NYC 9/11 Public Portal Document

NEWSDAY, THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 20, 2001

A Weary Faith

City struggles for optimism as rescue yields to recovery

By John Moreno Gonzales, Margaret Ramirez and Bobby Cuza
STAFF WRITERS

While the city continued to take halting steps toward normalcy, French President Jacques Chirac became the first foreign head of state to tour Ground Zero yesterday as rescue workers failed to locate any survivors for a seventh consecutive day.

Chirac took an aerial tour of lower Manhattan with Mayor Rudolph Giuliani and offered his unwavering support for the city and its residents.

"The mayor of New York must know that the French population and Paris, which has also been in the past attacked . . . feels very, very close to the New York population and the New York authorities," said Chirac, a former mayor of Paris.

Despite the reassurance, it was another uneasy day for the city.

As office and other workers continued to return to lower Manhattan, many still stared in disbelief at the void left by the crumbling of the Twin Towers at the World Trade Center last week.

Wall Street took another dip, with the market ending down 144 points after rallying from further depths. Federal agents detained three Yemeni men and searched the news stand where they worked in Astoria yesterday evening. Police continued to press for those who would disrupt the already reeling city with bomb threats, charging a food service employee at Kennedy Airport in the third such incident this week. And residents of Battery Park City waited anxiously to return to their homes.

But nowhere, it seemed, was the continuing effect of the bombing felt more intensely than among the rescue workers, who combed through the wreckage with no success.

Late yesterday, after putting in another 12-hour day, ironworker Mike Ledson of Flatbush said he agonized about going home to his 8-year-old son.

"He keeps asking, 'Did you save anybody? Did you save anybody?' " Ledson said. "And unfortunately, I have to tell him no. It seems like you work all day and you turn around and it seems like you just cleared a little bit of the pile."

Just 170 bodies have been identified so far — barely 3 percent of the total dead and missing — and more searchers are wearing "Recovery" badges on their uniforms, indicating they're looking for bodies.

Assistant Chief Terrance Manning of Los Angeles, a member of the California Urban Search and Rescue Task Force, said his and other units have searched about 75 percent of the catacombs and tunnels beneath the Trade Center.

Though armed with sophisticated listening devices that can detect noises as faint as a heartbeat, Manning said, his team has heard no tapping.

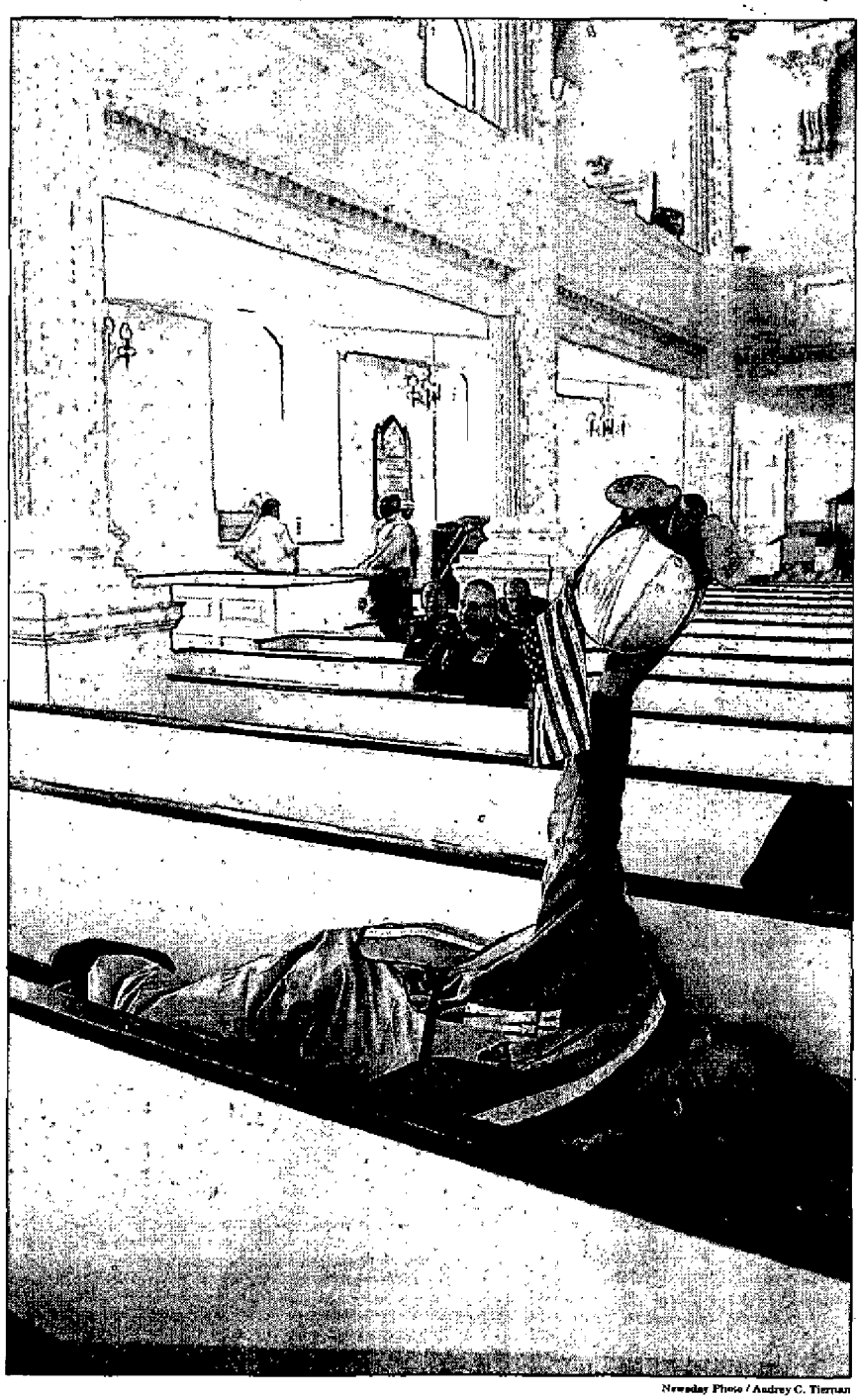
"Last night I got one hour's sleep," he said. "You lay down and you're awake an hour later."

Yesterday afternoon, Giuliani announced that a religious service tentatively slated for Central Park on Sunday had been relocated to Yankee Stadium. Plans to hold the larger-scale event were scrapped, due in part to concern about the availability of police.

"Given the enormous strain on the police, the National Guard, all the city and state people that are here, the idea of having a million people come, although very, very well-intentioned and quite beautiful . . . would not be a good idea," Giuliani said.

Maintaining a degree of optimism, Giuliani also took pains to label the event a "prayer" rather than a "memorial" service.

See CITY on A8



Newsday Photo / Audrey C. Tiernan

An exhausted worker waves his flag-adorned helmet and gas mask to visitors in St. Paul's Chapel on Broadway yesterday.

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French Leader Tours Site

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"It was too early to have a memorial service," he said, "too early in the recovery and relief effort, and too early in the grieving process."

Earlier in the day, Giuliani had a private meeting with Chirac at the city's command center at Pier 92. During the meeting, Chirac asked Giuliani about hope for survivors.

"It's a very delicate thing to communicate correctly," the mayor said. "We are still proceeding like we might be able to find some people . . . . At the same time, we have to get people ready for the fact that with the length of time we are not going to be able to recover significant numbers."

Before taking Chirac on the aerial tour, Giuliani presented him with police and fire department caps in a makeshift office in the cavernous warehouse of Pier 92, where china has been brought in from Gracie Mansion to inject an element of home.

Chirac told reporters that the French press has taken to labeling Giuliani "Mayor Hero," an expression, he explained, that is akin to "Rudy the Rock."

Meanwhile, Wall Street reacted to a flurry of job cuts and reports of weak third-quarter earnings. The Boeing Co. announced plans to lay off as many as 30,000 workers by the end of next year because of the expected slowdown, while American and United airlines announced 40,000 layoffs combined.

While acknowledging that the city will likely take an economic hit as a result of last week's terrorist attack, the mayor also appealed for optimism.

"We are mourning. We hurt, and we're going to hurt tomorrow, the next day, for a month, a year and maybe forever," he said. "I have no doubt the city is going to be economically stronger six months and a year from now. Economically, we're going to do fine."

Residents will have the help of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, which agreed yesterday to reimburse the city and state for 100 percent of its recovery costs, including debris removal, repairs to public facilities and emergency protection.



Newsday Photo / Julia Gaines

'Mayor Hero' and President Jacques Chirac brief reporters.

FEMA also announced yesterday that it would provide an additional $100 million to the city's relief effort; it had approved $25 million on Monday.

Meanwhile, city officials took steps yesterday to relieve the gridlock that has plagued commuters all week. For the first time since Sept. 11, the Brooklyn Bridge will reopen to traffic today, albeit with only two Manhattan-bound lanes. Cars will be allowed to exit only north on the FDR Drive.

In addition, six runs have been added to the Sunset Park ferry, and parking at the ferry site has been more than doubled. Alternate-side parking rules have also been suspended citywide.

"The reason for that is we want cars to stay put," Department of Transportation Commissioner Iris Weinshall said. "The more people don't feel the need or the obligation to move their car, then they'll take public transportation."

In another move toward normalcy, Giuliani said he hoped to reopen Battery Park City North by this morning — allowing 1,500 people to return to their homes — and Battery Park City South within a day or two. He also asked that all city employees return to work today.

Also today, a dozen schools that have been closed as a result of the disaster — including Stuyvesant High — will be temporarily consolidated into others.

And Con Edison said it had restored electricity to all networks that lost power because of last week's attack. Utility officials said service was restored to its Cortlandt network, which serves about 1,800 customers in lower Manhattan, at 3:51 a.m. yesterday.

However, some individual buildings may be without power until Con Edison can access them to switch on electrical connections, officials said.

While much of lower Manhattan gradually comes back to life — and work — rescue workers struggle to maintain faith in the face of increasingly long odds.

"From what I see, it's a drawn type look [on people's faces]. No one is smiling, the tension is high and everybody's got a job to do," said a Verizon worker who has been laboring to lay new telephone lines under the direction of FEMA. "A soldier who had been in Bosnia told me Bosnia was nothing compared to this."

Staff writer Rocco Parascandola and wire services contributed to this story.

The Toll

WORLD TRADE CENTER

233	Confirmed dead
5,422	Missing, including:
343	FDNY
23	NYPD
37	Port Authority Police
157	Airline passengers and crew

PENTAGON

189	Believed dead including:
64	Airline passengers and crew

PENNSYLVANIA

44	Airline passengers and crew confirmed dead

Figures as of 7:30 p.m. yesterday

Newsday



Newsday Photo / Audrey C. Tiernan

A woman breaks down on lower Broadway near John Street after seeing the ruins of the World Trade Center yesterday.

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