



Jay Faulk, 56, surveys the damage to his home on Friday in Mexico Beach, Fla. Residents of the small beach town of Mexico Beach began to make their way back to their homes some for the first time.

Chris Urso/Tampa Bay Times via AP

## Official: Searchers find body in hurricane-stricken town

By RUSS BYNUM AND  
BRENDAN FARRINGTON  
Associated Press

MEXICO BEACH, Fla. — Search-and-rescue teams found at least one body in Mexico Beach, the ground-zero town nearly obliterated by Hurricane Michael, an official said Friday as the scale of the storm's fury became ever clearer.

The death toll across the South stood at 14, including the victim discovered in Mexico Beach.

Miami Fire Chief Joseph Zahraban, leader of a search-and-rescue unit that went into the flattened town, said: "We have one confirmed deceased and are working to determine if there are others." Zahraban said searchers were trying to determine if that person had been alone or was part of a family.

Zahraban spoke as his team — which included a dog — was winding down its two-day search of Mexico Beach, the town of about 1,000 people that was nearly wiped off the map when Michael blew ashore there Wednesday with devastating 155 mph winds.

Blocks and blocks of homes were demolished, reduced to splintered lumber or mere concrete slabs by the most powerful hurricane to hit the continental U.S. in nearly 50 years.

As the catastrophic damage across the Florida Panhandle came into view 48 hours after the hurricane struck, there was little doubt the death toll would rise.

How high it might go was unclear. But authorities scrapped plans to set up a temporary morgue, suggesting they had yet to see mass casualties.

State officials said that by one count, 285 people in Mexico Beach defied mandatory evacuation orders and



Chris Urso/The Tampa Bay Times via AP

Destruction can be seen all over Mexico Beach, Fla., on Friday. The death toll across the South stood at 14, including the victim discovered in Mexico Beach.

stayed behind. Some of them successfully rode out the storm. It was unclear how many of the others might have gotten out at the last minute.

Emergency officials said they have received thousands of calls asking about missing people. But with cellphone service out across vast swaths of the Florida Panhandle, officials said it is possible that some of those unaccounted for are safe and just haven't been able to contact friends or family.

Across the ravaged region, meanwhile, authorities set up distribution centers to hand out food and water to victims. Some supplies were brought in by trucks, while others had to be delivered by helicopter because of debris still blocking roads.

Residents began to come to grips with the destruction and face up to the uncertainty that lies ahead.

"I didn't recognize nothing. Everything's gone. I didn't even know our road was our road," said 25-year-old Tiffany Marie Plushnik, an evacuee who returned to find her home in Sandy Creek too damaged to live in.

When she went back to the hotel where she took

shelter from the storm, she found out she could no longer stay there either because of mold. "We've got to figure something out. We're starting from scratch, all of us," Plushnik said.

President Donald Trump announced plans to visit Florida and hard-hit Georgia early next week but didn't say what day he would arrive.

"We are with you!" he tweeted.

Shell-shocked survivors who barely escaped with their lives told of terrifying winds, surging floodwaters and homes cracking apart.

Emergency officials said they had completed an initial "hasty search" of the stricken area, looking for the living or the dead, and had begun more careful inspections of thousands of ruined buildings. They said nearly 200 people had been rescued.

Gov. Rick Scott said state officials still "do not know enough" about the fate of those who stayed behind in the region.

"We are not completely done. We are still getting down there," the governor added.

Federal Emergency Management Agency chief Brock Long said he expects to see

the death toll rise.

"We still haven't gotten into the hardest-hit areas," he said, adding with frustration: "Very few people live to tell what it's like to experience storm surge, and unfortunately in this country we seem to not learn the lesson."

Long expressed worry that people have suffered "hurricane amnesia."

"When state and local officials tell you to get out, dang it, do it. Get out," he said.

On the Panhandle, Tyn-dall Air Force Base "took a beating," so much so that Col. Brian Laidlaw told the 3,600 men and women stationed on the base not to come back. Many of the 600 families who live there had followed orders to pack what they could in a single suitcase as they were evacuated ahead of the storm.

## Trump vows to unearth truth about Khashoggi disappearance

By ZEKE MILLER AND  
SUZAN FRASER  
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump declared Friday the U.S. will uncover the truth about what happened to journalist and U.S. resident Jamal Khashoggi, whose possible murder at Saudi hands after disappearing in Istanbul has captured worldwide attention. Trump promised to personally call Saudi Arabia's King Salman soon about "the terrible situation in Turkey."

"We're going to find out what happened," Trump pledged when questioned by reporters in Cincinnati where he was headlining a political rally.

Khashoggi, a forceful critic of the Saudi government, went missing more than a week ago after entering a Saudi consulate in Istanbul, and Turkish officials have said they believe he was murdered there. U.S. officials say they are seeking answers from the Saudi government and are not yet accepting the Turkish government's conclusions.

The Saudis have called accusations that they are responsible for Khashoggi's disappearance "baseless." Widely broadcast video shows the 59-year-old writer and *Washington Post* contributor entering the consulate on Tuesday of last week, but there is none showing him leaving.

Separately, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo spoke to Khashoggi's fiancée, Hatice Cengiz, the State Department said Friday. No details of the conversation were released.

In an interview Friday with The Associated Press, Cengiz said Khashoggi was not nervous when he entered the Saudi consulate to obtain paperwork required for their marriage.

"He said, 'See you later my darling,' and went in," she told the AP.

Citing anonymous sources, the *Post* reported Friday that Turkey's government has told U.S. officials it has audio and video proof that Khashoggi was killed and dismembered. The AP has not been able to confirm that report. In written responses to questions by the AP, Cengiz said Turkish authorities had not told her about any recordings and Khashoggi was officially "still missing."

She said investigators were examining his cellphones, which he had left with her.

Saudi Arabia says Khashoggi left the consulate. He hasn't been seen since, though his fiancée was waiting outside.

Both Turkey and Saudi Arabia are important U.S. allies in the region. Trump said Treasury Secretary Steve Mnuchin will evaluate whether to attend a Saudi investor conference later this month. Mnuchin had indicated earlier Friday he still planned to attend.

On Thursday, Trump had said U.S. relations with Saudi Arabia were "excellent" and he was reluctant to scuttle highly lucrative U.S. weapons deals with Riyadh. A number of members of Congress have pressed the Trump administration to impose sanctions on the country in response to the Khashoggi affair.

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