



Tribune file photo by John Lee
Sears Tower attracted a price of \$835 million, surprising some observers.

Sears Tower has N.Y. buyer

By Thomas A. Corfman
Tribune staff reporter

A New York investment group has a deal to acquire Sears Tower for more than \$835 million, a remarkable comeback for a skyscraper that has been tarnished by fears of a terrorist attack.

The group includes two Manhattan real estate entrepreneurs, Jeffrey Feil and Joseph Chetrit, both of whom have separately made Chicago real estate acquisitions in recent years, though none as prestigious or as risky as the nation's tallest building.

MetLife Inc., the longtime lender on the 110-story building that gained control of it in August, said Thursday that it had a contract to sell the tower but did not identify the buyer or disclose the price.

The New York-based insurer declined to comment further. Stephen Lividitis, managing director in the Chicago office of real estate investment bank Eastdil Realty Co., which is handling the sale for MetLife, also declined to comment.

Sources familiar with the transaction confirmed, however, that the price was more than \$835 million, a huge figure in light of the uncertainty that has swirled around the 3.5 million-square-foot building. Anxiety over a possible attack on Sears Tower reduced its attractiveness to some tenants and many prospective ones, though in re-

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Rush-hour blasts kill 192 on Madrid trains

Basques 1st blamed, but Al Qaeda role claimed



AP photo by Paul White
Firefighters carry a body Thursday from a bomb-blasted train in Madrid, where nearly 200 died.

By Todd Richissin
Tribune Newspapers

MADRID — Ten bombs exploded here Thursday with the most destructive possible timing, blasting apart train cars filled with morning commuters, killing at least 192 people and injuring more than 1,400 others. It was one of the deadliest attacks in Europe since World War II.

Authorities initially blamed the violence on Basque separatists in the militant group ETA, but a London-based Arabic newspaper said Thursday night it had been contacted on behalf of Al Qaeda, which claimed responsibility. Although Spain sent no troops to fight the war in Iraq, it supported the invasion and later sent about 1,500 peacekeepers to the region.

Spain's Interior Ministry, which is responsible for internal security, said that police found explosive detonators and an audiotape of verses from the Koran in a van parked near where the bombed trains originated. Spanish officials appeared to be qualifying their early certainty that ETA was



Reuters photo by Susana Vera
Relatives of victims comfort each other Thursday outside Gregorio Maranon Hospital.

Cell phones ring among dead
Survivors describe the carnage at train stations. PAGE 7

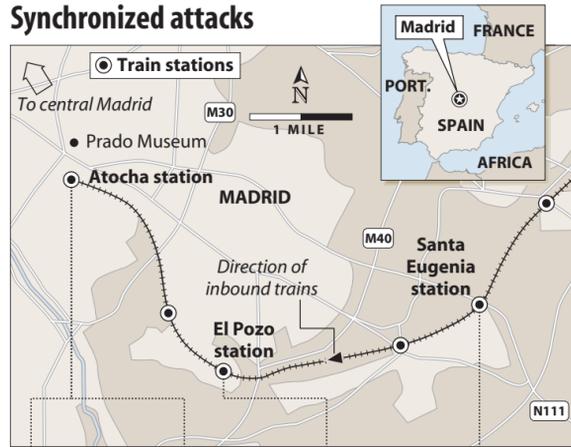
responsible but said evidence still points to the group rather than Al Qaeda.

Spanish security forces were not ruling out "any line of investigation," Interior Minister Angel Acebes said.

All day and into the night, people gathered near the site of the main Atocha train station.

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Synchronized attacks



- 7:39 a.m.:** Three bombs explode in a train arriving at the Atocha station.
- 7:44 a.m.:** Four bombs explode in a train arriving just behind the first train.
- 7:54 a.m.:** Two bombs explode in an arriving train at the El Pozo station.
- 7:49 a.m.:** One bomb explodes in a train at the Santa Eugenia station.

Sources: Interior Ministry, AP Note: All times local Chicago Tribune



Tribune photo by Stacey Westcott
Dr. Scott Hansfield checks on Rachele Buwalda, 24, in Waupun, Wis., where he now works after moving from Highland Park. He said he left when his insurance bill hit \$140,000.

Doctors flee insurance costs, state

Saying malpractice insurance premiums have soared, they relocate to Wisconsin or Indiana

By Gayle Worland
Tribune staff reporter

Dr. Susan Hagnell grew up in Chicago's Rogers Park neighborhood, attended medical school in Illinois and delivered well over 700 babies at hospitals in the northwest suburbs.

But when her malpractice insurance bill soared from \$71,848 to \$118,742 last summer, Hagnell

decided to jump the border. Now she delivers Wisconsin babies.

"I never thought I wouldn't be practicing in Chicago," said Hagnell, 40, who moved to Williams Bay, Wis., on Lake Geneva. "I grew up there, my extended family is there. . . . If I knew what was going to happen, I would never have become an obstetrician/gynecologist."

Across the state, doctors have

cited skyrocketing malpractice insurance costs as they've uprooted their practices, retired early or awaited this year's insurance bills with dread.

Many medical specialties have been hit hard, including neurology, anesthesiology and orthopedics. But doctors who deliver babies say they've taken the biggest blow because of the relatively lower reimbursement rates for their services.

The apparent rush of some

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U.S. indicts consumer advocate

Rep. Schakowsky's husband charged

By Matt O'Connor, Ray Gibson and Laurie Cohen
Tribune staff reporters

Robert Creamer, once head of Illinois' leading consumer advocacy organization and husband of U.S. Rep. Jan Schakowsky (D-Ill.), was charged in several elaborate check-kiting schemes

to pay bills for the cash-strapped not-for-profit group.

The indictment made public Thursday alleged that Creamer, while executive director of Illinois Public Action in the 1990s, shuffled numerous checks and wire deposits between as many as five bank accounts at a time to hide shortfalls in balances of as much as \$2.6 million.

The charges also alleged that Creamer failed to collect and pay federal withholding taxes for the consumer group's employees and himself—yet then

filed joint tax returns with Schakowsky for four years in which he falsely showed taxes had been withheld, substantially reducing the taxes he owed.

Schakowsky wasn't charged with any wrongdoing.

Creamer's lawyers ripped the charges, noting the check-kiting accusations date as far back as 11 years ago and maintaining that none of the nine banks involved suffered an actual loss.

In a separate statement, Schakowsky

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House bill increases fine for indecent broadcasts

By Frank James
Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON — With the memory of last month's raunchy Super Bowl halftime show still fresh in their minds, members of the House voted Thursday to get tougher on broadcasters and performers responsible for indecency on the airwaves.

In a lopsided 391-22 vote, the House passed legislation to significantly increase fines for airing indecent material. A similar measure awaits Senate action.

What's more, the bill would compel the Federal Communications Commission to impose its equivalent of the death penalty—the revocation of broad-

cast licenses—for repeat offenders. The agency has never revoked a broadcast license for indecency.

Critics, however, said the legislation raises 1st Amendment issues because the Supreme Court has ruled that indecent speech is constitutionally protected. They warned of lengthy court challenges if the FCC tried to yank broadcasters' licenses, and some blamed the bill on election-year politics.

Free-speech concerns were heightened by language in the measure that would penalize performers up to \$500,000 for each violation of the indecency

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INSIDE

METRO 23-pound teen found dead in home

Crystal Lake mother charged in death of malnourished boy.

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Weather: Sunny; high 34, low 20
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