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# INTERNATIONAL

NEWS FROM AROUND THE WORLD

## Eight climbers believed dead in Everest blizzard

■ **DISASTER:** One victim called his wife hours before his death

KATMANDU, Nepal (AP) — In bitter cold and howling winds, with the peak of Mount Everest just 500 feet above him, Rob Hall called his pregnant wife Jan on his fading radio to say goodbye. Hall, a 36-year-old New Zealander, had just reached the peak of the world's highest mountain Friday for his fifth successful ascent. But on the way down, he trailed others in his expedition in a futile effort to help 44-year-old Doug Hansen of Renton, Wash., who was ill and struggling, as a fierce blizzard lashed the mountain.

Hansen died Friday night. Hall was near death when he called his wife Saturday.

On another section of the 29,028-foot-high peak, Seaborne B. Weathers of Dallas struggled down to about 20,000 feet and was plucked off Monday in the world's highest-ever helicopter rescue mission.

"I am OK; I'm better now," Weathers said as he arrived at the Katmandu airport, his face raw

and blistered by windburn, his hands crippled by frostbite.

Life and death, luck and chance. In all, eight climbers are believed to have perished this weekend in one of the worst disasters since Everest was first conquered in 1953.

Yasuko Namba, 47, of Tokyo, was reported dead by another expedition member after becoming only the second Japanese woman ever to reach the top of Everest with her climb Friday.

Scott Fischer, 40, of Seattle and Andy Harris, 31, of New Zealand were presumed dead, as well as three climbers from India who began an ascent from the Chinese side of Everest.

Although their deaths have not been confirmed, alpine experts said no one has ever survived two nights in the open without oxygen on the southern summit of Everest.

Hall and Hansen were trapped on the mountain without oxygen, fluids, a tent or a sleeping bag. Hall survived the night, and was able to make a last call Saturday to his seven-months pregnant wife at their home in Christchurch, New Zealand, his friend Geoff Gabites said Monday.

"I don't know what his last words were. It was a personal conversation between him and Jan. We are sure Rob did not survive another night out in the open," said Gabites, who is also chief executive of the Adventure Tourism Council.

Other friends said Hall was experienced enough to know he was going to die.

"A bivouac without equipment 150 meters (500 feet) below the summit in bad weather means at the very least you're going to get frostbite, and it could go right through to death," said Peter Hillary, who climbed Everest with Hall six years ago. "He would have been aware of that."

Since Hillary's father, Sir Edmund Hillary, conquered it 43 years ago, Everest's summit has been reached 629 times. Thousands more climbers came close. The elder Hillary himself has complained that the track is now so familiar it has become a tourist mountain.

But that hardly reduces the danger. More than 100 people have been killed on its icy slopes.

Near the peak, most people need a tank of oxygen. Dehydration in the arid atmosphere can kill.



MATT GARTON/Emerald

Nepal has no rescue procedures for climbers in danger, and requires each expedition to take responsibility for its own safety.

Colonel Madan K. Chetri, flying a French-built Squirrel helicopter, hovered over the site where Weather's was, then landed in the highest-altitude rescue flight on record.

"The Nepal army did a heroic job," said Weathers. The helicopter, which was chartered by the U.S. Embassy, also brought back a Taiwanese climber.

## Liberian refugee boat still seeking safe port for passengers

■ **SUPPLIES:** One stop in Ghana promised much needed medicine and food, but refugees were not allowed to touch dry land

ABIDJAN, Ivory Coast (AP) — A rusty freighter seeking a port of refuge for thousands of sick and weary Liberian refugees was forced out to sea yet again Monday after restocking urgently needed food and medical supplies in Ghana.

Ghanaian authorities would not let the 3,000 to 4,000 refugees disembark, although eight seriously ill people were allowed off. Two of them were hospitalized in critical condition.

"It is really horrible and scandalous that the people were not allowed to come down from the boat even if it was only for a few hours, just to come down for some rice," said Michel Loro with the international relief group Doctors Without Borders. "It is really inhumane."

The ship left the port about 8 p.m. local time and it was not clear where it was headed.

Ghanaian officials said it was returning to Liberia. Other port officials said they believed the freighter would try to make it to Lagos, Nigeria, where government officials have indicated they would consider taking in the refugees.

As the Bulk Challenge continued its eight-day ordeal at sea, 3,000 more people were scrambling to board another freighter in Monrovia.

Fighting broke out among the people desperate to buy \$70 tickets, and African peacekeepers beat them with belts and batons to restore order.

The Nigerian-owned Bulk Challenge, carrying 3,000 to 4,000 Liberians, many sick with diarrhea, has been seeking West African refuge since it set sail May 5.

The ship was allowed to dock at Takoradi, a port in western Ghana, where authorities had made it clear the refugees would only be given medical help and then be sent back to sea.

"The vessel, which has been found to have no mechanical fault, was provided food and water and medicine," said a government statement. "The captain was then directed to return to Monrovia, where ECOMOG has created a safe haven."

It referred to the West African peacekeeping force, which has done little to contain six weeks of brutal violence among rival factions that has destroyed the Liberian capital.

Phil Doherty, head of the Liberian mission for Doctors Without Borders, said there was only one toilet on board the freighter and people had been forced to defecate on deck. A woman died Sunday from hemorrhaging and her body was removed from the ship by Ghanaian authorities.

"It's just getting worse," said Doherty. "We have no confirmation of specific diseases, but we've known for many days of severe diarrhea among many of the people."

Diarrhea is often a sign of cholera, a highly contagious disease that can be fatal if left untreated.

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