



AP photo by Hadi Mizban
A woman grieves over the body of her mother, who was killed Wednesday when a Shiite procession on a Baghdad bridge took a chaotic turn.

950 Iraqis die in panic

Rumor of bomber sparks stampede

By Alex Rodriguez
Tribune foreign correspondent

BAGHDAD—Thrown into a panic by shouts that a suicide bomber was in their midst, thousands of Shiite pilgrims in a procession across a Baghdad bridge suddenly stampeded Wednesday, killing about 950 people, many of whom plunged to their deaths in the Tigris River.

It was Iraq's single largest loss of life since the U.S. invasion in March 2003.

Most of the dead were women, children and the elderly, Iraqi officials said. About 815 people were injured, and officials at the five hospitals treating the wounded reported being overwhelmed and struggling to cope.

The magnitude of the tragedy could be seen in hospital hallways, where bodies of victims were piled because morgues had filled up. Iraqi officials said the death toll could rise.

Pandemonium ensued when word that a suicide bomber was in the crowd spread through the legions of Shiites trying to make their way across Al Aimmah Bridge toward the Khadimiyyah mosque in northern Baghdad. There was no suicide attacker, but in the chaos scores of people on the bridge were crushed underfoot and even more drowned when they leapt into the Tigris 100 feet below.

"It seemed like it all happened in a second," said Khaled Hamid, 30, splayed on a bed in pain at Al-Kindi Hospital with injuries to both legs. "People were screaming, children and women were falling to the ground, and people were

PLEASE SEE IRAQ, PAGE 17

INSIDE

NATION

Scientists crack chimp genome

DNA sequenced, and it shows a 96% resemblance to humans'. PAGE 16

METRO

Subpoena takes aim at insiders

Links to teacher pension fund sought.

Weather: Sunny; high 82, low 58
Index, Page 2
Online at chicagotribune.com

Thousands feared dead in lawless city

Feds send troops, aid amid looting and gunfire



AP photo by Eric Gay
With thousands of people stranded, the mayor of New Orleans ordered 1,500 cops to stop rescue missions and begin patrolling the city to rein in crime.

Total evacuation of New Orleans begins

By Howard Witt and Michael Martinez
Tribune national correspondents

COMPLETE HURRICANE COVERAGE: PAGES 3-11 AND IN BUSINESS

NEW ORLEANS — A massive forced evacuation of this sunken city began Wednesday as Mayor C. Ray Nagin said thousands were feared dead in

the wake of Hurricane Katrina and the federal government deployed thousands of troops to help combat rampant looting and lawlessness.

Nagin and Louisiana Gov. Kathleen Blanco said the entire city would be empty for months as officials began the long task of pumping out floodwaters and

assessing the damage caused by one of the worst natural disasters in American history. "The city will not be functional for two or three months,"

the mayor said. Nagin also voiced previously unspoken fears about how many of his city's residents may have died since Katrina swept ashore early Monday. "Minimum, hundreds. Most PLEASE SEE AFTERMATH, BACK PAGE

IN NEW ORLEANS

A sad, slow procession for refugees

By Howard Witt
Tribune senior correspondent

NEW ORLEANS — They escaped with little more than the ragged, filthy clothes on their backs and the moldering shoes on their feet, and many didn't even have that much, emerging barefoot and nearly naked from three days of desperation inside the stricken heart of their flooded city.

They are refugees from a city where thousands are still left behind.

Some had emerged from the darkness of the fetid Superdome, where they had been confined for days. Some had clung to chimneys and rooftops without water or food. Some had walked for miles clutching babies and toddlers above the waist-high floodwaters, struggling to give the dead bodies floating nearby a wide berth. Some were critically ill, still tied to the wooden doors that had been torn from their hinges so they could be used as makeshift stretchers.

But at least they were alive,

PLEASE SEE EVACUATE, PAGE 6

IN MISSISSIPPI



Charlotte Observer photo by Patrick Schneider
Beth Stump tries to comfort her 9-week-old daughter while waiting for food in Biloxi, Miss.

Scavenging just to survive

People are raiding trash bins for the basics of life in areas where aid has yet to arrive

By Dahleen Glanton
Tribune national correspondent

BILOXI, Miss.—Once Hurricane Katrina passed, Angela Johnson thought life would return to normal. But for many Gulf Coast residents, the aftermath of the

storm has been a long wait for little help.

With her two children in tow, Johnson spent two hours at the Save-A-Lot grocery store Wednesday, standing in a line that stretched around the corner. People had heard that the store was giving

away food. All Johnson got was a package of Pampers and a 24-pack of warm canned sodas.

Her family had not eaten for three days. Her clothes were dirty and wet. Her children wore the only thing they had—1-year-old Larry in a diaper and 3-year-old Shirley Ann in a pair of soggy pants.

PLEASE SEE SURVIVORS, PAGE 5

THE PRESIDENT

Bush says recovery to take years

By Mark Silva and Frank James
Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON — Taking swift and personal responsibility for federal relief efforts in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, President Bush on Wednesday made a somber appeal for patience and a pledge to deploy vast resources, from the military to public health agencies, to a lengthy and daunting task.

Federal agencies promised millions of meals, cots and blankets, water, ice and medical treatment, as well as assistance from the military and National Guard. The government also was easing restrictions on refineries and tapping the nation's oil reserves to keep gasoline flowing amid disruptions in the gulf.

"This recovery will take

PLEASE SEE BUSH, PAGE 11

