



Girl killed in New Mexico school shooting

BY MICHELLE KOIDIN
ASSOCIATED PRESS

DEMING, N.M. — A 13-year-old girl shot in the head at school died Saturday, the same day the father of the suspected shooter said his son had intended to kill himself but, was jostled by others in the school lobby.

Araceli Tena died at a hospital in El Paso, Texas, where she had been rushed by ambulance after she was shot Friday at Deming Middle School.

Victor Cordova Jr., of Palomas, Mexico, was wearing a camouflage jacket when he fired a single shot from a .22-caliber handgun, police said. Police records list the boy as 13 years old, but his family says he is 12.

Cordova's father, Victor Cordova Sr., said during an interview Saturday in Palomas that he talked to his son after the shooting.

"Yesterday, I spoke to him, and he said that he was going to kill himself," the elder Cordova said. "But when they went into the school that he was pushed and the gun moved."

Police said they have no information to corroborate the account, and the boy was being held Saturday in the Luna County jail.

He was charged Friday with attempted murder, assault, aggravated assault and aggravated battery, but investigators will be working with prosecutors to amend the charges, police said. Under New Mexico law, he can't be charged as an adult.

The boy's family described him as intelligent but depressed. He is the oldest of three children, but spent a lot of time alone and had threatened suicide in the past, said his relatives. In February, the boy lost his mother to cancer.

Cordova was born in Deming and had gone to U.S. schools since kindergarten, said his father. He would walk across the border from Palomas each school day and board a bus for his classes 33 miles to the north in Deming.

Investigators said they were still trying to determine a motive for the shooting at the only middle school in this farming and ranching town of 15,000, said Carlos Viramontes, Deming schools superintendent.

Police declined to say where Cordova got the gun.

The boy's relatives said he has a temper, sometimes yelling and throwing things.

"According to some of the other kids — I wasn't aware of this — he would get violent because since his mother died recently, they would say stuff about his mother," said the father, a 36-year-old mechanic and construction worker.

He said his son no longer wanted to go to school in the United States and had complained that other kids were bothering him.

"I told him to stay over there, that he'd have more opportunities over there than over here," he said.

At Deming Middle School, classes will resume Monday, with up to three officers at the school to make the children feel safe, said Bill Kuehl of the police department.

The school district had established an emergency plan following the fatal shootings at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colo., Viramontes said. He said it wasn't clear how the gun got into the school.

Counselors met with about 100 students and parents earlier Saturday at the school.

"I think what you saw today was the whole gamut of emotions from fear to anger to I don't understand why this happened," Viramontes said. "I know that some of the children and some of the parents were a little more relieved when they left."

"But this is not going to be worked out in a two-hour counseling session. This is going to take a longer amount of time," he said.

China holds unmanned space tests

BY RENEE SCHOOF
ASSOCIATED PRESS

BEIJING — China is one step closer to catching up to the U.S. and Russian space programs after conducting its first unmanned test of a spacecraft designed to carry astronauts.

The spacecraft Shenzhou safely touched down on land in north China's Inner Mongolia early Sunday after 21 hours orbiting Earth.

Western experts say after this accomplishment — a breakthrough for the nation's secretive space program — China will probably send its first manned mission into space next year.

While the most recent flight was unmanned, the Shenzhou (pronounced

shun-jo) is capable of carrying astronauts, who are dubbed "taikonauts" in Beijing from the Chinese word for "space."

"This looks to have been an excellent start to the Chinese manned space program and puts them on a course for a manned flight in about a year's time," said Phillip Clark, a British expert on the Chinese program.

He predicted a manned flight sometime in October to December of next year, if no problems arise.

The state-run Xinhua News Agency said more unmanned tests were planned before a manned flight, but gave no timetable. China didn't announce Sunday's flight until after the craft had landed.

The spacecraft was adapted by Chinese scientists from the design of the Russian Soyuz craft, but it is heavier, has four solar panels compared with two, and has a forward module that is cylindrical instead of spherical, Clark said. China also turned to Russia for the craft's life-support system and for astronaut training, he said.

As early as 2001 or 2002, the nation is likely to put into orbit a small lab that future crews can visit, Clark said. Chinese experts also have discussed a new family of modular launch vehicles, including a large one that would likely be for a moon landing, possibly in 10 or 20 years, he said.

According to Clark, the test flight over the weekend was originally scheduled for last fall, and the first manned flight for this October, around the time of the 50th anniversary of communist rule on Oct. 1. But development problems with the new Long March 2F rocket caused a yearlong delay.

Although China's space program has been highly secretive, Western observers knew a test launch was imminent when China deployed four space-tracking ships at sea, Clark said.

James Oberg, a 22-year veteran of the U.S. space shuttle program who now works as an independent consultant, said U.S. space command officials also tracked the latest launch, flight and landing.

"This basically is proof they have attained a very exclusive level of space capability," he said.

President Jiang Zemin approved the manned space program, named Project 921, in 1992.



SPECIAL TO THE GAMECOCK

China's unmanned space capsule Shenzhou lies on the desert ground Sunday after a successful re-entry into the atmosphere and landing in Inner Mongolia after 21 hours of orbiting the earth.

Archaeologists unearth 4,000-year-old palace

DAMASCUS, SYRIA (AP) — Archaeologists have discovered the ruins of a royal palace believed to be 4,000 years old near Damascus, the Syrian Arab News Agency reported Saturday.

It said "highly valued ruins" were discovered by a joint German, Italian and Syrian expedition in Qatanah, about 12 miles southwest of the Syrian capital.

The palace dates back to 2000 B.C., the news agency said. It didn't give a more precise year or say which ruler built it. Government officials in charge of archaeology weren't immediately available for comment.

Historians believe that the Amorites, who came from the Arabian peninsula around 2100 B.C., were the first important Semitic settlers in the area, and that they established many small states.

The palace contains a throne hall that is 70 feet by 132 feet with 6-foot-high adobe walls, the agency said. In the center of the hall, an unbroken jar with "amazing decoration" was found stuck to the ground, the agency said.

'Peanuts' creator battling colon cancer

SANTA ROSA, CALIF. (AP) — "Peanuts" creator Charles M. Schulz is battling colon cancer, the *Santa Rosa Press Democrat* reported Sunday.

The cancer was discovered Tuesday, when Schulz was rushed to Santa Rosa Memorial Hospital to clear a blocked abdominal artery, the artist's wife, Jean Schulz, told the newspaper.

His treatment will begin once doctors decide on the best course for attacking the disease, she said.

The future is uncertain for "Peanuts," which is distributed to 2,600 newspapers in 75 countries and is the basis of a franchise that collects \$1 billion per year.

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