

After daring rescue, entire Thailand soccer team out of cave

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The "Wild Boars" soccer team and their coach got trapped on June 23 while exploring the cave complex in the northern province of Chiang Rai after soccer practice and a rainy season downpour flooded the tunnels.

In this undated photo released by Royal Thai Navy on Saturday, July 7, 2018, Thai rescue team members walk inside a cave where 12 boys and their soccer coach have been trapped since June 23, in Mae Sai, Chiang Rai province, northern Thailand. (Royal Thai Navy via AP)

Ending more than two weeks of the ordeal, all 12 boys and their soccer coach trapped deep inside a flooded Thai cave have been rescued, in what has been a successful end to a perilous mission that has gripped the world.

The Thai Navy Seal unit, which carried out the rescue operations, confirmed today that all have been rescued. "The 12 Wild Boars and coach have emerged from the cave and they are safe," the SEAL unit said on its official Facebook page.

On June 23, the "Wild Boars" soccer team and their coach got trapped while exploring the cave complex in the northern province of Chiang Rai and a rainy season downpour flooded the tunnels. Last week on Monday, some British divers found the 13, hungry and huddled in darkness on a muddy bank in a partly flooded chamber several kilometres inside the complex.

When did the rescue operation start?

After much thought on how to retrieve the trapped, a rescue operation was finally launched on Sunday when four of 13 were brought out with the help of rescue divers. On Monday, another four were rescued, while the last four boys were taken out today.

Although all were successfully rescued, but not without a casualty. A former Thai navy diver died last Friday while on a re-supply mission inside the cave in support of the rescue.

The last four were brought out of the cave on stretchers and transported by helicopter to a hospital. Navy Seal unit's three members and an army doctor, who stayed with the boys at the time of their discovery, were last people due to come out of the cave.

What was the condition of the boys after they were brought out of the cave?

As of now, officials haven't commented yet on the rescue operations, so it wasn't immediately clear about the condition of those brought out on Tuesday.

The group of eight boys, who were brought out on Sunday and Monday, were in good health, as per Reuters, and also asked for chocolate bread for breakfast.

This photo tweeted by Elon Musk shows efforts underway to rescue trapped members of a youth soccer team from a flooded cave in northern Thailand. Musk tweeted early Tuesday, July 10, 2018, he has visited the cave and has left a mini-submarine there for future use. (Courtesy of Elon Musk via AP)

While two boys had suspected lung infections, according to Reuters, the four boys from the first group were all walking around in hospital.

Meanwhile, officials had told Reuters that the identity of those rescued weren't revealed out of respect for the families whose sons were still trapped.

The boys were still being quarantined from their parents because of the risk of infection and would likely be kept in hospital for a week to undergo tests, officials said earlier on Tuesday.

During rescue ops, Thai officials had said the boys are in "high spirits" because they are soccer players

While the rescue operations were on, a Thai public health official was quoted as saying by AP that the eight boys rescued were in "high spirits" and have strong immune systems because they are soccer players.

Rescuers walk toward the entrance to a cave complex where five were still trapped, in Mae Sai, Chiang Rai province, northern Thailand Tuesday, July 10, 2018. The eight boys were rescued from the flooded cave. (AP Photo/Sakchai Lalit)

Jesada Chokdumrongsuk, deputy director-general of the Public Health Ministry, had told Reuters that the first four boys rescued, aged 12 to 16, were able to eat normal food. He said two of them possibly have a lung infection but all eight are generally "healthy and smiling", adding that "the kids are footballers so they have high immune systems."

What were the ideas that the authorities had devised to get them out?

Initially, the authorities dubbed the efforts to save them "Mission Impossible" as they struggled to find a way to get them out because the shelf was more than four kilometres (2.5 miles) inside the cave and the labyrinth of tunnels leading to them filled with water. They thought of ideas such as drilling holes into the mountain or waiting months until monsoon rains ended and they could walk out.

An ambulance believed to be carrying one of the rescued boys from the flooded cave heads to the hospital in Chiang Rai as divers evacuated the remaining boys and their coach trapped at Tham Luang cave in the Mae Sai

district of Chiang Rai province, northern Thailand, Tuesday, July 10, 2018. (AP Photo/Vincent Thian)

Due to plummeting oxygen levels in their chamber and monsoon rains threatening to inundate the cave above the ledge where the boys were sheltering, it was decided that divers would escort them out through the tunnels. But the escape route was a challenge for even experienced divers.

Since the boys had no previous diving experience, the rescuers trained them how to use a mask and breathe underwater via an oxygen tank. There was one fear nonetheless: that the boys could panic while trying to swim underwater, even with a diver escorting them.

The fear was understandable after the death of former Thai Navy SEAL diver who ran out of oxygen in a flooded area of the cave on Friday.

How did world leaders react?

The challenging rescue operations got the attention of a global audience, drawing support from celebrities as varied as US President Donald Trump, football star Lionel Messi and tech guru Elon Musk.

Theresa May, British Prime Minister, was one of the first world leaders to celebrate the success, and pay tribute to the divers who risked their own lives to save the boys. In a Twitter post, she wrote: "Delighted to see the successful rescue of those trapped in the caves in Thailand. The world was watching and will be saluting the bravery of all those involved."

Now they are out, concerns are set to focus on the physical and mental toll of the ordeal.

Thailand PM said boys given an anti-anxiety medication to help with their rescue

Thailand Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha was asked by reporters if the boys had been sedated before the rescue operations. To this, he was quoted by AP as saying, "Who would chloroform them? If they're chloroformed, how could they come out? It's called Anxiolytic, something to make them not excited, not stressed."

Boys are in good health and mental state, say officials

Even as the rescue operations have ended, experts opined that drinking contaminated water or otherwise being exposed to bird or bat droppings in the cave could lead to dangerous infections. They suggested counselling to deal with the psychological trauma of spending so long not knowing whether they were going to survive.

However, Medical chiefs had told AFP on Monday itself that the eight boys rescued on Sunday and Monday were in relatively good mental and physical conditions. "All eight are in good health, no fever, everyone is in a good mental state," Jedsada Chokdamrongsuk, permanent secretary of the public health ministry, was quoted as saying to AFP.

Be that as it may, the boys would remain in quarantine in hospital until doctors were sure they had not contracted any infections from inside the cave.

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