

Study: Drought ruined Mayans



NEW YORK (AP) — The most severe drought in the past 7,000 years might have contributed to

the mysterious collapse of the thriving Mayan civilization.

Scholars are trying to understand why the Mayan civilization in the southern Yucatan Peninsula collapsed around the years 750 to 900, when it was clearly thriving as late as the year 700.

Now scientists have found evidence that around the time, major Mayan cities were abandoned and left in ruins, because the area around a local lake was suffering through its worst drought in the last 7,200 years.

That may have been one reason for the collapse, said researcher Jason Curtis said Wednesday.

A geology student at the Uni-

versity of Florida in Gainesville, Curtis describes signs of drought in ancient mud from the bottom of the lake in an article with other scientists in Thursday's issue of the journal *Nature*.

Jeremy Sabloff, director of the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology in Philadelphia, called the finding an important step toward understanding the Mayan downfall.

Other research shows that no single factor can be blamed, but rather, "the picture we're building up is a whole series of strains," he said.

The strains include a growing population, warfare between cities, military threats on the Mayan borders and environmental degradation, such as the cutting down of vast areas of the jungle that led to increasing erosion.

"Drought in and of itself would not have caused a thriving civilization to abandon some of its major cities," he said. "But if it's added to these other major burdens, if you're already having difficulties feeding the general population, increased drying of the climate would have a much more severe impact than usual."

Nations are still struggling with problems such as population growth, local warfare and growing populations, raising the question of how much a nation can handle before natural events cause it to collapse, he said.

Flooding, earthquakes or climatic shifts brought on by global warming might "be enough to push civilizations over the edge, where the governments could not maintain food distribution, protection of their people and trade," he said.

Jet crashes into apartment, 2 die

WICHITA FALLS, Texas (AP) — An Air Force training jet complex Wednesday, crashing into an apartment building and several cars in flames. At least two people were killed and 16 injured.

The T-38's two pilots ejected just before it went down and parachuted onto the athletic field at a high school. They were not seriously injured.

The plane, which had just taken off from Sheppard Air Force Base, experienced some sort of mechanical problem, the military said.

It was trailing smoke and pieces were falling off just before it crashed, said Renee Stephens, a witness.

"It sounded just like a bomb," she said. "There was a big mushroom cloud and the whole building was consumed by flames."

Witnesses said the plane just missed two schools and a day-care center before smashing into the 120-unit Amber Falls Crossing apartment complex four miles from the base. One of the 11 buildings in the complex was hit; four apartments in that building were destroyed.

"It took out about six cars," said Eric Struve, who works at a restaurant nearby. "It hit about 50 feet away from the [apartment] office. A lady that works here was blown out of the office, but she's OK."

Two bodies were found in a parking lot outside the apartment complex, said Lt. Col. Mike Laughlin, a base spokesman. Sixteen people were hospitalized, he said. It was not immediately known if

any were seriously injured.

Air Force Col. Bill Orcutt did not rule out the possibility of other victims being found in the apartment complex, since not all tenants were immediately accounted for.

The pilots, who were not identified, were assigned to the 80th Flying Training Wing, based at Sheppard.

"The pilots are extremely distressed about what happened," Orcutt said. "But from what we know, it was a mechanical problem. There was nothing they could do."

Mary Hayes, a secretary at an elementary school, said the plane went right over the campus, whose students are already home for the summer. Parts of the plane were scattered across the school grounds, some near the front door.

A piece of the jet's canopy ended up in the parking lot of Wichita Falls Hirschi High School, two blocks away.

At least two children were on a playground directly behind the crash site, Jerry Byrd and his cousin.

"I ran out and all I saw was fire and smoke," said Jerry's aunt, Norma Byrd. "It was so black you couldn't even see the building. I was looking for the boys. I was very scared, but they came around the side of the building. I was very relieved."

The T-38, a twin-engine two-seater, is manufactured by Northrop.

Bob Dole: Hollywood lacks decency

LOS ANGELES (AP) — GOP presidential hopeful Bob Dole accused Hollywood on Wednesday of promoting violence, rape and casual sex in music and movies, and said for the good of America's children "the mainstreaming of deviancy must come to an end."

The Senate majority leader, in the entertainment industry's backyard, said his reaction to today's popular culture was more than a "codgy old attempt of one generation to steal the fun of another. A line has been crossed — not just of taste but of

human dignity and decency."

In remarks prepared for delivery at an evening Los Angeles fund-raiser, the early GOP front-runner repeated a challenge to Hollywood executives first voiced during his campaign announcement tour in April, urging them to focus on family oriented programming and products.

Specifically, Dole criticized the R-rated action movies *Natural Born Killers* and *True Romance* as "films that revel in mindless violence and loveless

sex." Dole also specifically cited three recording groups, Cannibal Corpse, Geto Boys and 2 Live Crew.

"I'm talking about ... a culture business that makes money from 'music' extolling the pleasures of raping, torturing and mutilating women; from 'songs' about killing policemen and rejecting law," Dole said. "The mainstreaming of deviancy must come to an end, but it will only stop when the leaders of the entertainment industry recognize their responsibility."

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