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Mass Suicide by Poison Reported After Congressman's Slaying; Some Members Shot

WASHINGTON STAR STAFF WRITERS

The bodies of about 400 men, women and children, many of whom reportedly queued up to drink poison brewed in a vat, have been found in the Guyana People's Temple commune, whose members killed five Americans, including Rep. Leo J. Ryan, Guyana's minister of information announced today.

The minister, Shirley Field-Ridley, said some of the bodies showed no indications of violence — and thus were thought to be suicide victims — but others showed signs of violence, including presumed gunshot wounds, which were not consistent with suicide.

Mark Lane, the attorney for sect leader Rev. Jim Jones, said he was present when Jones implemented a mass suicide pact by speaking of "the dignity of death, the beauty of dying." Poison was handed out, he said, and 85 bursts of semi-automatic gunfire accompanied the mass rite.

Just before the shooting began, Lane said, Jones shouted "Mother, mother, mother, mother." He and another lawyer, Charles Garry, were in a house at the sect's commune while the suicides and shootings took place, Lane said.

Amid further gunfire and screaming, Lane said he fled into the jungle outside the camp. More than 600 members of the sect were unaccounted for and may have escaped.

Discovery of the bodies was made by Guyanese troops and police officers who went to a remote jungle area near the Venezuela border, where the religious cult has established a temple and farm.

"Some of the bodies were found in homes, some were found in clearings in the forests, but no live persons were found," said Field-Ridley. "The troops are searching for them. We estimate some 600 persons may be missing."

AS FOR JONES, there was one report, unconfirmed by other sources, that he had committed suicide.

Kathy Hunter, a free-lance writer in California, said today that she talked by telephone with a Guyanese legislator who claimed Jones had killed himself.

However, Lane suggested that Jones may have escaped. The lawyer, who held a poolside press conference today at a hotel in Georgetown, Guyana's capital, said the commune possessed a boat.

Meanwhile, police in Georgetown, Guyana's capital, said they found the bodies of a woman and her three children in a separate Jones-cult commune in a suburb of the city. The throats of all four had been cut.

In Washington today, a State Department official declared: "There has been a great calamity in Guyana involving many Americans. There have been cold-blooded murders and apparently many suicides." The official, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State John Bushnell, said military aircraft were being sent to Guyana to aid in any possible evacuations of Americans.

In the aftermath of the ambush of Ryan's investigative team, Guyanese troops and police officers yesterday entered the people's commune, which is called Jonestown in honor of the sect's charismatic founder, the 48-year-old Jones, a former San Francisco Housing Authority chairman and California political figure whose theology mixed Christianity and Marxism.

They did not encounter any resistance," Field-Ridley said.

In Washington, the State Department quoted a Guyana police official as saying: "It appears as if as many as 400 members of the Jonestown People's Temple community may be dead."

Stephen Katzaris, a Potter Valley, Calif., psychologist who accompanied Ryan to Guyana in a futile attempt to get his daughter out of Jonestown, said the residents of
spokesman, said Ryan had been cau-
ted. Tom Reston, a State Department official, told NBC News that Ryan was in critical condition after surgery at the Air Force hospital in Puerto Rico for emergency treatment. It then continued on to Andrews, where it arrived last night with five of the survivors.

IN NEW YORK, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Peter Lane, said that FBI agents were en route to Guyana at the request of the government of Prime Minister Forbes Burnham to assist in the investigation and determine whether any U.S. laws had been violated.

The plane left several seriously injured persons at a U.S. Navy hospital in Puerto Rico for emergency treatment. It then continued on to Andrews, where it arrived last night with five of the survivors.

Meanwhile, the Defense Department quickly dispatched a C-141 medical plane from McGuire Air Force Base, N.J., to evacuate the wounded.

The Justice Department disclosed that FBI agents were en route to Guyana at the request of the government of Prime Minister Forbes Burnham to assist in the investigation and determine whether any U.S. laws had been violated.

A Guyanese official said his government expects to prosecute those responsible for the murders. The bodies of Ryan and those killed with him could not be removed from Jonestown colony.

The attack occurred at a crude airfield on a dirt airstrip at Port Kaituma, seven miles from Jonestown, as the congressman was escorting disenchanted members of the cult to two chartered planes.

The plane was attacked by Guyanese authorities. No specific charge was made public. According to one report, it was Leyton who began the shooting Saturday night.
Guyanese sources said Ryan had been advised not to go to Jones' jungle camp because his mission would be perceived as hostile by the People's Temple.

After the slaying of Rep. Leo J. Ryan, three newsmen and an American woman by members of a California-based cult. At least three bodies are visible, the one at right believed to be the California congressman.