

making the news

From Associated Press reports

TSUMEB, South-West Africa — Escalating violence and a looming showdown in a previously low-key guerilla war threaten the transition of this disputed territory from white South African control to independence as the new black-governed nation of Namibia.

The slaying of five persons — four whites and a black — allegedly by black nationalist guerrillas and a Draconian reaction by authorities, has further dimmed already faint hopes for a peace transition.

The worsening conflict has implications far beyond South-West Africa, four times the size of the British Isles.

The United States and other Western powers support a United Nations plan to lead South-West Africa, or Namibia as some already call it, through a peaceful and orderly process to become an independent nation.

WASHINGTON — Pres. Carter's appointment of Lynda Bird Robb as an adviser on women's affairs hasn't healed the wounds he opened by firing Bella Abzug as co-chairwoman of his National Advisory Committee on Women.

While some politically active women said they would take a "wait and see" approach to Robb's selection as head of the revamped committee, others said the choice appeared to be a political move aimed at the 1980 election rather than a commitment to women's issues.

Harriet Henyges, executive director of the League of Women Voters, said her organization hopes the appointment signals "a more serious commitment by the administration to the committee."

But Arlie Scott, vice president of the National Organization for Women, described the appointment as made simply to enhance the president's chance of re-election.

She said her organization does not consider the committee an effective advocate and does not expect to use it as NOW's link with the administration on issues of concern to women.

GALVESTON, Texas — Near gale-force winds and turbulent waters kept divers from entering a sunken oil rig Sunday in search of eight crewmen feared dead in the Gulf of Mexico.

The crewmen have been missing since Thursday night when the rig collapsed 12 miles west of here. The rig's 1,300-ton platform sank Friday night, and rescue officials have said little hope remained for the crewmen.

"We'll continue to work on the assumption that the men are still alive, but we're becoming more and more pessimistic with each passing minute," said Coast Guard Lt. Gabe Kinney.

China teaching a lesson

TOKYO (AP) — China charged Sunday that Vietnam has tried to unilaterally alter their common border and said the Vietnamese had killed more than 100 Chinese civilians along the frontier in the six weeks preceding their February invasion.

China has called its month-long invasion of Vietnam a counterattack intended to teach its former communist ally a lesson. Both nations now are negotiating in Hanoi on a settlement of the dispute.

China on Friday pledged to unilaterally release the estimated 1,000 Vietnamese prisoners it captured in the war. Vietnam responded on Saturday with a promise to release an unspecified number of sick and wounded Chinese captives. The prisoner exchange is tentatively set for later this month.

In a long commentary on the

border issue, China's official Xinhua Hsinhua news agency said Vietnam is demanding that the Chinese withdraw behind a border "created by Vietnam itself."

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Ayatollah calls courts 'humane'

TEHRAN, Iran (AP) — The chief of the revolutionary court in Tehran said Sunday that Iran's Islamic tribunals, which have sent more than 200 of the shah's followers to their deaths, are "as humane as Nuremberg."

Appearing at a heavily guarded news conference, Ayatollah Sadeq Khalkhali said the Koran, the Moslem holy book, demands punishment of criminals of ousted Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi's regime.

"We can compare these courts to Nuremberg," he said, referring to the post-World War II trials of Nazi war criminals. In both cases, he said, the accused have included people who allegedly sanctioned murder, not just those who committed murder.

The Allies condemned 11 Nazi leaders to die. Ten of them were hanged and the eleventh killed himself the night before his scheduled execution.

"The people of Iran have already condemned" the shah and a number of officials of his regime, the Ayatollah said. "Their guilt is proven already."

He indicated that if any of the people he named were killed abroad, Iran would consider interceding on behalf of the killer. But he did not say the officials of the old regime had been condemned to death in absentia in any formal proceeding.

Among those named in addition to the shah, were Empress Farah Diba, wife of the monarch; the empress' mother; former prime ministers Jaafar Sharif-Emamy, Shahpour Bakhtiar and Gholam-Reza Ashari; Princess Ashraf, a sister of the shah; former ambassador to the United States Ardeshir Zahedi and former Tehran martial law administrator Gen. Gholam Ali Oveisi.

The nation's evolutionary courts have executed 204 people and jailed many others for alleged political or moral crimes since the revolutionary regime took power on Feb. 11. Most of the trials took place in secret, and some reportedly lasted less than an hour.

"Those who fought with God on earth or with his prophets, or who spread corruption on earth, must be killed, or hanged after they are killed, to show their bodies to the people or their hands and feet must be cut off so they cannot move around, or else they must be banished," said the Ayatollah, whose religious title is the Islamic equivalent of an archbishop.

"We do not believe in Western law," Khalkhali said.

"Those who have been on trial — you can ask them yourselves — haven't been tortured, so they can speak freely." He said defendants were free to call their own witnesses to support their defense.

South African breaks reptilian record

HARTBESPOORT, South Africa — Peter Snyman grinned Sunday — very carefully — when he broke the 36-day world record for sitting in a cage filled with deadly snakes. Then he said he might stay inside another two weeks to ensure the longevity of the mark.

"It'll become more difficult to stay," he said from the stiff position he has had to maintain since April 7 to avoid a bite from

one of 24 venomous vipers slithering around him. "Now that I've broken the record, the inclination to get out of the cage is greater."

"I have had a black mamba slither over my face in the dark, attempt to crawl into an ear or a nostril and explore inside my shirt. A bite could kill in 30 seconds," Snyman said. "But I think the challenge has been worth it. My name will be en-

tered in the Guinness Book of Records."

Snyman has lived an almost motionless existence since he entered the cage at 11 a.m. April 7 in this hilly area about 43 miles northwest of Johannesburg.

He surpassed the record set by fellow South African, Trevor Kruger, in 1975. Kruger died in a car crash a few weeks later.

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