

China quake death toll raised to 15,000

by UPI

BEIJING -- The death toll from Monday's 7.9-magnitude quake in southwest Sichuan province has soared to nearly 15,000, officials said Wednesday. China's state-run Xinhua news agency has released figures revising the death toll from 12,000, CNN reported. The situation in Yingxiu, in the quake's epicenter of Wenchuan County, was worse than expected with traffic cut off and children buried in debris, Xinhua reported. The report said of the town's 2,300 survivors, more than 1,000 were badly injured. People were digging with their hands to reach children in the debris of a demolished school as rescue teams had yet to reach the scene because roads were blocked by fallen rocks. The report said boulders were still rolling down from the mountains Wednesday. A bridge on the highway linking Yingxiu and Dujiangyan City collapsed, cutting off the area and allowing little communications with outside areas. By late Tuesday, about 200 soldiers out of a contingent of about 40,000 reached the epicenter and nearby areas, where more than 50,000 people were feared missing or trapped in rubble. The BBC reported heavy rains also were hampering efforts to reach the victims in quake-hit areas.

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