

WorldWatch

by Staff

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Earthquakes

Several strong +7.0 earthquakes rocked areas of the planet in June. On June 10, a 7.9 temblor struck the Andreanof Islands of Alaska, the strongest to hit North America in 10 years. Another 7.9 quake hit the Flores/Banda sea region on June 17 at a depth of 350 miles, making it the largest deep earthquake since the Bolivian 8.3 quake on June 6, 1994.

Large earthquake totals for 1996 as of July 4:

+6.0s: 80 (Avg.=105/yr.) +7.0s: 13 (Avg.=15/yr.).

Israel

The 21 Arab League members met in Cairo June 21-23 to urge Israel to prove its commitment to peace by resuming negotiations without delay. Yassir Arafat's deputy threatened: "Any digression by Binyamin Netanyahu from the peace process will cause a return to the state of war which existed before the Oslo agreements of September 1993." Though promising to continue the peace talks, Netanyahu insists that he has a mandate to pursue peace in his own way.

Europe

The European Union (EU) has agreed to negotiate for the adoption of a single currency and set up a system of central banks despite British opposition. Some analysts expect Britain and Sweden to withdraw from the EU and return to the European Free Trade Association, which includes Norway, Iceland, Switzerland and Liechtenstein.

Drugs

Since 1992, recent use of marijuana has skyrocketed 137% among American 12- and 13-year-olds and 200% among 14- and 15-year-olds. The percentage of students having used any illicit drugs within the past 12 months also rose over 10% in each of the 8th, 10th and 12th grades.

Weather

Over 65% of U.S. counties have been declared disaster areas as a result of extreme weather conditions occurring in the last year. Natural disasters have become increasingly intense and of great concern. America has experienced hurricanes, tornadoes, drought, flooding and bitter cold in unprecedented proportions in recent years.

Russia

Russia's ambassador to Iran assured the Iranians that Moscow considers forging a strategic partnership with Iran to be a foreign policy priority and would oppose U.S. attempts to isolate

Tehran. Iran joined Russia in opposing NATO's plan to expand into Eastern Europe, fearing that it would then move into the Middle East.

War

A research group in Stockholm, Sweden, reports that there were 30 armed conflicts fought worldwide in 1995, just one less than 1994. All of these wars pitted a government against another group or groups within the country.

Germany

According to the same Swedish research group, Germany ranks third behind the U.S. and Russia as the world's foremost arms exporters. In 1995, Germany sold \$2 billion worth of arms, compared to Russia's \$4 billion and America's \$10 billion.