

## INTERNATIONAL

## Church missionaries arrested in Zimbabwe

INDIANAPOLIS (AP)— The leader of an Indianapolis-based missionary group says that its members' only goal was to deliver Bibles, medicine, clothing and seed to the people of Africa.

Authorities in Zimbabwe, however, said the group's real mission was more sinister: aiding Congolese rebels while committing espionage, terrorism and sabotage.

Jonathan Wallace, leader of Harvestfield Ministries, denied those charges during a weekend interview at his home in Indianapolis.

He said he and other members did carry weapons — but only for protection — and that they never fired them in the Congo.

"We preached, we drilled water wells, and did lots of other missionary work there... We now have hundreds of Christians and preachers there," Wallace said.

While Wallace spoke in

### Missionaries being held without bail on charges that could bring them life in prison.

the United States, three Harvestfield members, including Wallace's son-in-law, remained jailed Sunday in Zimbabwe. All were being held without bail on charges that could bring them life in prison.

The men were taken into custody March 7 in Zimbabwe when, as they boarded a flight for Switzerland, a gun activated an airport metal detector.

Authorities said a search of their pickup truck at the airport later turned up assault and sniper rifles, shotguns, a light machine gun, hand guns, firearms, telescopic sights, knives, camouflage cream, two-way radios and ammunition.

Wallace readily acknowledged members of his group had shipped guns

when they moved to Africa from Canby, Ore., and built their mission in late 1997.

"All of us packed all the property we owned and necessities we needed, including guns. The guns were bolt-action hunting rifles with scopes, pistols, but no automatic weapons," he said.

But — Zimbabwean prosecutors claim the three were funneling arms to rebels involved in an eight-month civil war to topple Congolese President Laurent Kabila. Zimbabwe has been supporting Kabila with troops and weapons.

Mercenaries in Africa often pose as missionaries in order to mask arms shipments and travel unhindered. But Wallace said his son-in-law, Joseph Wendell Pettijohn, 35,

and the other two — John Lamonte Dixon, 39, and Gary George Blanchard, 34 — were the real thing.

"They are not guilty of any espionage. They are not guilty of any assassination plots," said Wallace. "No one in my organization has ever served in the military. We are religious people."

Wallace said he formed Harvestfield as a non-denominational Christian organization about nine years ago. While independent, the group is supported financially by individuals and by a number of churches, including congregations of the Assembly of God, the Church of God and independent churches, he said.

A newsletter published by the organization at that time told readers the group was moving to Congo, "only because it is God's will for our lives."

## Tanzania faces major food shortage

DAR ES SALAAM, Tanzania (AP) — At least 1 million people are suffering from severe food shortages in Tanzania due to unpredictable weather and crop failures, the U.N. food agency said today.

But the World Food Program said it had only been able to raise half the \$8 million needed to provide 20,000 tons of food to 1.1 million people in 12 regions of the East African nation.

"If we don't receive additional funds to mount this aid operation soon, we'll see the onset of malnutrition and other hunger-related diseases which may ultimately cost human lives," Irene Lacy, WFP's Tanzania director, said in a

statement.

She said the food aid sought was the minimum to stave off what she termed "a major crisis."

The statement said the Tanzanian government's own grain reserves will be nearly gone after it contributes the 9,000 tons promised to the relief effort. Maize is the staple crop of Tanzania and is consumed in the form of thick porridge.

The food agency is also responsible for feeding 340,000 refugees from Congo, Rwanda and Burundi living in camps in western Tanzania and is having trouble coming up with funds to keep this program going, Lacy said.

## Ethiopia: Eritrea clashes still spreading

ADDIS ABABA, Ethiopia (AP) — Weekend skirmishes have escalated into a new round of heavy fighting in the 10-month border war between Ethiopia and Eritrea, Ethiopia said Monday.

Small skirmishes erupted Sunday at the Zalambessa-Egela front 60 miles south of the Eritrean capital of Asmara, Ethiopia said in a news release. The clashes developed into full-scale fighting that continued Monday, Ethiopia said.

Eritrea and Ethiopia are fighting over parts of their barren 620-mile border that was never clearly demarcated after Eritrea became independent from Ethiopia in 1993. Eritrea said it shot down an Ethiopian MiG-23 jet fighter and destroyed 19 tanks in fighting Sunday at the Tsorona front, northeast of Zalambessa. Eritrea said it also had captured two Ethiopian tanks.

Ethiopian government spokeswoman Selome Tadesse called Eritrea's

report "ridiculous."

Tadesse also backed off Ethiopia's earlier claim that Tsorona saw only small skirmishes Sunday. Heavy fighting that started there Sunday continued, she said today.

Before Sunday's fighting, there had been a two-week lull in the latest round of battles that began Feb. 6. Full-scale fighting in May and June killed 1,000 people. There are reports that as many as 10,000 people, mainly Ethiopian and Eritrean troops, died in

fighting last month. Neither government has made public its losses, and it has not been possible to obtain independent confirmation.

Both countries have accepted an Organization of African Unity agreement to settle the dispute, but their differing interpretations of the agreement have left peace efforts deadlocked.

The U.N. Security Council intensified its efforts last week to convince the two countries to talk rather than fight.

## South African leaders push for peace in Cape Town

CAPE TOWN, South Africa (AP) — Political leaders pledged today to safeguard the peace during upcoming national elections, following political violence that claimed five lives in the past week in Cape Town.

Following a two-hour summit called by Archbishop Njongonkulu Ndungane, the leaders issued a joint statement vowing to censure party members who commit politically motivated acts of violence.

Hundreds of South African troops and police were sent to a ramshackle Cape Town township on Wednesday as authorities tried to halt an outbreak of political bloodletting ahead of June 2 elections.

Alarmed by the killings of the five political activists — four from the United Democratic Movement and one from the African National Congress — government officials deployed the forces to prevent a recurrence of the violence that killed thousands before South Africa's first all-race elections in 1994.

The leaders agreed to set up an observer commission to ensure all parties adhered to the electoral code of conduct and to process complaints and monitor rallies.

A rally to address the root causes of the violence is planned for Wednesday in the Cape Flats, site of the recent violence, where party leaders will speak and show unity.

## WORLD BRIEFS

### NEW INITIATIVE BRIDGES ASIAN BUSINESSES WITH AFRICA

TOKYO (IPS) — It opens on April Fool's Day, but Asia's first official information center on investment in Africa is no joke. Aimed at promoting trade between Asia and Africa, the still unnamed center is expected to stimulate Asian business interest in more African countries. This despite the current economic crisis in Asia, has seen business slowing down in this side of the world. "There are many small Asian companies that might want to invest in an African country but cannot do so for lack of expertise and information on joint ventures," says an optimistic foreign ministry official who declined to be named. "The center will fulfill this role." According to the official, the center, which will have a site on the Internet as well as host workshops and seminars, was the "result of strong urging from African officials, aid organizations and Asian governments." Economists say the prospects of Japanese investment in Africa are not promising because companies are more bent on keeping money at home rather than expanding overseas. They say that Japan is hoping other Asian countries will be able to help Africa despite their own troubles.

### MENINGITIS CLAIMING 30 LIVES A DAY IN SUDANESE CITY

KHARTOUM (IPS) — In response to an outbreak of meningitis that is claiming an average of 30 lives a day in the capital city of Khartoum, a door-to-door meningitis vaccination campaign has been coordinated by a group of police officers, students and non-governmental organizations, according to Sudanese health officials. Dr. Bashir Mukthar, a senior official at the Ministry of Health, said that about 140 people have died of the disease since the outbreak began in February. Unconfirmed reports, however, say the figure could be upwards of 1,000. The death toll is especially high in the shanty towns of Khartoum where more than three million displaced from the civil war in southern Sudan live. The disease also has hit western Sudan's northern Darfur state, on the border with Chad. Meningitis, an inflammation of the brain or the spinal cord due to infection by viruses or bacteria, is common in tropical zones. The disease, whose spread is aggravated by high temperatures and overcrowding, causes an intense headache, fever, loss of appetite, intolerance to light and sound, and rigidity of muscles, especially those in the neck.

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