



SITE OF TRAGEDY: MORGAN CITY, LA. — Twenty-one men were trapped more than a mile and a half below the marshy surface of the Belle Isle Salt Mine after a fire destroyed the "shaft head frame" at the entrance to the huge exca-

vation. Photo shows salt pouring into a barge at Belle Isle after being taken from the ground. In background are some of the buildings of the mine.

(UPI Telephoto from Files)

542 Americans Lose Lives In Bitter Vietnam Battles

By EUGENE V. RISHER
SAIGON (UPI)—U.S. spokes-

men said today 542 Americans were killed in Vietnam last

of South Vietnam was celebrating the Lunar New Year.

The spokesmen said that last

week another 2,191 U.S. service-

capital of Hue, 40 miles below

the border.

U.S. commanders reported

Marines of the 3rd and 1st

Two Rescuers Probe Salt Mine Depths; No Sign of Victims

By G. MICHAEL HARMON

MORGAN CITY, La. (UPI)—

Two rescuers in a cage were lowered into the hot, smoky depths of a salt mine shaft today to look for 21 men trapped since midnight Tuesday. They found 80 feet of water in the shaft but no sign of the men.

But they could hear a diesel engine running somewhere.

"It is smoky down there and gloomy and there is carbon monoxide," Clayton F. Tonnemaker, vice president of Cargill, Inc., operator of the mine, said. The sound of the engine gave hope some miners were still alive.

Edward Holeman, 34, one of a team of rescuers from Kentucky brought to the swampy southern Louisiana area near Morgan City to look for the

miners, was bruised on his descent into the mine by debris falling down the shaft. Officials postponed another team's descent to build a protective cover for the cage.

Holeman and his partner in the descent, Gilbert Holmes, said they found some 80 feet of water in the bottom of the mine shaft, but the trapped men could have gotten into a side horizontal shaft. When the two rescuers looked to their left and right off the main shaft, they saw smoke and haze in one direction and a small fire blazing in a fan in the other.

Officials said the diesel engine whose clatter they heard could not have run unattended the 30 hours since the men were trapped at midnight Tuesday by a fire that burned the elevator cables. So somebody would have

had to start it up since midnight Tuesday.

"The crucial thing is, where did the men go when the fire broke out?" Tonnemaker said. "How far away were they able to get from the main shaft?"

It took more than 30 minutes for the two men to reach the bottom of the shaft of the Cargill, Inc., mine. Going down slowly, the two men in a makeshift cage called out conditions as they were lowered into the dull-white cavern.

They said the concrete-lined walls of the shaft were in good shape but that elevator guide beams were burned out. The miners were trapped when fire roared up the shaft.

The descent by rescuers into the shaft was delayed more than four hours while workmen constructed a smaller cage.

The men made an earlier attempt to go down in a larger cage, but it hit an obstruction and had to be pulled up.

Hope that the miners would be found alive had been steadily fading since calls down the shaft brought no answer.

Then, before the two rescue workers went down, a walkie-talkie with a light on it was lowered into the shaft. Nobody touched the walkie-talkie in the bottom of the shaft and it was pulled back up again.

Earlier tests had shown evidence of deadly carbon monoxide at the bottom of the shaft, 16 feet in diameter.

The men, employed at the Belle Isle salt mine on the isolated Louisiana coast, were trapped when fire roared up the shaft Tuesday night, burning telephone lines and incinerating elevator cables.

The only way out of the mine is by elevator.

GSA Adopts Program To Cut State Delays

HARRISBURG — An 18-year old log jam in General State Authority construction was broken today when The General State Authority Board, meeting here, approved a pre-planning program which will reduce actual design and construction time by two years and will substantially lower costs.

Robert L. Kunzig, Executive Director of The General State Authority, said, "Under this 'pre-planning' program we can proceed with the planning and design of buildings immediately, using the initial two year period which previously had been wasted."

The GSA Chief said all projects to be included in the two-

year programming will begin at once.

"This is something that has been a long time coming in GSA construction," Kunzig said, pointing out, "With this program we can find out in advance the sub-soil conditions, presence of existing utilities or the necessity of having lines installed, future plans for construction or relocation of existing highways and a review of the master building plans for the colleges or universities involved in any specific project."

In explaining the program, Kunzig pointed out, "With pre-planning, the General State Authority can proceed with the initial study and cost analysis of the building the moment the