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Matt Brown/Special to the Times-Delta
COS basketball coach George Tarkanian, left, and Sonny Mannon look away as time runs out and the Giants lose to Cerritos College in the JC playoffs.

Giants lose to Cerritos Tarkanian's future uncertain as COS coach

By Leighton Ginn
Times-Delta

IRVINE — College of the Sequoias' bid for the state community college men's basketball championship ended abruptly Thursday, followed by almost immediate speculation on the future of coach George Tarkanian.

Minutes after his Giants were eliminated 86-80 by Cerritos in the first round at the Bren Events Center at the University of California, Irvine,

Tarkanian said he is not sure if he'll return next season.

Tarkanian, as is standard procedure at the college, had to reapply for his job. But after the due date for applications passed last week, COS officials told Tarkanian they were extending the deadline for another two weeks.

He and two other people applied, the coach said.

The Giants finished 29-8 in their first season under Tarkanian, a veteran of the state's JC coaching ranks and the son of Fresno State coach Jerry Tarkanian.

"It's my intent to stay here, but I have to look at my options until this is settled," said George Tarkanian. "Right now, I'm starting to look to see what my options are, because I can't wait two or three weeks."

Tarkanian said he enjoys the atmosphere and community support in Visalia.

"I can't think of another community college job I would want," he said.

The Tarkanian name is both legendary and stigmatized in JC and major college circles. Most of that comes from Jerry Tarkanian's string of brilliantly successful teams at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, and his frequent runs with the NCAA and recruitment of players with a variety of off-court problems.

George Tarkanian's players, however, appeared to be on their best behavior both on and off the court this season. In six seasons as a head coach at COS and Chaffey College in Southern California, Tarkanian has a 162-50 career win-loss record.

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Weather/2A
Sunny
Today's High/low: 65/39
Saturday's High/low: 71/45



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Gunfire, rumors follow in wake of shooting

Police saturate streets after teen's death

By Sukhjit Purewal
Times-Delta

A day after a 13-year-old girl was killed by a stray bullet from a teen-age dispute, gunshots near two Visalia schools Thursday produced "lockdowns" and tension spawned rumors of another incident.

Visalia police, reinforced by Tulare County Sheriff's deputies, fanned out on city streets to prevent retaliation for the Wednesday night shooting in Recreation Park that killed Nancy Saechao, a student at Divisadero Middle School.

Police continued to search for two young men believed to have fired the fatal shots.

In incidents Thursday: A drive-by shooting attempt at Lovers Lane and Houston Avenue put nearby Golden West High School and Golden Oak Elementary School on alert.

School officials reported hearing shots in front of Highland Elementary School, 701 N. Stevenson St., two blocks north of Recreation Park.

Police and witnesses provided further, sometimes differing, details on the Wednesday night slaying, which occurred about 7:20 p.m. at Recreation Park amid a confrontation between two groups of teen-age boys.

Police refrained from describing any of the incidents as gang-related.

But they said that Wednesday night two boys briefly argued with a group of teens congregated around benches directly south of the Recreation Center. One was pushing his bike and the second was walking beside him toward the Visalia Oaks parking lot when the second group started chasing them, police said.

At that point the two teenagers turned, and one of them pointed a gun at the pursuers and opened fire. At least five shots were fired, police said.

Family, friends mourn teen-ager

Loved ones try to comprehend loss of lively, happy seventh-grader

By Barbara E. Hernandez
Times-Delta

Nancy Saechao spent Wednesday night as she usually did — at the United Community Youth Center, talking, laughing, playing ping pong and turning up her favorite song, NSync's "God Must Have Spent A Little More Time On You."

Only minutes later, at 7:20 p.m., Nancy lay near a side entrance to the UCYC center, dying from a bullet wound in



Tulare County Sheriff's Det. J. Mayberry collects information from young adults hanging out Thursday at Recreation Park. The day after 13-year-old Nancy Saechao was killed at the park, sheriff's officers helped Visalia police establish a presence around the city.

"The intended victims hit the deck," police Sgt. Jim German said.

Police said Nancy Saechao was standing with a group of friends on the west side of the center when she was shot once in the chest.

She died two hours later at Kaweah Delta District Hospital.

Relatives and friends, however, told a more poignant story on Thursday: They said Nancy emerged from the Recreation Center and began to take a ride on a friend's bicycle.

She and a small group of friends, on foot, were around the corner from the center

entrance when gunfire rang out. Everyone else immediately ducked, leaving only Nancy, still on the bike, exposed. She was hit in the shoulder by one bullet and then in the heart by a second, her friends said.

Other young people quickly retreated to the center. Nancy came last, wheeling the borrowed bike. She called out that she had been shot, then she fell to the pavement.

"Her eyes started going back in her head, and you could barely understand her because blood was gurgling in her throat," her cousin Pao Saechao said. "Her last

How to help

Visalia police asked that anyone with information about the shooting at Recreation Park Wednesday call Detective Allyn Wightman at 738-3256 or the department's anonymous hotline at 734-5302.

Chronology

1. 7:20 p.m. Wednesday: Shots are fired during a dispute between two groups of teenagers in Recreation Park. One strikes 13-year-old Nancy Saechao, innocently riding a bicycle nearby, in the chest. She dies two hours later.

2. 8:58 a.m. Thursday: An 18-year-old student walking to Visalia Adult School is shot at on Lovers Lane near Houston Street. Students are kept inside classrooms at nearby Golden Oak Elementary School and Golden West High School in what school officials call a lockdown.

3. About 9 a.m. Thursday: Reports of shots being fired at Redwood High School are received by police and relayed over the police radio. Within minutes police say the reports are "without substance."

4. 1:50 p.m. Thursday: Eight to 10 shots are heard in front of Highland Elementary School. Students are kept inside for 25 minutes.

Inside

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words were, 'I was shot.'"
German said one suspect is about 5 feet 7 inches tall and weighs about 140 pounds. He described the second as being 5 feet 8 inches to 5 feet 10 inches tall and weighing about 120 pounds.

See Shooting/2A

the chest. Nancy Saechao was a good kid. A 13-year-old seventh-grader at Divisadero Middle School, she received five As and three Bs on her last report card. She tutored younger kids, including her younger brother and three sisters.



Nancy Saechao

"She was always here, always wanting to be a part of our activities," said youth center program supervisor Jesse Moreno. "Out of 150

See Nancy/2A



Friends and family of 13-year-old Nancy Saechao gather Thursday in her neighborhood to make a banner for display at Divisadero Middle School, where she went to school.

Nick Gayton/Times-Delta

FBI holds out little hope for missing sightseers' survival

Yosemite search continues; family refuses to give up

By Christine Hanley
The Associated Press

MODESTO — An FBI agent said Thursday that a missing woman and two teen-age girls likely met violent deaths soon after they disappeared on a trip to Yosemite National Park.

The trio, missing for more than three weeks, probably died the night they disappeared from the El Portal lodge where they were staying or very early the next

morning, agent James M. Maddock said.

"We're now focused on one theory that we believe to be the lead scenario," Maddock said at a news conference Thursday. "We feel almost certain the women were the victims of a violent crime."

Carole Sund, 42, of Eureka, her 15-year-old daughter Julie, and Silvina Pelosso, a 16-year-old from Cordoba, Argentina, were last seen on Feb. 15 at the Cedar Lodge, a restaurant and motel on Yosemite's rugged western border.

Maddock refused to say what investigators told the

Sund and Pelosso families on Wednesday that prompted Carole Sund's husband to say that evening that he was "devastated" by the FBI's news.



Carole Sund

Earlier Thursday, Jens Sund apologized for the remark, saying reporters caught him at a low moment and that he has "been on an emotional rollercoaster."

Francis Carrington, Carole Sund's father, said after the

news conference that despite the FBI statement, the family continues to hold out hope the three women will be found alive.



Julie Sund

"We don't believe it. We think there's still a pretty good chance," he said, his voice choked with emotion.

Federal agents used all-terrain vehicles Thursday in an intensified search around rugged western border of the park. Volunteers assisting in

the effort said they had been told to search for shallow graves.



Silvina Pelosso

Maddock also refused to comment on whether the arrest of the restaurant's night cleaner Friday night has anything to do with the disappearance.

Billy Strange, who had spent time in jail for domestic violence, was arrested on a parole violation at the request of the FBI and his parole officer, the Mariposa

County sheriff's department said.

On Tuesday, agents also seized Strange's cream-colored van and a car belonging to his girlfriend, who works as a front desk clerk at the lodge. The woman's car was returned the same day, officials said.

Authorities still were hoping to locate the red rental car Carole Sund was driving. Maddock would not say whether investigators expected to find the travelers with the car.

Ken Sund, Jens's brother, said the families would hold a vigil and march Sunday at noon in Modesto.

Dili residents return to ruined city

DILI, East Timor (AP) — With East Timor's capital secured by an international peacekeeping force, Dili residents returned from makeshift refugee camps Tuesday to find a looted, burned city.

There was almost no water and no electricity. All the windows were smashed, most buildings had been burned down and the only signs of life were the throngs of homeless at the city's dockside. Even the hunched vendors who used to sell soft drinks from rickety carts outside the port were gone.

"Indonesia will have to pay reparations for the loss of our hometown," said 34-year-old Filomena Bianco.

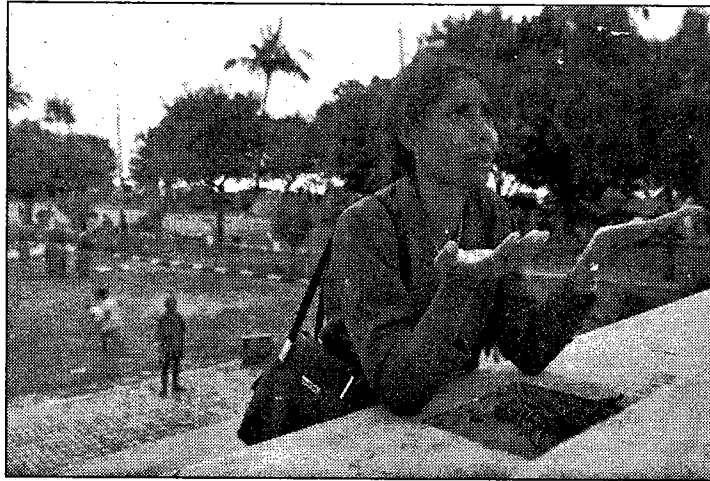
Tanks, trucks and armored personnel carriers rumbled off warships Tuesday in East Timor, and troops from 10 countries poured in for the second day without resistance from pro-Indonesia militias. About 3,000 multinational troops will be on the ground by Wednesday, nearly half the total contingent of 7,500.

But force commander Maj. Gen. Peter Cosgrove cautioned that the rest of East Timor will not be under full control for some weeks and will remain dangerous until then, particularly with villages still burning. He said his troops were to begin moving outside the capital today.

"It is too early for us to assert that the security situation overall is anything approaching benign," Cosgrove said.

The multinational force is attempting to restore order to a province where militias — aided by some elements in the Indonesian army — engaged in a campaign of arson, terror and murder, driving tens of thousands of people from their homes. Human rights workers and refugees say hundreds, perhaps thousands of people, were killed.

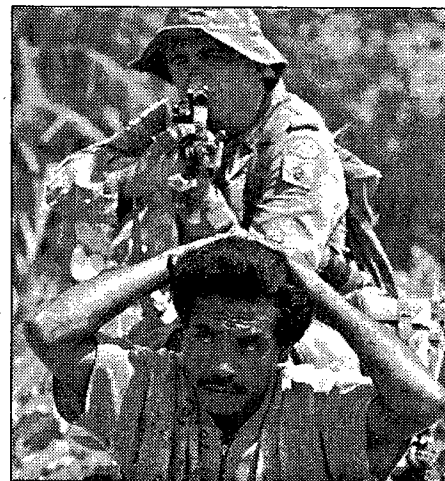
The militias had hoped to nullify an Aug. 30 vote, in which nearly 80 percent of the East



East Timor: the human face of turmoil

An East Timorese woman (above) prays at an icon of the Virgin Mary across the street from the refugee camp where she and hundreds of others are squatting in Dili, the capital of East Timor. An Australian soldier (above right) aims his assault rifle at an alleged militiaman who was arrested along with four others at the entrance of the Dili airport. And an East Timorese child (right) looks up at a passing Australian soldier as peacekeepers and U.N. officials visited a refugee camp in Dare, East Timor, outside of Dili.

Associated Press



Timorese people opted for independence from Indonesia. Indonesia invaded East Timor in 1975 after Portugal abandoned its former colony.

The peacekeepers' task of securing the entire province is daunting in a jungle climate filled with rugged hills and mountains. In many villages, troops may have to conduct house-by-house searches to flush out the militias. Soldiers already have detained half a dozen people found with weapons.

Other militia members are scattering, going to nearby islands. There even have been reports that

the militias have been intimidating pro-independence refugees on the island of Bali, where idyllic resorts lure vacationers from around the world.

On Tuesday, people in Dili cheered and danced for the foreign troops. In Dare, six miles south of the capital and the site of a large refugee camp, people burst into tears of joy as international soldiers in full battle gear and a group of U.N. officials drove up in a convoy of U.N. vehicles.

Some refugees who returned to Dili on Tuesday tried camping out in the rubble of their former homes.

But escape was the only goal of the homeless at the dockside.

Between 190,000 and 300,000 people fled into the mountains and other areas during the violence, in addition to 141,000 who fled to Indonesian-controlled West Timor, according to a UNICEF report.

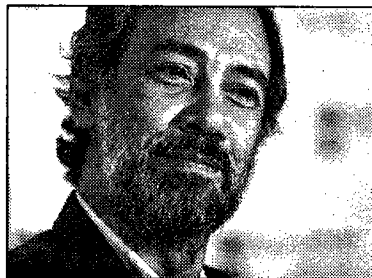
The United Nations and aid agencies are clamoring to bring food to people in the hills, but have been hampered by Indonesia's bureaucratic red tape and a lack of transport planes. Relief workers hoped to start air-dropping food again today.

Refugees give hero's welcome to independence leader

DARWIN, Australia (AP) — Despite having spent half his life battling Indonesia's brutal military rule, Jose Alexandre "Xanana" Gusmao never expected his foes were prepared to destroy East Timor before finally abandoning it.

Gusmao, widely expected to be the first president of the fledgling nation, watched helplessly from a distance as his homeland was plunged into mayhem over the last three weeks. Hundreds of people, including Gusmao's own father, are believed to have perished in the rampage.

He stayed in seclusion in Jakarta and Australia — even when an international peace force entered East Timor — finally emerging Tuesday to visit East Timorese refugees evacuated to



Associated Press

East Timor's independence leader Jose Alexandre "Xanana" Gusmao, speaks to the press in Darwin, Australia, Tuesday.

this northern Australian town.

"We didn't suspect the violence would take such dimensions," said Gusmao, who has come to symbolize his country's struggle for independence. "But even if we knew that it would be like that, I think my people would still have

voted independence."

Gusmao, a guerrilla leader who spent the last seven years in Indonesian jails, rarely tires of stressing his readiness to work closely with the Indonesian government.

The homesick refugees in Darwin gave a hero's welcome to Gusmao, who flew to Australia on Sunday — his first trip abroad since being released from prison earlier this month.

"I'm very sad to meet here, so far away from our homeland," Gusmao told his fellow exiles.

He promised to return soon to East Timor's devastated capital, Dili, and said he would work within U.N. guidelines on the transition to full statehood.

Though full independence is at least 1½ years away, Gusmao is

considered the only person who can rally his people toward a successful political transition.

The former leftist firebrand is now a solid moderate who has gone out of his way to assure potential investors that an independent East Timor will protect foreign investments and guarantee private property.

In his first comments since international forces moved into East Timor, Gusmao thanked the world Tuesday for intervening to stop the bloodshed by anti-independence forces.

"I promise, myself, for the following period that we will do everything to help the multinational forces pursue what the East Timorese people are wanting: peace and tranquility in our country," he said.

Only misery in common

Both pro- and anti-independence Timorese fled to refugee camps

DARE, East Timor (AP) — Independence supporters who survived the reign of terror in East Timor greeted arriving peacekeepers with wild applause Tuesday.

But the mood was sour on the other side of the island, where pro-Indonesia loyalists, who also fled the violence, hunkered down in camps — and considered a possibly desperate future.

Refugees in the two camps have only misery in common. The question of whether East Timor should be part of Indonesia or independent still divides them.

Food, clean water and medical care are lacking everywhere. Twenty people have died in Dare, where thousands of independence supporters have been weakened by hunger and are susceptible to disease, said U.N. mission chief Ian Martin. Five babies were among the dead, another aid worker said.

In Dare, located in the hills above Dili, waves of cheers rippled through the crowd as a U.N. convoy made its way through the town.

Grinning people reached out to clasp hands with Australian soldiers riding in Land Rovers. People chanted pro-independence slogans.

"I feel very happy because today we can see that the international community is with us — for the people and for democracy," said Leandro Isaac, a leader of East Timor's independence movement.

In West Timor's provincial capital, Kupang, men glared when Indonesia's social affairs minister, Yustika Baharsyah, led a delegation of aid officials, mostly Europeans, through three refugee camps.

One refugee, Augustina de Costa, sat under a tarpaulin outside a stadium in Kupang where 10,000 refugees have gathered, offering cigarettes and drinks for sale.

In her hometown of Lotalos, just outside Dili, she had lived well. But she knew she could not stay when one of her two houses was burned to the ground.

"We thought of staying in Indonesia, but we lost the vote," she said. "Maybe we can return to East Timor someday."