CORINTH, GREECE EARTHQUAKE OF FEBRUARY 24, 1981

Umesh Chandra (ERI 1977?) has reported the following from his field crew of Ebasco geologists working in Greece:

"Immediately after the earthquake of 24 February 1981 (origin time 20 hr, 53 min, 37.7 sec GMT: 36.2°N, 23.0°E; M<sub>s</sub> = 6.8) and its largest aftershock on 25 February (origin time 02 hr, 35 min, 34.8 sec GMT; same epicenter; M<sub>s</sub> = 6.4) occurred about 65 km west of Athens, a team of Ebasco geologists, comprising Norman Tilford (ERI 1980), Robert Cannon, and David Amick, undertook a field investigation of the epicentral area. They located surface rupture along a fault trending east-west on the north side of the Corinth isthmus. Movement is about 30 cm down to the north. Left lateral movement of about 10 cm is indicated. The length of surface rupture exceeds 2 km and is a subject of continuing investigation. The fault rupture recovers a scarp about 3 to 4 meters high, indicating earlier stress relief along this line. Significant rockslides and falls are closely related to the alignment of surface structure. Likewise, the most severe building damage occurred along the strike of the rupture. Most of the building damage occurred to poorly constructed Category B, Category C, and Category D masonry structures."

A joint ERI/National Research Council, Committee on Natural Disasters team is proceeding to Athens to join Prof. Panayotis Carydis and coordinate their reconnaissance investigation with the Ebasco group. The ERI/NRC team consists of:

Jim Jirsa (ERI 1976), University of Texas, Team Leader
Prof. Carydis (ERI 1976), National Technical University of Athens
Gregg Brandow (ERI 1973), Brandow and Johnston Associates

Details of their findings will be reported in the near future.

Quake Rocks Athens; 8 Die, Nearly 50 Hurt

ATHENS (UPI)—An earthquake measuring 6.8 on the Richter scale jolted Athens and other parts of Greece into Thursday, killing at least eight people and injuring nearly 30. Thousands of Athenians fled their homes and spent the night in the streets, parts or in their cars out of fear of aftershocks. Others fled to the countryside.

"We never felt such a strong earthquake before," said an Athenian. The telephone lines fell from its table. The lights went out and all of a sudden I heard people in the street shouting and crying."

The quake, which struck shortly before 11 a.m., was centered 45 miles west of here in the area of the Algos Islands in the Gulf of Corinth. The heaviest hit town was Megara, 50 miles southwest of Athens, where four people were killed and 10 injured from falling masonry.

In Athens, one woman died of a heart attack in the middle of the street and another was killed when she jumped from her second floor window.

In the same town, another woman died in a heart attack in the street and another was killed when she jumped from her second floor window.

In the nearby town of Halatsi, one woman was killed and in Vrachliotingos the Corinth Gulf coast a woman was killed under the debris, authorities said.

In Corinth, where some damage was reported in old buildings, 24 people were hospitalized for injuries.

Police said that several people were injured when palace broke out in theaters and cinemas in Athens. Telephone lines and electricity lines were cut and panicked residents in the capital rushed into the streets, Athens television said.

Athenians Fleeing City After Quakes

ATHENS (UPI)—Panicky Athenians streamed out of the city Wednesday after Greece was hit by two strong earthquakes that killed 15 people and injured dozens of others in collapsed houses and hotels.

Police said five people were reported missing after the quakes hit the country during the night. The capital city was almost deserted by mid-afternoon as people drove into the countryside, fearing that buildings might collapse as hundreds of aftershocks hit the area.

"People must understand that they are suffering unnecessarily by staying out in the open now if they are sure that their houses are safe," Prime Minister George Ballis said in a tour of the worst-hit area. "Houses that didn't suffer from either the first or second large quakes have proved that they can stand."

The two major quakes registered 6.6 and 6.8 on the Richter scale. Their epicenter was 45 miles west of Athens in the Gulf of Corinth, the Athens Seismological Institute said.

Corinth, 40 miles west of Athens, was one of the hardest-hit cities. The shocks destroyed five hotels in the area around the Gulf and caused more than 600 houses to collapse, police said.

The quake was the strongest in Athens in recent years. Many Athenians panicked when lights went out and windows shattered. Thousands spent the night in the open, huddled around makeshift fires or wrapped in blankets.

"We were out almost all night," pensioner Costa Zervis said as he stumped in his car with his wife and two grandchildren.

In Kinetta, between Athens and Corinth, teams worked for eight hours to save Evangelos Roussis, a hotel owner who had been trapped in the ruins of his collapsed hotel.

Schools were closed in all areas affected by the quakes. Rail workers and school buildings had remained useless the shocks, however, and would reopen today.

The prime minister added that it was up to local authorities to persuade people to return to their homes. All military units and public services were placed in a state of readiness to deal with emergency situations.

The Seismological Institute said 465 tremors registering more than 5 on the Richter scale were recorded after the first shock. Of those, eight registered between 4.5 and 4.8 on the Richter scale.

[Update March 1: Two faults, 9 km in length, separated 2 to 3 km, have been located. They have equal offsets. Each is believed to represent the break of a separate earthquake.]