

Los Angeles Times
Sunday, April 3, 1983

The death toll in last week's earthquake in Colombia rose to at least 250, all but 13 of them in Popayan, where hundreds of survivors wandered rubble-strewn streets and slept in makeshift tents. Others packed salvaged possessions in horse-drawn carts and headed for Cali, center of relief operations, 100 miles away. Water and power remained cut off in the city and the entire southwestern corner of the country.

Rocky Mountain News 4/3/83 Quake survivors bury dead, relief distribution delayed

POPAYAN, Colombia (AP) — Cold, hungry and homeless, thousands of survivors of a devastating earthquake buried their dead Saturday and sifted through piles of rubble to salvage blankets and pots and pans. Some begged for money to buy coffins.

Rescue workers complained about delays in distribution of relief supplies and said the army had held up delivery of tents and medicine donated by the United States and France.

Many people in this city of 200,000 slept on sidewalks and in parks without blankets or in shelters made of plastic sheets and wooden poles. The temperature has dropped each night since Thursday's quake to the mid-40s.

200 Feared Killed as Quake Rips Colombia

From Times Wire Services

POPAYAN, Colombia—A major earthquake struck southern Colombia on Thursday, devastating this mountain city where hundreds of tourists had gathered for Holy Week. Estimates of the casualties ranged up to 200 dead and 500 injured.

A witness said the shuddering earth "sent the roofs of many houses flying into the air as a cloud of dust covered the city." Another said "whole walls were collapsing" and the noise was deafening.

From the air Popayan looked as if it had been bombed. Dust rose 1,000 feet over the city.

The quake, measuring 5.5 on the Richter scale, according to the U.S. Geological Survey, struck at 8:15 a.m., knocking down buildings around the historic provincial capital as residents slept late on Holy Thursday, a national holiday. The quake brought the Roman Catholic cathedral down on as many as 100 worshippers. Police said 25 bodies were recovered from the rubble of the church.

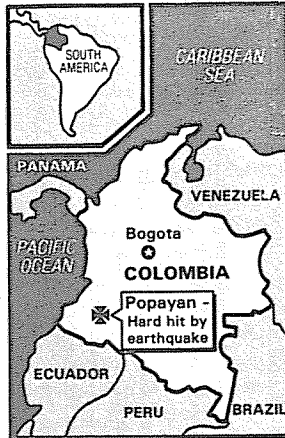
Rescuers Weep Openly

Four lines of rescuers passed bricks and timbers hand to hand to free the trapped worshippers. Some of the rescuers, their hands bleeding from handling the jagged rubble, wept openly as they worked.

Popayan, at the foot of the active Purace Volcano, normally has a population of 125,000, but during Holy Week it grows to twice that number. Tourists from Colombia and other nations flock to the city, which has world-famous processions and religious ceremonies. Some are televised nationwide.

San Jose Hospital reported that 500 injured people were admitted. Doctors there said supplies of plasma, medicine and even surgical thread were exhausted by mid-afternoon.

Police said 35 bodies were recovered from houses and some hotels in Popayan. Other officials reported fires raging in some parts of the city. In residential areas many people,



DON CLEMENT / Los Angeles Times

dazed by the shock, wandered through the ruins. Others took charge of crying children who had lost their parents.

Mayor Luis Guillermo Salazar said his city was "half-destroyed" and that at least 3,000 houses were in ruins.

President Belisario Betancur, who flew to Popayan shortly after the quake, said Popayan was put under military control to prevent looting. The government said the United States, Venezuela and Panama sent planes with food, medicines, tents and other supplies.

Betancur said that more than 100 people died. A U.S. Embassy official, however, said "the death toll has been put at about 200, and still climbing." Al Laun, embassy information officer in Bogota, said he based his statement on casualty reports filtering in from the devastated area.

The Andean Geophysics Institute said the quake lasted 18 seconds and was followed by two other, minor tremors within the next half-hour. The institute said the quake's epicenter was 60 miles west of Popayan.

Rocky Mountain News

April 2, 1983

Thousands mourn Colombia victims

Rocky Mountain News wire services

POPAYAN, Colombia — Colombia's president and thousands of mourners attended a Good Friday Mass and burial for 79 of the 194 victims of an earthquake that destroyed most of Popayan and left 100,000 people homeless.

A pall of fine dust hung over Popayan's ruins, and aftershocks added to the fears and misery of survivors. One strong one early Friday afternoon was felt in Buenaventura, Colombia's chief Pacific port 155 miles northwest of Popayan. A fire brigade spokesman said no casualties or damage were reported.

Buildings left crumbling and shaky suffered delayed collapses set off by vibrations from passing cars.

President Belisario Betancur, who returned to Popayan for the second consecutive day, and 50,000 mourners, some perched in trees, attended the Mass given by Archbishop Samuel Silverio Buitrago and 14 priests.

"This is a test God has handed us," Buitrago said.

The 79 bodies, carried one by one from Popayan central hospital and morgue, were buried in a common grave in Popayan's main cemetery to avoid the spread of disease.

At least 12 people fainted under the afternoon sun and were treated by Red Cross volunteers.

Popayan is famous for its Holy Week festivities that attracted 70,000 people into the city this year.

U.S. Ambassador Thomas Boyatt flew to Popayan to view the damage and said the American government "will do whatever is necessary" to help the victims. U.S. aid so far includes 1,000 field tents and a U.S. Air Force C-130 transport unloaded 25 tons of emergency supplies in Cali.

He authorized the use of a special \$25,000 embassy fund to buy supplies for quake victims.

The quake, which measured 5.5 on the Richter scale, destroyed 3,000 buildings, about half of the city. Officials said 2,400 more were so badly damaged they would have to be leveled.

Pope John Paul II in a telegram sent to Buitrago "invoked the Lord's peace for the victims and a speedy recovery for the injured and expresses his brotherly closeness to those who are suffering."

Red Cross officials said they had identified 118 bodies, recovered from the wreckage of buildings. A presidential press spokesman, in a broadcast on Radio Caracol, said at least 194 people had died.

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Colombia Officials Sell Food to Quake Survivors as Relief Supplies Pile Up

POPAYAN, Colombia (AP) — Earthquake relief aid from the United States, Canada, France and other countries piled up in warehouses Sunday while a Colombian government agency sold food to desperate survivors.

President Belisario Betancur, who expressed dismay at reports of looting and hoarding of tents and food in this devastated southern Colombian city, called an emergency Cabinet session for today.

Red Cross sources said much international aid, including tents and blankets from the United States and Canada, was being lost or not distributed because of lack of coordination among relief organizations.

The government's Market and Agriculture Agency said in reports published in newspapers in Bogota, the capital, that it was giving away 50 tons of food to the refugees. In Popayan, however, the agency was selling the food in the center of town, far from the poor sections.

Officials of the agency were charging the equivalent of \$10 for about five pounds of food, including rice, coffee, sugar, noodles, dried soup and salt. They did not explain why they were charging.

The quake struck this mountain city of 200,000 people in southern Colombia early on Thursday, destroying homes, killing at least 250 people, injuring hundreds more and leaving three-quarters of the population homeless.

Mon., April 4, 1983

ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

Relief Aid Being Sold In Colombia

POPAYAN, Colombia (AP) — Some tents for the homeless were selling for \$400 each, supposedly free food was costing up to \$2 a pound, and people were begging for medical attention in the aftermath of the earthquake that devastated this Andean city.

The quake struck this city of 200,000 people early Thursday, destroying homes and a crowded cathedral, killing at least 240 people, injuring hundreds more and leaving three-quarters of the populace homeless. The government relief office said 12,000 buildings had been destroyed.

Earthquake relief aid that began arriving Friday from Canada, the United States, France and other countries was still piled up Sunday in warehouses under control of military authorities.

The Colombian radio network, Todelar described the relief effort as chaotic. One group of survivors was seen pounding on the doors of a police station, demanding tents.

Another radio network, Caracol, said that by nightfall only 168 of the 12,000 tents donated by France and the United States had been set up. Archbishop Silverio Buitrago of Popayan said in an interview with Caracol that tents were being sold to the homeless for \$400 each.

Health officials said water supplies had been contaminated by broken sewers, and the Colombian Red Cross said cases of typhus and dysentery were reported.

At Red Cross stations, hundreds of people, including many women with children in their arms, waited as long as four hours for medicine.

The government's Market and Agriculture Agency said in reports published in newspapers in Bogota, the capital, that it was giving away 50 tons of food to the refugees.

But in Popayan, the agency was selling the food in the center of town, far from the poor sections.

Colombians Not Getting U.S. Aid

Military Fears Rebels Will Seize Quake Relief

BOGOTA, Colombia (AP)—The Colombian Red Cross has received none of the 25 tons of U.S. medical aid left with the army for distribution to earthquake victims, a spokesman for the relief agency said Monday.

Military authorities fear that the relief aid will fall into the hands of leftist guerrillas, said Lt. Carlos Ismael Meza, a retired army officer working with civil defense officials in the stricken city of Popayan, 235 miles southwest of Bogota.

U.S. Air Force planes delivered 6,000 tents and 25 tons of medicine and hospital equipment to Colombia last Friday, 24 hours after an earthquake devastated the southern city of 200,000 residents, killing at least 250 people, injuring hundreds and leaving three-quarters of the population homeless.

The Red Cross has seen none of the medical aid, and the army has said nothing about delivering it to the Red Cross, according to a spokesman for Carlos Martinez, the director of emergency relief for the government.

The army has delivered to the Red Cross only two dozen of the 6,000 tents, said the spokesman, who asked not to be identified for fear of possible retribution by military authorities.

Col. Jose Garzon, director of public relations for the Defense Ministry, was not in his office and did not return a reporter's telephone call.

A spokesman in the colonel's office, who refused to identify himself beyond saying he was a captain, said reports that the army is withholding relief supplies are lies. He did not elaborate.

In Washington, Angela Wright, spokeswoman for the Agency for International Development, said the agency was not prepared to formally respond to charges that U.S. aid was not getting to those who need it.

The army is a powerful force in Colombia, where governments have decreed a state of siege for 32 of the last 34 years to suppress leftist insurgencies.

The state of siege was lifted last August by the civilian administration. Previous governments have lifted the state of siege but reimposed it within a year.

An estimated 2,000 leftist guerrillas roam Colombia's rural regions, Defense Department sources have said. Leftist sources estimate guerrilla strength at 5,000 fighters.

The Roman Catholic archbishop of Popayan, Silverio Buitrago, told reporters Sunday that tents meant for quake relief victims were being sold for as much as \$400. Dozens of refugees told a reporter earlier that individuals were offering the tents for sale for up to \$100.

Those tents are among several dozen that the army has given to the Cauca state government relief committee, the Red Cross source said.

Residents and reporters in Popayan said Sunday that the government's Market and Agriculture Agency was selling food to quake survivors, despite newspaper reports in the capital that the agency was giving away 50 tons of food.

Officials in the center of Popayan were charging \$10 for five pounds of food, including rice, coffee, sugar,

Red Cross to Run Colombia Quake Relief

POPAYAN, Colombia (AP)—The state governor's committee administering relief to survivors of the Popayan earthquake bowed Tuesday to charges of inefficiency, profiteering and misuse of relief supplies and announced that it will let the Red Cross take over relief operations.

Committee member Manuel Mosquera said after a meeting of the 12-member emergency group that effective immediately, the Red Cross alone will be responsible for distribution of all food, medicine, tents and clothing.

"A lot of mistakes have been made," Mosquera said. "All of the responsibility for what has happened falls on our shoulders."

A variety of sources in Popayan confirmed an Associated Press report Sunday, denied by officials in Bogota, that relief tents and food were sold instead of distributed free. The sources had more reports of misuse of the supplies, particularly by the Colombian army.

Alicia Iglesias, a vice president of the Colombian Red Cross, said Tuesday that after last week's quake, which killed at least 250 people and left 150,000 homeless, the Red Cross tried to move in quickly and start a relief program. She said Gov. Amalia Salazar's emergency committee blocked the agency's efforts.

Tents, generators, medicine, food and clothing began pouring in from Colombian cities and abroad Friday, but the governor's committee and the army, working together, repeatedly confiscated relief aid destined for the Red Cross, she said.

On Saturday, the army confiscated 460 tents donated by the United States, then on Sunday said it had only 206 and would not give them up, Iglesias said.

Reporters were not allowed into the army's temporary base near the Popayan airport, but an AP reporter flying over the area and the adjoining police barracks area saw 30 of the blue-and-white U.S. tents set up there.

Relief Aid Diverted

Iglesias said the army on Monday seized two trucks arriving in Popayan with relief aid from the Red Cross at Barranquilla, and the Red Cross has not seen the material yet.

Red Cross relief coordinator Fernando Gomez said 14 portable generators arrived Sunday from the Spanish Red Cross, but the governor's committee confiscated six of them and turned them over to the army.

Gov. Salazar told the Associated Press that her committee ordered all relief aid stockpiled under its control because it believed it could distribute it best. But Mosquera said that because the quake struck at the beginning of the Easter holiday, many committee members were away, and it took several days to get the group organized.

An AP reporter found the government's marketing and agriculture agency, IDEMA, selling food to refugees Saturday at its downtown warehouse, which survived the earthquake. President Belisario Betancur objected to the report and said IDEMA also had been donating food to refugees.

However, the head of the government's Family Welfare Institute office in Popayan, Fernando Iragori, said Tuesday that IDEMA continued to sell the food and would not begin to give it away until today.

The selling of tents apparently occurred when the governor's committee handed them over to neighborhood leaders instead of setting them up in refugee

compounds as the Red Cross recommended.

Residents of one neighborhood said over a local radio station that representatives of the Alfonso Lopez suburb and a member of the neighborhood's communal action committee tried to sell the tents that were delivered to them.

The governor's committee said it is investigating the accusation.

"We know there are incidents of politics in the communal action groups, where people who really don't need aid are being favored," Mosquera said.

He said tents in the hands of people who don't need them will be confiscated and turned over to the Red Cross.

Rocky Mountain News 4/3/83

Costa Rica hit by quake; no deaths reported

SAN JOSE, Costa Rica (AP) — A strong earthquake shook this Central American country Saturday evening, causing confusion, panic and minor damage in the capital, police said. There were no immediate reports of injuries.

The main window of one downtown church here was knocked out by the shock and broken glass littered the streets in several areas.

Reports from other parts of the country were scarce and the extent of damage, if any, could not be determined. There were no reports from Panama, Costa Rica's southern neighbor, where some reports here said the quake also could be felt.

The tremor struck at 8:53 p.m. local time (5:53 p.m. MST) and knocked out electric power here and in other parts of the country for about five minutes, officials said.

Red Cross officials said about 300 people in the capital were treated for shock but apart from that there was no need for medical assistance.

Police said property damage in San Jose and other areas of the country from which they had reports was minimal.

The National Earthquake Information Center in Golden said the quake measured 7.1 on the Richter scale and the epicenter was about 225 miles west of Panama City, Panama, which would put it on the border area between Costa Rica and Panama.

Luis Diego Morales of the University of Costa Rica seismograph station said local geologists placed the epicenter 111 south of San Jose and about 70 miles out in the Pacific Ocean. He said the tremor lasted 42 seconds.

Quakes Hit Costa Rica

SAN JOSE, Costa Rica (UPI) — Tremors rippled across Costa Rica on Sunday, one day after a major earthquake had killed one man and caused an undetermined amount of damage, officials said.

At least three major shocks and a number of minor tremors were reported by Costa Rica University seismologists on Sunday in the aftermath of the quake Saturday that toppled houses, downed utility lines and cracked pavement and windows.

St Louis Post-Dispatch 4/4/83

Los Angeles Times
Tuesday, April 5, 1983 *

At least three major tremors and a number of minor shocks were reported by Costa Rica university seismologists in the aftermath of a weekend earthquake that registered 7.1 on the Richter scale. One man was crushed to death when his house collapsed on him, and power lines were reported down.

Sign at a Glendale residence: "Pre-Earthquake Garage Sale."

noodles, dried soup and salt, witnesses said. Attempts to reach anyone in the agency's Bogota offices with knowledge of the situation were unsuccessful.

Reports from the devastated city said thousands of quake survivors spent their fourth night Sunday sleeping in the open in temperatures in the mid-40s with no running water, electricity or latrines.

Popayan's Mayor Guillermo Salazar imposed a dusk-to-dawn curfew Monday as part of government attempts to prevent looting and rioting.

The Red Cross broadcast appeals

for medicine to fight gastroenteritis, typhus and dysentery, three disorders that particularly strike children among the homeless victims.

Here in the capital, President Belisario Betancur met with his Cabinet to discuss measures to halt profiteering and begin the orderly distribution of aid.

In addition to aid from the United States, tons of food, clothes, tents, medicine and portable generators have been airlifted to Colombia from countries such as Canada, West Germany, Spain, Venezuela, Ecuador and Panama.