

Blood shortage as thousands queue to donate

By Steve Bird

THE emergency services battled to cope with the thousands of people injured in the country's biggest campaign of terrorist attacks yesterday.

Hospitals in New York and Washington were inundated with casualties as ambulances and buses were used to ferry the injured and badly burnt to emergency wards.

As the scale of the devastation wreaked on the World Trade Centre emerged, hospitals issued urgent appeals for blood.

Rudy Giuliani, Mayor of New York, said he feared "severe losses" of police and firefighters who had entered the building to help in the rescue effort, but who had been killed when it collapsed.

There were also reports of people being injured in a stampede in the west of Manhattan as the towers collapsed, sparking panic on the streets. Hospitals dealing with the brunt of the casualties cancelled all leave and staff on holiday were summoned.

Mike Smith, a fire marshal in New York, said his officers were being confronted by utter devastation. "It's like a war zone," he said. "Everyone was screaming, crying, running — cops, people, firefighters, everyone."

At one point reserves of blood became so low in New York that staff at St Vincent's Hospital in Greenwich Village, lower Manhattan, pleaded with people on the street to donate.

Hospitals issued emergency appeals on local television and radio for blood donors as reserves reached crisis point. Queues of more than 2,000 people trying to give blood trailed down the street from donor centres.

Mr Giuliani urged people to be calm and to walk out of lower Manhattan. He said: "When the building collapsed, we had a lot of police officers and firefighters in the building, and I know many of them, because I saw many of them go in, I'm praying for them. The losses to our police and fire department are going to be severe."

He added: "I never thought I would see anything like this happen. I got there after the first plane hit and before the second. Watching people jump from the top of the World Trade Centre was an unbelievable sight."

Near the Beth Israel Medical Centre in Manhattan's East Village, shops and offices emptied as people went to offer blood. Signs had been pinned on windows telling donors where to go.

Doctors appealed for people with rare blood groups to come to the head of the queue. "I don't know if I've a rare blood group," said one man. "I just don't know. I wish I did."

A woman said: "I don't know what else I can do. I'll stay as long as it takes to give some. I know they need it. I can't imagine those poor people."

"Luckily, I don't think anyone I know has been involved. But I really don't know — they could have been down there

shopping, or for a meeting. It's just awful. I can't describe it."

At one point a rabbi and a priest arrived at the hospital to offer comfort to the injured.

One medic said: "There's so many people, I can't tell you what it is like."

Some of the casualties were still wearing the coloured jackets of their bond trading firms.

Teams of up to 60 doctors and nurses stood in scrubs and uniforms waiting for the next wave of ambulances to arrive at St Vincent's Hospital. The entire entrance to the emergency room was lined with stretchers covered with white sheets. Doctors said the most of the victims had burns.

"So far we've received a few patients, mostly second-degree burns," said Dr Gary Fishman at St Vincent's. "We are expecting the brunt of the people to arrive soon."

After the first of the two towers collapsed, more than an hour after the first plane hit, a Reuters reporter said: "There was a stampede up all the avenues on the West side."

"People were hysterical, saying, 'We're going to die.' A huge cloud of smoke and dust came up the avenue, looking like it was going to engulf everybody."

In Washington, special sectors were set up on the grass outside the Pentagon to cope with walking wounded. The 20,000 civilians and military men and women who work in the defence nerve-centre were immediately evacuated as dozens of people were taken to hospital.

Military and civilian workers were allowed to cross security lines to help drag the injured from the building. Red, yellow and green sectors were established on a nearby road, preparing to handle the different degrees of casualties once survivors were brought out.

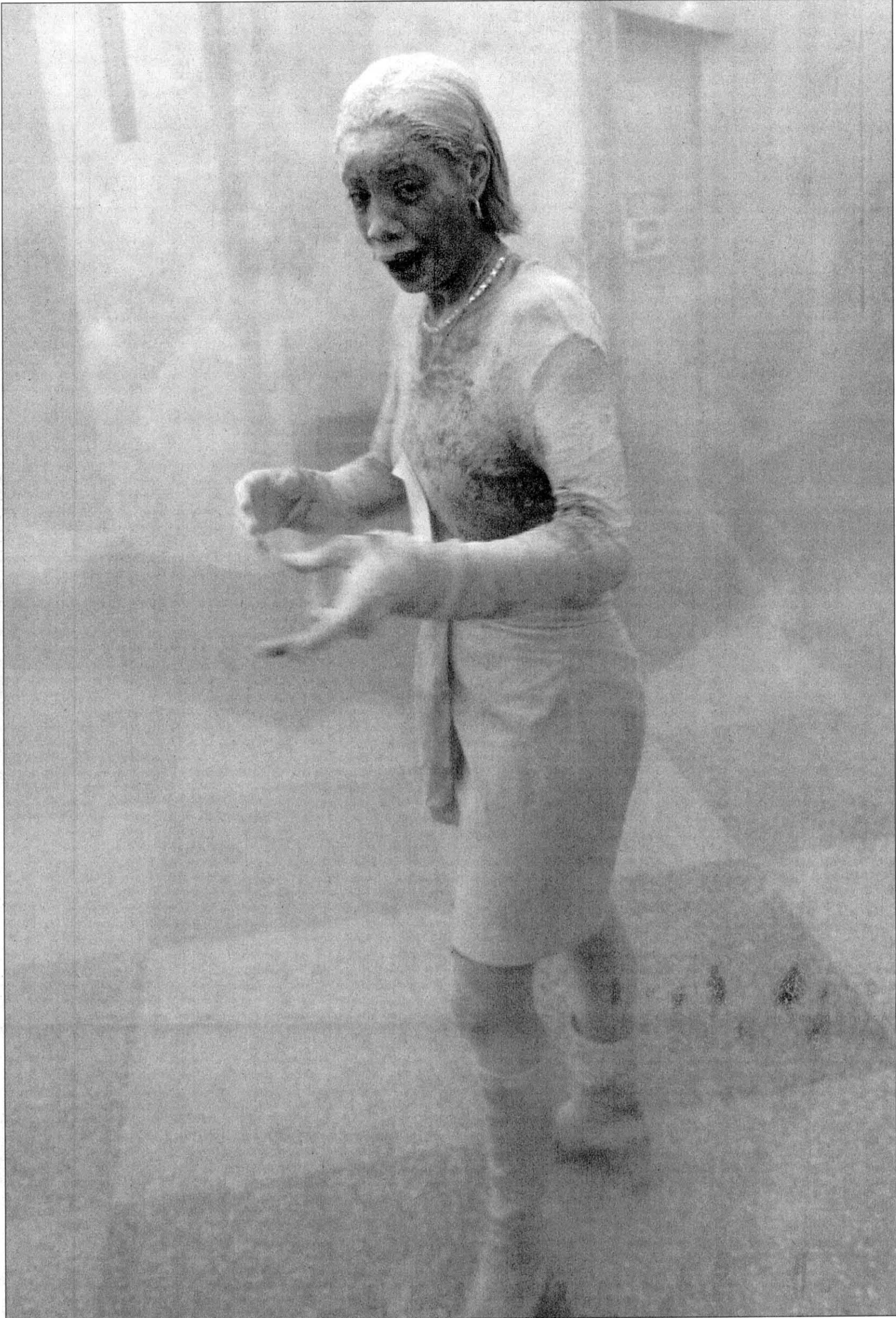
The regular Pentagon helicopter pad was unusable, scattered with debris from the hijacked plane that had crashed into the building and exploded. Helicopters were landing and taking off from a cordoned-off area nearby.

A fire engine poured water into the charred and devastated section to douse the flames. Ambulances and a busload of trauma experts arrived from the Army's Walter Reed Hospital in Washington.

"All hospitals are in their emergency response mode and they are all prepared to receive victims transported to them," said Robert Malson, president of the DC Hospital Association. "All of the hospitals are on maximum alert."

In New York many schools were shut. Teachers at those that remained opened were asked not to tell their pupils about what happened, but many of the pupils soon realised.

Rescue workers used commuter ferries to carry victims across the Hudson River to safety in Hoboken, New Jersey. More than 100 injured people arrived at the Hoboken terminal, where rescue workers established an emergency triage center. By the early afternoon, there were between 25 and 30 rescue vehicles stationed at the terminal.



A survivor of the New York outrage, covered in dust from the collapse of the twin towers, seeks refuge in a nearby office building

10.30

"They can destroy buildings, they can kill people, and we will be saddened by this tragedy, but they will never be allowed to kill the spirit of democracy" — Secretary of State, Colin Powell

11.00

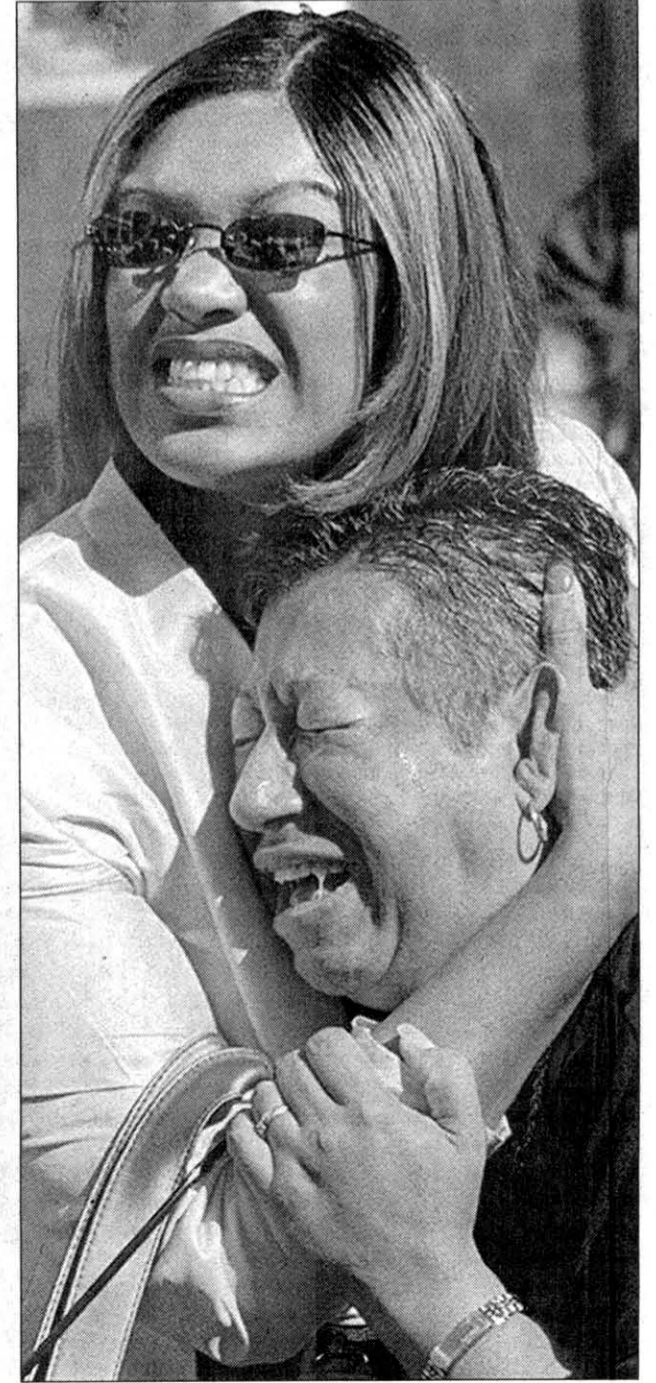
"These barbaric acts constitute intolerable aggression against democracy and underline the need for the international community and the members of the alliance to unite their forces in fighting the scourge of terrorism" — George Robertson, NATO Secretary-General

11.01

"Osama Bin Laden is only a person, he does not have the facilities to carry out such activities. We want to tell the American people that Afghanistan feels their pain" — Taliban spokesman

11.02

Rafiq Hariri, the Lebanese Prime Minister, condemns the attacks as against "human and religious values"



An abandoned bicycle lies covered in debris, the fate of its owner unknown, as two terrified women try to comfort each other — an emotional scene mirrored throughout Manhattan where New Yorkers could not believe what they had witnessed