

Vatican Web site expands

By Lynne Weil
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY — The voice and video image of Pope John Paul II are coming soon to a computer screen near you.

The Vatican announced Aug. 10 that real-time audio and visual signals from papal general audiences, Sunday blessings, the pope's pastoral visits abroad and solemn celebrations in St. Peter's Basilica would be available at its Web site starting Aug. 15, the feast of the Assumption.

After several years in preparation, the Web site went on line on March 30, 1997, an Easter Sunday. It offers copies of important Vatican documents, papal speeches and other files. Initial reports from the Vatican indicated that users were most interested in information about Pope John Paul.

Archbishop Claudio Celli, secretary of the Administration of the Patrimony of the Holy See, announced in April that the Web site would soon have audio and video options, as well as quicker access to text.

More powerful computers also are to be added to the system, the archbishop said, so that text searches and the downloading of documents will take less time.

The latest Vatican announcement did not mention expansion of the system's hardware, but it did provide some details of the new features.

It said that in cooperation with Vatican Radio and CTV, the Vatican's television service, the Internet Office of the Holy See would ensure that the pope's voice and face "would be diffused practically all around the world and would be easily available to whoever has access to a computer connected with a telephone network."

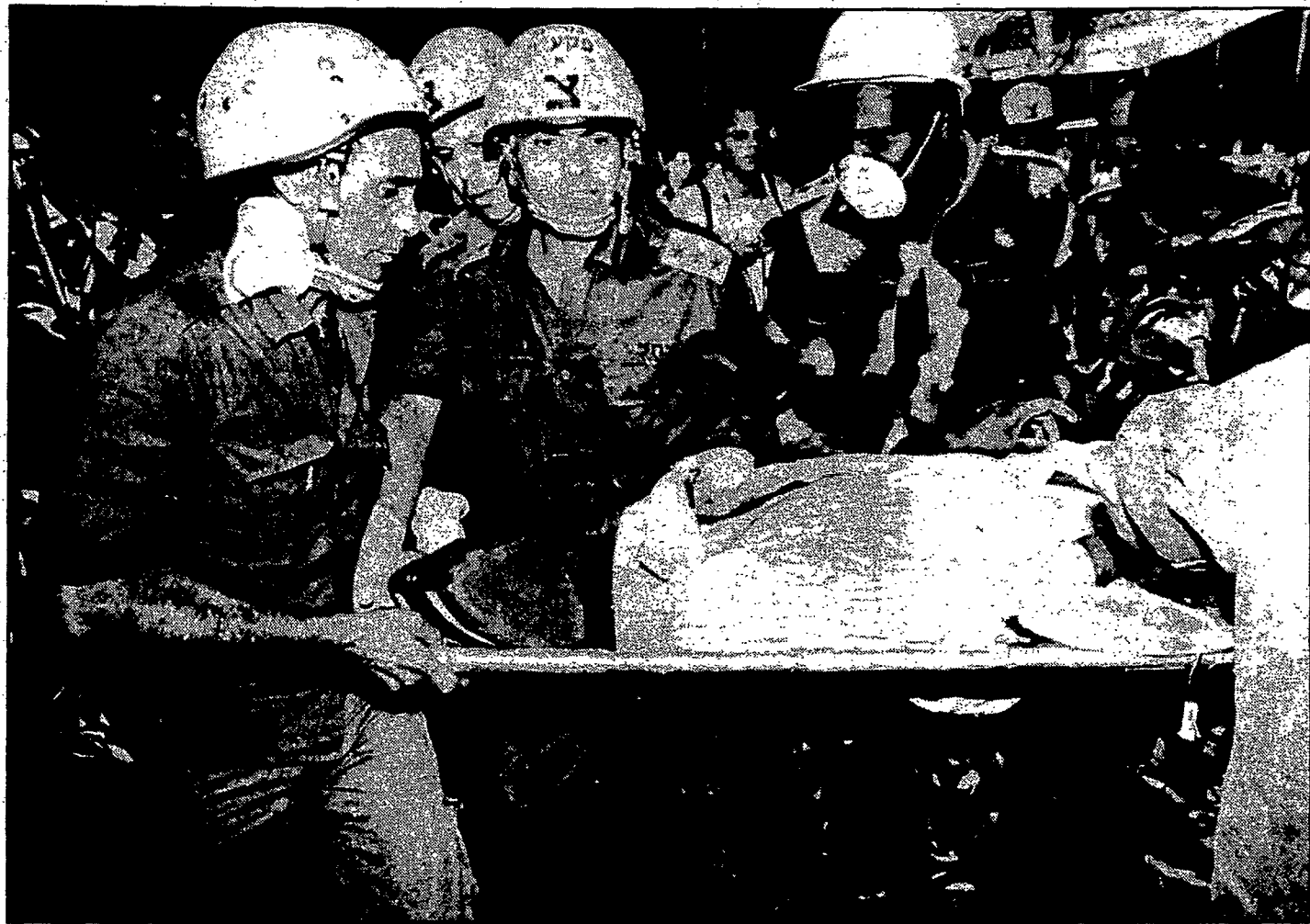
In addition to the live transmissions, which would be accessible using commercially available audio and video software, the Vatican was to place a weekly archive of images on line. The daily news broadcasts of Vatican Radio were also to be made available live and in the archive.

Development of the Web site has been sustained by "the great interest demonstrated on the part of millions of persons who connect every day with this 'open window' on the Apostolic See," the Vatican said. "But above all, this is the latest sign of the efforts of the Holy See to promote its presence in the world through modern means of social communications."

Users in 50 countries have accessed the site a reported average of 7 million times per month in the year since it went on line. Services are available in Latin, English, French, Spanish, Italian, German, Portuguese and Polish; the English, Spanish and Italian services are the most popular.

The Vatican Web site is at <http://www.vatican.va>.

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CNS/Hadar Cohen, Israel Defense Force

Israeli and Kenyan rescue workers carry a man out of the rubble of a collapsed building in Nairobi, Kenya, Aug. 9. The man was found alive 36 hours after the deadly bomb attack near the U.S. embassy.

Pope calls bomb attacks 'heinous'

NAIROBI, Kenya (CNS) — Pope John Paul II and Kenyan bishops condemned the bombings near U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, describing the crimes as "heinous" and offering solace to victims.

Condolence messages sent in the pope's name offered prayers for the victims and denounced the attacks as an "incomprehensible assault on life."

The Kenyan bishops linked the blasts "to international terrorism, fanaticism and fundamentalism." Kenyan police said the bomb was aimed at the U.S. Embassy, but Ufundi House next door, which houses offices and a secretarial college, took the brunt of the explosion.

Father Michael Ruwa, secretary-general of the Kenyan bishops' conference, described Ufundi House as "the busiest building in the city."

In a message to Kenyan Archbishop Raphael S. Ndingi Mwana'a Nzeki of Nairobi, Pope John Paul was said to be deeply saddened at an acts of violence. The two nearly simultaneous explosions Aug. 7 left more than 200 dead and more than 5,000 injured, mostly in Kenya. Twelve Americans were among those killed.

"Once more (the pope) strongly condemns all deeds of wanton aggression and violence, and he calls on the international community to work together and redouble efforts aimed at building a world of peace and justice, in which such offenses to human life and dignity will have no place," said the message sent Aug. 8.

A similar papal message to Cardinal Polycarp Pengo of Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania, called the bombing there a "heinous crime" and called on all men and women to "reject the ways of violence and be ever more committed to building a world of peace and justice for all."

An Aug. 10 statement from the Kenyan bishops said the church "joins the Kenyan



Reuters/CNS

A man is removed from the wreckage of a building after the bomb attack in Nairobi. That attack, and another bombing around the same time at the U.S. embassy in Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania, left at least 200 people died and more than 5,000 injured.

and entire international community in mourning the deaths of innocent victims" in "this heinous act against humanity."

It praised the swift rescue operation led by Kenyan President Daniel arap Moi, police, military, medical teams, hospital staff "and the brave and courageous combined efforts" of everyone who rescued the victims.

It said the bishops also commended "the highly humanitarian response and presence of the international rescue team from the United States, Israel, South Africa and France."

The church "calls for an intensive global mobilization to bring terrorists to book, curtail further acts of terrorism and bring justice to the world," the statement said.

Sending "prayerful condolences" to the bereaved and wishing all the injured a quick recovery, the bishops' conference said the church had mobilized its 50 parish centers in the Nairobi area and all its chaplains and volunteers to offer spiritual care and counseling to those affected by the blast.

"Also church medical hospitals and facilities are available in this time of emergency," it added.

Father Ruwa, the Kenyan bishops' official, said that Father John Kiongo, 47, a diocesan priest in Nairobi, was visiting his brother who works in the U.S. Embassy when the bomb went off.

"He said he heard what sounded like a gunshot, and then he felt the force of the blast and was thrown out the building through a window," Father Ruwa said Aug. 10.

At Kenyatta national hospital, Father Kiongo was recognized by a priest visiting injured victims and was transferred to Mater Misericordiae Catholic hospital, Father Ruwa said. Father Kiongo has facial injuries and has had surgery on his right arm and hand, the secretary-general added.

The day of the explosion, Father Ruwa spoke of "blood all over the place" at Mater Misericordiae.

Nairobi hospitals were flooded by people with relatives or friends in Ufundi House or the U.S. Embassy, he said. Hospital staff made lists of people admitted and discharged "to try to make things easier for relatives" of potential victims, Father Ruwa said.

He and other priests joined the hospital chaplain "doing our best to calm patients," Father Ruwa said, adding that an emergency call had been made to all medical staff in the city to help at the hospitals.

"Everybody has responded to the calls for help," Father Ruwa said.

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