Seven Oil Workers Found Alive in Gulf of Mexico

E. EDUARDO CASTILLO,Associated Press

VERACRUZ, Mexico (AP) — Seven of 10 oil workers missing in the Gulf of Mexico were found alive Sunday, according to Mexico's state oil company, three days after evacuating their disabled rig in a tropical storm and escaping in an enclosed life raft.

Two bodies also were found but have yet to be identified, and rescuers are still searching for one worker who remains missing, Petroleos Mexicanos, or Pemex, said in a statement.

Pemex identified the survivors as two Americans, Jeremy Parfait and Ted Derise, Jr., both of Louisiana, Kham Nadimuzzaman of Bangladesh and Mexicans Ruben Velasquez, Eleaquin Lopez, Luis Escobar and Ruben Lopez Villalobos.

They were found 51 miles (82 kilometers) off the coast of the gulf state of Campeche by the ship Bourbon Artavaze and taken by helicopter to the Campeche port city of Ciudad del Carmen, where they were admitted to a Pemex regional hospital.

The fate of the other two Americans, who have been identified previously as Craig Myers and Nick Reed, also of Louisiana, was not clear late Sunday.

The oil company and the Mexican Navy, which assisted in the search and rescue, provided no other immediate details. It was not known how the survivors and bodies were found or whether they were still in the life boat. There was also no word on the condition of the survivors.

All were working for Houston-based Geokinetics Inc. on a liftboat owned by Trinity Liftboat Services based in New Iberia, Louisiana. All four Americans were from the New Iberia area, including Reed, who is the son of liftboat company owner Randy Reed.

Geokinetics spokeswoman Brenda Taquino could not reached for comment Sunday night.

A woman who answered the phone at Trinity Lifeboat Services said the company can't confirm details about the workers being found.

A girl who answered the telephone at the home of Ted Allen Derise Sr. said she was the sister of the rig worker but wouldn't give her name.

"It's good news to us but we're still praying for the other people," she said.

The oil workers called for help Thursday afternoon in the middle of Tropical Storm

Nate, which disabled their vessel, the Trinity II, a 94-foot (29-meter), 185-ton liftboat, that can lower legs to the sea floor and then elevate itself above the water level. This one was being used as a recording vessel and housing for the crew, and it was in waters about 25 feet (8 meters) deep.

They abandoned the liftboat about 8 miles (13 kilometers) off shore of the port of Frontera in southeastern Mexican state of Tabasco.

Pemex and the Mexican navy led the search by air and sea, which intensified Saturday as the storm moved west toward the coast of Veracruz. A dozen fishermen who disappeared aboard two shrimp boats on Friday in the gulf during the storm.

Pemex said the search continued late Sunday with four boats, four Pemex helicopters and two airplanes making overflights.

Nate weakened to a tropical depression and then a "remnant low" late Sunday over Mexico's Gulf coast, where officials opened shelters as a precaution but said the storm was having little impact.

Nate made landfall as a tropical storm on Sunday north of Barra de Nautla in the state of Veracruz, where Gov. Javier Duarte said there were no reports of damage or injuries and rivers remained below risk level.

The U.S. National Hurricane Center in Miami said that by Sunday night Nate's winds had weakened to 30 mph (45 kph) winds and it would not release any more advisories on the storm.

Of more than 2,200 shelters set up in Veracruz state, only two were in use, housing little more than 50 people, civil protection authorities said. In the city of Antigua, Mayor Arturo Navarrete told radio station XEU that there was light rain and very little wind.

In the Caribbean on Sunday, Tropical Storm Maria was centered about 105 miles (170 kilometers) northeast of San Juan, Puerto Rico, with winds that had strengthened to 60 mph (95 kph). The hurricane center said it was moving northwest at about 10 mph (17 kph), toward the open Atlantic.

In Puerto Rico, there were no reports of any damage or flooding from Maria.

Associated Press writer Janet McConnaughey in New Orleans contributed to this report.

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