

Mexico ends search for 9 in landslide

The Miami Herald
Nov. 21, 2007

SAN JUAN GRIJALVA, Mexico --

Mexican authorities said Tuesday they have called off the search for the bodies of nine people still missing after a mudslide swept away an entire village in southern Chiapas state.

The army, navy and state police have already recovered the bodies of 15 residents of San Juan Grijalva, where torrential rains caused a hillside to collapse into a river Nov. 4, unleashing a giant wave of water that destroyed the hamlet.

But while authorities still hope to find the body of an eight-year-old boy believed to be in the Grijalva River, they have given up on finding the nine residents buried beneath a mountain of rubble, said Hector Ordonez Torres, government secretary of Ostuacan, the municipality in which San Juan Grijalva is located.

"Locating the bodies is practically impossible," Ordonez Torres said.

Antonio Ovilla Mendez, a relative of the missing, described the slide as a nightmare he couldn't shake.

"The worst part is not knowing where the bodies are to pray and leave flowers," he said.

In addition to the dead in San Juan Grijalva, at least eight others were killed by flooding earlier this month in Chiapas and neighboring Tabasco state.

Authorities say 80 percent of Tabasco was underwater at one point, and the floods damaged or destroyed the homes of some 500,000 people in the state.