

# Relatives Start to Remove Jonestown Dead for Burial

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The first bodies of Peoples Temple Church members who perished in the forced mass suicide at the cult's Jonestown, Guyana agricultural commune last month were removed by relatives yesterday from the U.S. Air Force Base at Dover, Del., for burial.

The handful of bodies were among nearly 600 that have been identified so far from fingerprints and medical and dental records by a task force of FBI agents and Army technicians at Dover, where the more than 900 Jonestown victims were brought from Guyana.

U.S. officials have been notifying next of kin as quickly as possible after positive identifications have been made, and on Friday the State Department authorized relatives to begin taking bodies away for burial.

Army pathologists also prepared yesterday to begin autopsies on six of the bodies, including those of cult leader Jim Jones and the Jonestown physician, Dr. Lawrence Schacht, who mixed the poisonous brew that Jones' followers were forced to drink in the "white night" suicide ritual of Nov. 18.

It had been hoped that an autopsy of Jones' body would help determine whether he or someone else fired the shot that killed him, what kind of physical ailments he may have been suffering from during his final days, and whether he was drugged.

There has been speculation, including from a San Francisco physician who said he had visited Jonestown to attend to Jones, that the cult leader had been suffering from some kind of systemic infection that might have contributed to his growing paranoia and bizarre behavior.

It may be too late now, however to learn very much from the autopsies, in the opinion of Dr. William Q. Sturmer, the current president of the National Association of Medical Examiners.

In an interview with Washington Post special correspondent Bruce De-

Silva, Sturmer said that because the U.S. government had "badly botched" its handling of the Jonestown dead, "it will never be known with certainty" exactly how they died.

As a result, Sturmer said, unanswered questions about the mass deaths in Jonestown will leave "insurance claims and other matters of adjudication mired in doubt for years to come... Family members will never know how their loved ones died and will be nagged for years by these unanswered questions."

Recovery of the bodies and the autopsies were delayed by a string of complications, including diplomatic confusion between U.S. and Guyanese officials, the logistical difficulties of airlifting so many bodies from Jonestown, and indecision over the necessity and value of performing any autopsies at all.

Sturmer proposed that problems of this sort be avoided in the future by creating a U.S. government team of pathologists and technicians ready to move quickly to investigate Americans deaths in foreign air crashes, natural disasters and violence.