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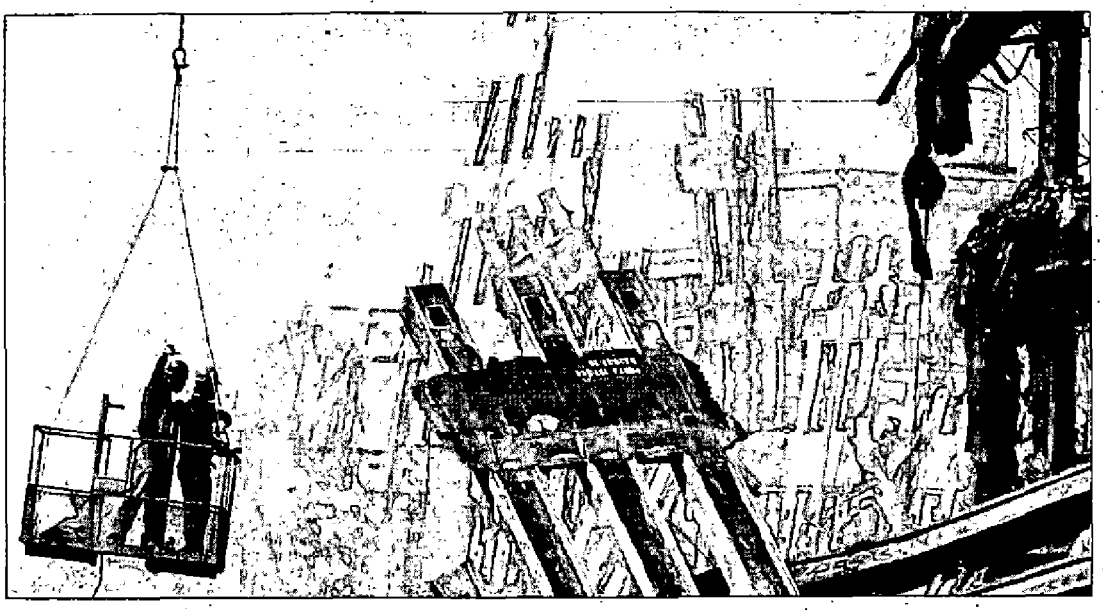
Rescuers' hope fading



GRIM TASK: Two workers suspended from a crane direct the heartbreaking search of the trade center yesterday. Reuters

NO LETUP: Proudly bearing the flag, a shift of rescue workers is trucked in to the disaster site. AP

Another frustrating day with no survivors

By Larry Celona, Ikimulisa Sockwell-Mason, David Seifman and Kate Sheehy

The grueling search for World Trade Center survivors continued yesterday — with no success.

The smoldering rubble, tons of concrete piled precariously in places and sheer weariness of rescue workers toiling for nearly a week prompted officials to haul in more heavy machinery — much to the frustration of rescue workers hoping to get a crack at digging out some possible survivors.

Yesterday, no intact bodies were recovered, only dozens of shattered body parts.

More than 5,000 people are still missing, including more than 300 firefighters and 23 cops. None of the police officers have been found so far.

"It was very somber," said volunteer Jim Kasey, 35, of the mood as he passed buckets of debris along a brigade.

Makeshift, MASH-like units lined some streets collecting body parts, which were to be delivered to a morgue at Bellevue Hospital.

Families of the missing were urged to help authorities collect DNA samples to identify their loved ones by bringing in such things as toothbrushes or combs they may have used before Tuesday's fated events.

Only 115 victims had been identified since yesterday, and the process of identifying the rest could take months, officials warned. One hundred and eighty have been confirmed dead.

Still, hope lived on in spots.

Michael Glass, whose Rottweiler, Nala, was having her aching feet wrapped before starting their second full day on the trail of possible survivors, insisted, "There is hope.

"Very realistically, there are lots of pockets of air and lots of holes. We don't know who had their lunch or breakfast with them. So there's still hope till the last bit of dust is picked up," he said.

Queens firefighter Ed Kester said he's focused on finding personal items in the rubble — since that might indicate a person is still alive nearby.

"It gives a hint — like eyeglasses, pocketbooks, Palm Pilots," Kester said. "If we find stuff, we bring dogs in to sniff around."

Unfortunately, luck has not been with him so far.

"It was a letdown. The dogs didn't pick up on anyone," he said.

Aside from survivors, the feds said they are focused on another problem: finding the 500 guns that were in WTC offices and are still unaccounted for. They continued the search to no avail yesterday.

Some people were also concerned about the living walking around above the mess.

Several doctors from NYU Downtown Hospital were walking along the streets holding up signs encouraging workers to wear masks to protect them from the thick dust.

"I know people aren't interested in their own health right now, but chances are, many of the people down there aren't alive now, and we want to keep the people alive up here," said Dr. Warren Micht.

Sky-high art studio fears for member

By TODD VENEZIA

The World Trade Center was the titanic symbol of America's capitalist might, but it was also home to a group of artists inspired by its massive scale and spectacular location.

Now, one of the 15 members of an art studio program housed on the north tower's 91st floor is among the missing — and his colleagues in the creative world are devastated.

"This has just been so hard to deal with," said Liz Thompson, the executive director of the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council, which oversaw the artists' space.

"A lot of the artists wanted to work up there to be inspired by the view," she said. "But we never saw this coming."

Thompson, who had just arrived at street level from the 107th floor when Tuesday's attack occurred, said Michael Richards, a Jamaican mixed-media artist, is missing.

He had probably spent all night working in his studio 1,100 feet in the air — and had probably decided to sleep over, she told The Post.

Richards, who had been working in the center for about three months, has not been seen since. His father traveled from Jamaica yesterday to wait for word of his fate.

The other artists were found safe after a flurry of frantic phone calls. Program director Moukhtar Kocache even searched at the disaster site for his colleagues after the collapse.

As he looked for survivors, a man and a woman yelled racial insults at the Lebanese-American.

"They told me, 'You should go back to your country, you f---ing Arabs. We should bomb the s--- out of you,' " he told an ABC News reporter he met in the chaotic aftermath Tuesday.

The space for the artists was donated by the Port Authority four years ago.

It gained fame just a month ago, when The New York Times ran a story about a balcony allegedly erected there by a group of performance artists who removed a window.

Yesterday, Thompson said the WTC arts space was special in a city that has long been as proud of its arts and artists.

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