

Weather has most impact on current wheat crop

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Keith Snethen, who farms northwest of Goodland, said hot weather and little rain has done a job on his 30 acres of wheat. The plants are short, he said, adding the crop will probably yield only 15 to 20 bushels an acre if more rain doesn't come soon.

"That heat last weekend," he said, "really, you could just watch it cookin' in the field."

He said he'd heard temperatures are

supposed to climb again this weekend. (The National Weather Service office in Goodland is predicting highs of more than 100 degrees on both Saturday and Sunday.)

Some years, insects or hail can do major damage, but Snethen said this year the weather has been the main problem.

"Everything else has been pretty good," he said, "just a lack of rain and too hot of weather."

Schiels said there was no hail because there was no rain. He said he's

seen a lot of freeze, wind and heat damage in his wheat, which could yield between nothing and 25 bushels per acre, depending on what the weather does. The crop headed out 15 days early this year, he said.

Schiels said he had a good wheat crop last summer, although it was dry in May and June, because there was enough moisture in earlier months to sustain the plants. The crop yielded 30 to 65 bushels per acre last year, he said.

Farmers can deal with the weather, Schiels said, because they realize they

have no control over it. What's frustrating, he added, is the low prices, and the fact the government isn't working to change the system and open up new markets.

"We don't want subsidies," Schiels said. "We want market price."

Pancake said most farmers need to get \$5 a bushel for wheat to cover expenses. Currently, a bushel is selling for about \$2.70 in Sherman County.

"You don't realize how much it costs to farm now," he said, noting that a combine to harvest wheat costs about

\$250,000.

Pancake said growing organic wheat has put him in a better position than some farmers.

Last year, he said, he sold wheat all over the country — with most of it going to Mormons in Utah — for \$4.65 to \$4.75 per bushel. But it's still not enough to cover his costs.

What keeps the farm operating, Pancake said, is the \$50,000 he gets each year for his Colorado farm land that's in the Conservation Reserve Program, in which farmers are paid by the gov-

ernment for planting their fields to grass.

Because farm subsidies are tied to production, Schiels said, some farmers could be in big trouble this year. The new farm bill President Bush recently signed won't help, he said.

"If you don't produce grain," he said, "it (the farm bill) doesn't help you."

"I'm not sure we'll ever get out of this doldrums of low prices," he said, adding that many farmers are fed up.

"A lot of people are ready to throw in the towel."

Mission to rescue hostages defended by officials

HOSTAGES, from Page 1

full arsenal "to finish off" the Abu Sayyaf. The group's numbers have dwindled to less than 100 from about 1,000 a year ago.

Despite the deaths of two of three hostages, Reyes defended the mission, saying Philippine soldiers took "every precaution to secure the safe release of the hostages."

Intense fighting started early in the afternoon near the town of Siraway on the main island of Mindanao, where the U.S.-trained Philippine troops have been searching for the hostages for weeks. The fighting was still going on after nightfall.

Helicopters piloted by U.S. troops helped evacuate the wounded but no U.S. troops took part in the raid, both Philippine and U.S. military officials said.

U.S. troops also had no hand in planning the raid, said Gen. Richard Myers, chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff. Myers said the training given Filipino troops since mid-February was not aimed at freeing hostages.

"The training was more general. It

was not pointed to hostage rescue," Myers told reporters in Brussels, where he is attending a NATO meeting.

Some 1,200 Americans are in the Philippines as part of Bush's global fight against terrorism. The U.S. presence is the largest outside Afghanistan, where an international coalition is pursuing bin Laden's al-Qaida terrorist network.

Brig. Gen. Emmanuel Teodosio said the Americans — including Green Berets, pilots, military engineers and support staff — were crucial to the mission. Philippine officers credited U.S. surveillance with leading local troops to the hostages.

The United States has deployed U.S. Orion P3 surveillance planes and unmanned reconnaissance aircraft as part of its non-combat support for operations against the Abu Sayyaf.

"This was only made possible because of the benefits we have derived from the conduct of the exercise," he said. "The surveillance equipment of the Americans was very instrumental in locating where the Abu Sayyaf was."

Arroyo offered her sympathies to the Burnham and Yap families.

"This has been a long and painful trial for them, for our government, for our country," she said.

"Our soldiers tried their best to hold their fire for safety," Macapagal Arroyo said. "We shall not stop until the Abu Sayyaf is finished."

Philippine officers said the guerrillas evaded the troops for days but were slowed down by heavy rains today, allowing the soldiers to catch them.

Private First Class Rene Mabilog was with about 40 Scout Rangers who first came across the guerrillas.

"We were following them since last night," Mabilog told The Associated Press in a hospital where he was being treated for arm wounds. "This morning, we found their tracks and we followed them. There were about 30 of them."

Mabilog said the guerrillas stopped to rest because it was raining heavily and the soldiers crept up to about 30 yards behind them.

The fighting lasted about two hours, he said, and eventually included hundreds of Philippine troops.

The Burnhams, of Wichita, Kan., were kidnapped May 27, 2001. Yap

was taken hostage a few days later when the Abu Sayyaf, with the Burnhams in tow, raided a hospital in the southern town of Lamitan to seize hospital staff and medicine to treat their wounded.

The guerrillas kidnapped 18 other people along with the Burnhams, including 17 Filipinos and Corona, Calif., resident Guillermo Sobero.

Sobero was beheaded by the guerrillas in June 2001, according to U.S. and Filipino officials.

The Abu Sayyaf says it is fighting to carve a Muslim state out of the southern Philippines.

Martin Burnham's parents, Paul and Oreta Burnham, received the news of his death at their home in Rose Hill, Kan.

"The Lord will give us the strength to get through this," Burnham said when he came to the door. He said Arroyo had called him.

Before a prayer service at Rose Hill Bible Church early this morning, Martin Burnham's brother, Doug Burnham, said the family was still trying to grasp the news.

"God has given us strength. It is kind

of numbing right now. I suppose the full impact has not hit us."

Two of Martin Burnham's uncles, David and Ralph Burnham, were among those gathering at the church.

"Whatever his will is, we will accept it," David Burnham said. "This could have happened a long time ago. We appreciate we still have Gracia."

David Burnham said that as of Thursday the family didn't even know if the Martin and Gracia were still on the island and the rescue attempt came as a surprise to them.

He also said that the three Burnham children — Jeff, 15, Mindy, 12, and Zach, 11 — will be returning home to Kansas later today, with grandparents, Norvin and Betty Jo Jones of Cherokee Village, Ark.

Scott Ross, a lawyer for the Burnhams' religious group, the Florida-based New Tribes Mission, said it never doubted "military pressure" was needed to resolve the hostage crisis. But he said the group has been concerned from the start about "how effective the military has been."

Family leaning on faith for support

By Roxana Hegeman

Associated Press Writer
ROSE HILL — Relatives of slain missionary Martin Burnham gathered in this small Kansas town early today and said their religious faith would sustain them through the tragedy.

"The Lord will give us the strength to get through this," Paul Burnham, the missionary's father, said at his home before dawn and within hours of his son's death.

He later told reporters, "We would like to see the military continue to take care of this Abu Sayyaf," he said.

Martin Burnham, who had been held hostage for more than a year with his wife by Muslim extremists, was killed

during a rescue attempt in the Philippines. His wife, Gracia, was injured in the rescue but was said to be in stable condition. A third hostage shot during the rescue died later.

Burnham's parents, Paul and Oreta, were informed of their son's death before dawn today in calls from the Philippine president, Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, and the Philippine ambassador to the United States. Paul Burnham informed other family members.

The family said they did not know of the imminent rescue attempt, but had been expecting a call in the night for some time now.

"We've been waiting for a call, and it was very bad to take that news," Paul

Burnham said.

The three children of the kidnapped missionaries — Jeff, 15; Mindy, 12, and Zach, 11 — were at a lake in Missouri with Gracia Burnham's parents, Norvin and Betty Jo Jones of Cherokee Village, Ark. They were on their way to Rose Hill, about 15 miles south of Wichita.

Martin's parents were on furlough in Kansas from their own missionary work in the Philippines at the time of the kidnapping. They since have been caring for their grandchildren while their parents were held hostage.

Martin's mother, Oreta, said the family wanted to reunite the children with Gracia as soon as possible.

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