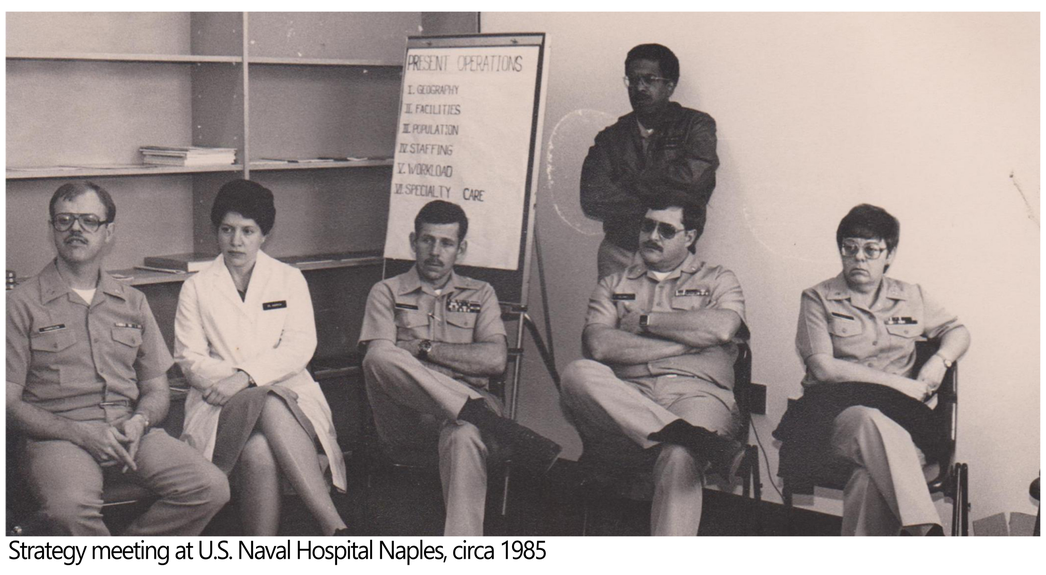
1980s

Commanding Officer CAPT O'Brien presents an award to a sailor, circa 1981

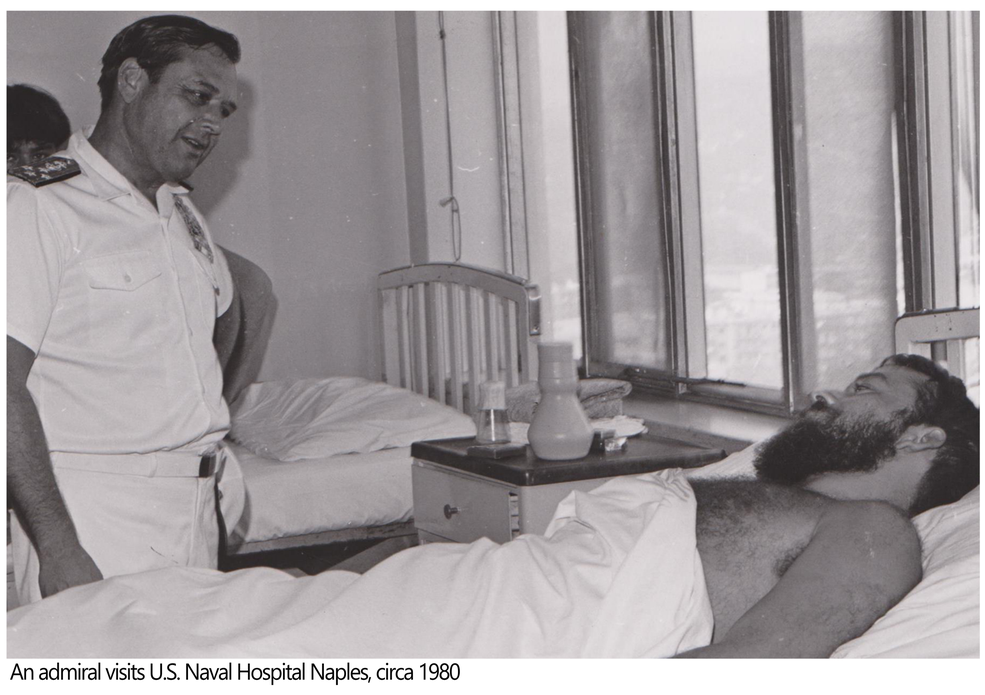
- On November 23, 1980, an earthquake of a 6.9 seismic scale, hit Naples, Italy, in addition to aftershocks. 4,689 people died as a result. The U.S. Naval Hospital Naples dispatched medical support to the Salerno area to assist with the emergency response. Some patients were admitted to the hospital until they were stable and could be returned to their families. The patient liaison was crucial in the communication between the Naval hospital and the Italian authorities. . The patient liaison was crucial in the communication between the Naval hospital and the Italian authorities.
- In April of 1988, the United Service Organization (USO) suffered a terrorist attack. A car bomb exploded in Calata San Marco. This resulted in the death five individuals, four Italian citizens and one American; several others were injured. There was a fashion show going on that evening in the basement of the building. The bomb exploded at 8:00pm, when the fashion show was set to finish. Thankfully the fashion show was running late, which likely mitagated many deaths and injuries. Mr. Ralph Sgambato of U.S. Naval Hospital Naples assisted in identifying the American casualty in this accident, Angela Santos. U.S. Naval Hospital Naples dispatched ambulances to the site of the blast to retrieve American sailors from area hospitals as well as the site of the blast itself.

Navy Spouses Day, circa 1980



Strategy meeting at U.S. Naval Hospital Naples, circa 1985

Commanding Officer CAPT Halder at the command picnic, circa 1985



An admiral visits U.S. Naval Hospital Naples, circa 1980

Commanding Officer CAPT Clayton presents an award to a sailor, circa 1988

Commanding Officer CAPT O'Brien participates in a cake cutting ceremony, 1981

Commanding Officer CAPT Halder reviews supplies with a sailor, circa 1985

USO explosion kills servicewoman

NAPLES, Italy (AP) A car bomb explosion in front of an American military club killed a U.S. Navy servicewoman and four Italians and injured at least 17 people. Investigators said today Middle East terrorists are likely suspects.

Four U.S. sailors were among those injured in the Thursday night blast outside the United Services Organization club in downtown Naples, said Navy spokesman Lt. David Morris.

Police today released a composite sketch of a man seen outside the club just before the explosion.

One U.S. servicewoman was quoted as saying he saw the man place an object in the car before it blew up. The blast heavily damaged the club's interior, wrecked cars and shattered windows along the short, narrow San Marco street, in one of Naples' busiest sections.

The name of the slain servicewoman was withheld until her relatives are notified. She was stationed at a Navy communications station in Naples, home to about 8,000 American military personnel and dependents.

Italian media quoted officials as saying four Italians were killed.

Antonio Barrel, the inspector general of public security in Naples, told the Italian news agency ANSA that authorities do not yet know if the car bomb was set by foreigners or Italians.

But ANSA quoted an unidentified police official as saying "the Middle East connection seems most likely."

State-run RAI television reported today that it received an anonymous call from a person who said, "Justice is done for the Lebanese people."

Thursday was the second anniversary of U.S. bombing raids on Libya that Tripoli says killed more than 30 people. President Reagan ordered the raids in retaliation for Libya's alleged involvement in a West Berlin disco bombing that killed a U.S. serviceman.

The bomb, in a white car with Milan license plates, exploded at about 8 p.m. (2 p.m. EDT) while dozens of U.S. servicemen were at the USO club.

Morris said most of the servicemen were from the frigates USS Capodanno and USS Paul, which are anchored in Naples. Luckily, Morris said, most of the sailors were in the club's basement.

Panic swept the area as the gas tanks of nearby parked cars exploded.

"We were getting ready to lower the shutters when the world exploded around us. We heard desperate shouts. We ran out into the street," said Valaria Spinetti, 22, who works at a store on San Marco street.

"God what a terrible scene. I saw three or for people transformed into torches who were crying for help," she added. "I went back into the store to get a fire extinguisher. When I went back into the street they were already burned beyond recognition."

Police set up roadblocks at exit points to the city and tightened security.

Museum hours

The Fannin County Museum of History will be open Tuesday - Saturday, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.; and Sunday, 1 p.m. to 4 p.m.

15 April 1988 edition of the *The Bonham Daily Favorite* of Bonham, Texas, reports on the 1988 car bombing in front of the USO in Naples, Italy

Commanding Officer CAPT Halder speaks with Lieutenant Commander, circa 1985

Commanding Officer CAPT Halder presents an award to a First Class Petty Officer, circa 1985

Commanding Officer CAPT O'Brien presents an award to Ms. Griffiths, circa 1981

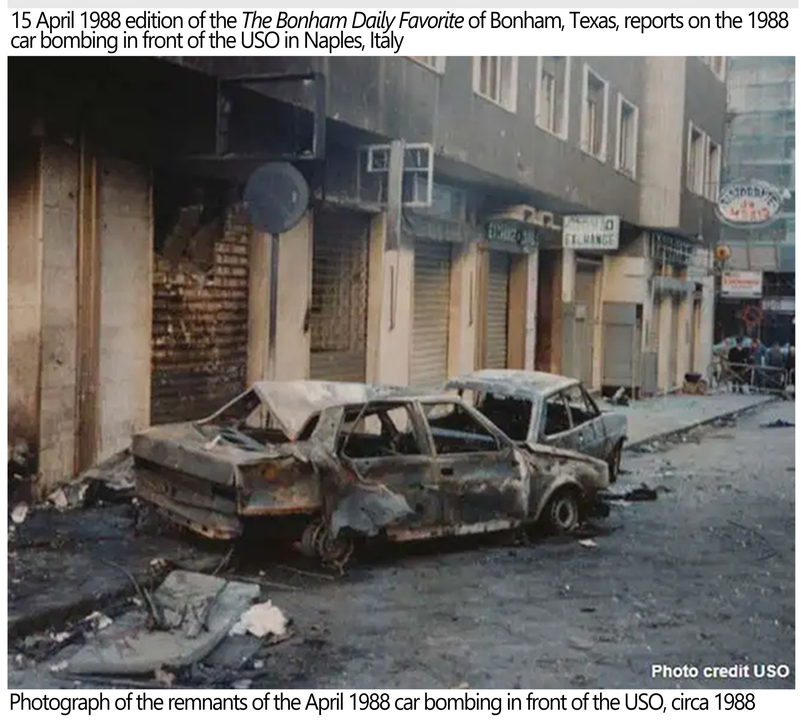


Photo credit USO

Photograph of the remnants of the April 1988 car bombing in front of the USO, circa 1988

Officials Say Quake Toll Will Top 3,000

NAPLES, Italy (AP) — The Italian Military Rescue Command estimated the death toll in Sunday's earthquake at more than 3,000 today, making it Italy's worst quake in 65 years.

The director of relief operations, Giuseppe Zamberletti, said 1,750 people were known killed, 570 missing with little hope of finding them alive, and 1,579 injured. But the rescue command's office in Naples said it estimated at least 3,138 dead on the basis of reports from previously isolated villages in the mountains behind Naples and Salerno.

The Interior Ministry said there were 100,000 homeless, and seismologists reported that more than 40 aftershocks shook the region in the hours after the quake Sunday night. The quake, a new tremor in Avellino, east of Naples, knocked down buildings damaged in the first jolt.

The Italian military announced that 500 soldiers and 100 pieces of equipment left the northern city of Milan to reinforce the 10,000 soldiers and 1,500 firemen already in the zone digging for survivors.

Residents of Laviano, Santomenna and other towns dug through the ruins with their hands in search of husbands, wives, children or other loved ones.

But the rescue workers were short of bulldozers and other equipment to clear the rubble. It was difficult to get the large vehicles available up the narrow roads in the impoverished region.

"I couldn't even get a chain saw to save my wife who was trapped under a ton of rubble," Alfonso Migliorino, a lawyer in Sant' Angelo del Lavoro, said. "I had to work with my fingernails."

Fragmentary reports indicated hundreds more dead were still to be counted in Teora, San Mango, Lioni, Laviano and Calabritto.

In Lioni, 10 search dogs helped find survivors beneath the rubble.

Teora, a town of 2,000 was reported leveled, but there was no casualty report from that town.

Bodies were collected in schools or on sidewalks. Blankets covered them until coffins could be brought in.

Pope John Paul II planned to tour the stricken region by helicopter today. Press reports said he would stop in Naples, Potenza and the village of Balvano, where 100 or more people were killed when the quake occurred during Mass Sunday night and the walls of the church of Santa Maria Assunta collapsed on them.

President Sandro Pertini and Premier Francesco Cossiga visited victims of the quake Monday, which was declared a national day of mourning.

The government ordered 10,000 troops and 1,500 firemen to rescue work. Railway sleeping cars were moved in to provide temporary housing.

The quake, which measured 6.8 on the Richter scale, damaged 97 cities, towns and villages across 10,156 square miles of southern Italy, an area with a total population of 7 million. As aftershocks continued, countless thousands spent their second night out of doors Monday, sleeping in cars and tents.

In Naples, a city of 1.5 million, families spanning three and four generations camped in their cars in the courtyards of a 16-story soccer stadium and in open spaces along the shoreline of the famed Bay of Naples.

Officials estimated that up to 15 percent of the city's buildings suffered structural damage and 35 percent more had superficial damage. Rescue workers pulled 30 bodies from a 10-story apartment house that collapsed.

"I don't know why, but St. Januarius is punishing us," said 63-year-old Anna Pavese, as she sat in the back of a small blue car in the Piazza del Plebiscito.

Januarius, a 4th century martyr, is the city's patron saint. According to tradition, he protects it from disaster if his dried blood liquefies in May, September, and December. Believers in the tradition were bewildered because the blood liquefied both times this year but still the quake occurred.

Shops and restaurants were closed in Naples Monday, but the city government urged the people to resume normal activities today. Buses returned to some routes Monday but taxis and trolleys were not running.

A rescue party removes a victim of Sunday's earthquake in Italy from the remains of a collapsed building. (AP)

25 November 1980 edition of *The Dispatch* of Lexington, North Carolina discusses the earthquake

Commanding Officer CAPT O'Brien presents an award, circa 1982

Commanding Officer CAPT Halder serves food at a hospital function, circa 1986

A Lieutenant Commander reenlists a sailor at U.S. Naval Hospital Naples, circa 1980