

NATO queries troop removal

MOSCOW (AP) — The news media of the Soviet bloc Sunday portrayed President Leonid I. Brezhnev's promise to reduce Red Army forces in East Germany as a major peace initiative. But the United States and its NATO partners took a far more cautious approach.

West German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt said the Soviet

pledge would be "a substantial contribution to the reduction of certain existing imbalances." But Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher, while calling the Soviet move "a step in the right direction," also indicated concern over Soviet missile strength.

In Brussels, Belgium, a NATO official noted it remains to be

seen whether the Soviets will withdraw only combat units, or support units as well, and how far they will be pulled back. If they are withdrawn only as far as Poland, he said, they will still be viewed as part of the Soviet military contingent in Eastern Europe.

And in the United States, presidential security adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski rebuffed Brezhnev's suggestion that the NATO allies drop plans to deploy nuclear missiles in Western Europe in exchange for a reduction in Soviet missile strength.

In East Berlin on Saturday night, the Soviet president, declaring the East bloc is serious about detente, pledged to withdraw from East Germany within 12 months up to 20,000 Soviet troops, 1,000 tanks and other military equipment. He challenged Western countries to make similar steps in Central Europe.

Western defense officials estimate Soviet troop strength in Central Europe at between 340,000 and 408,000 men.

In response, the State Department noted that Washington believes the Soviet Union currently enjoys a position of military advantage in Europe.

In the long-deadlocked talks in Vienna, Austria, on reducing forces in Central Europe, the United States has called for a Soviet pullback of 65,000-70,000 troops and 1,700 tanks in return for a U.S. reduction of 1,000 nuclear warheads, 29,000 men, 54 aircraft and 36 short-range missiles.

The State Department added, however, that Brezhnev's proposal "appears to contain some positive elements" and would be thoroughly studied.

In addition to the troop reduction move, Brezhnev volunteered to reduce the number of medium-range Soviet missiles targeted on Western Europe if "no additional medium-range nuclear means are deployed in Western Europe."

Brzezinski, asked about the missile offer on a Sunday television interview show, replied:

"We have to recognize that the Soviet Union has an interest in forestalling Western efforts to upgrade our conventional and theater nuclear forces in order to achieve equality...we intend to proceed with the proposals we have been discussing with our allies."

making the news

From Associated Press Reports

SEABROOK, N.H. — Hundreds of anti-nuclear protesters repeatedly assaulted the Seabrook atomic power plant Sunday but were repulsed by state troopers and National Guardsmen using fire hoses, Mace and a smoke-spewing generator.

Waves of demonstrators twice assaulted the fence surrounding the construction site and ripped down whole sections of it with ropes. Troopers and Guardsmen surged through the gap, spraying Mace and driving the protesters back along an access road.

But more than 1,000 of them quickly regrouped and marched a mile in the rain to the plant entrance, where they were met by troopers and guardsmen standing shoulder to shoulder behind the main gate. Fire hoses were turned on the crowd and a stream of smoke was unleashed from a generator.

The demonstrators eventually backed off but continued to mill about in front of the gate. Some returned to campsites in the nearby woods.

Ten people were arrested Sunday, bringing to 19 the number arrested on criminal trespassing charges in the two-day attempt to occupy the Seabrook site, long a focal point for demonstrations against the use of nuclear power. One other demonstrator was arrested on a charge of criminal mischief. Officers also confiscated gas masks and other gear from protesters.

A few hours later, about 500 demonstrators returned in two groups and managed to bring down sections of the fence before being turned back.

The early skirmishes at first appeared to dim the spirits of demonstrators who had camped in the rain overnight in the marshland, after a failed attempt to take over the plant Saturday.

ATHENS, Greece — Fire swept a Swissair DC-8 jetliner Sunday night, killing at least seven of the 154 persons on board after the plane skidded to a halt on a rainswept runway at Athens international airport, authorities said.

The Civil Aviation Authority reported three persons were in serious condition and an undetermined number of the 142 passengers and 12 crewmembers were being treated at Athens hospitals.

Witnesses saw ambulances rushing from the scene as flames engulfed the aircraft. Passengers and crew escaped by sliding down emergency chutes after heavy smoke and flames engulfed the plane within seconds of its touchdown, one passenger told reporters.

Firefighters on the scene reported seven persons had died. An Associated Press photographer said he saw a charred body in the smoldering interior of the aircraft. He said the plane was blackened from nose to tail and firemen were extinguishing small fires near the tail.

Authorities reported there was light rainfall and high winds at the time of the incident, but gave no indication of the cause of the fire.

Witnesses said they saw flames shooting out of the jet's undercarriage as it attempted to brake to a stop, finally coming to a halt at the end of the runway.

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