putting conservation easements on cropland near Gonzales, Fischer said.

"They are continuing to be

leaders by placing the ranchland habitat (under conservation easements) as well," she said.

Saunders said the transaction represents the largest conservation easement acquired by the Big Sur Land Trust and a new direction for the 29-year-old conservation group toward preserving "living heritage" lands in Monterey County.

"There is a very strong connection between people and those landscapes," she said. "We're working with those folks to ensure a more enduring legacy of their stewardship."

Fischer said the hill country at the northwest flank of the

Salinas Valley contains about 30,000 acres of continuous oak forests, grass savannas and wetlands in privately held ranches such as the Violini Ranch. Those lands are a "globally significant resource" and "a last bastion for those types of wildlife."

There was no immediate development pressure on the Violini Ranch, but Fischer said, "We are seeing, throughout the region, more estate homes developed in the foothills above the Salinas Valley."

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