

INTERNATIONAL BRIEFS

Croatian president seeks new truce

ZAGREB, Yugoslavia (AP) — The Yugoslav army battled Wednesday to claim some of the biggest military prizes in secessionist Croatia — the Adriatic port of Dubrovnik and the eastern strongholds of Vukovar and Vinkovci.

As his troops fought the army and Serb insurgents, Croatian President Franjo Tudjman sought a new truce, offering to lift blockades of army facilities in his republic if the Yugoslav military held its fire.

But generals of the Serb-dominated army, angered by what they said was Croatia's refusal to honor a past cease-fire, appeared in no mood to talk.

"Words will not be trusted any more," the army said in a statement issued hours before Tudjman made his offer during a visit to Italy to seek support for Croatia. The republic declared independence June 25, but has not been recognized by any major European power.

Croatia radio said Tudjman suggested both sides stop fighting at 4 a.m. Thursday. There was no immediate army response.

The radio also broadcast a letter reportedly sent by Tudjman to President Bush, saying Croatia was under "all-out attack" and appealing for foreign peacekeepers.

The army's push seemed dictated by increasing exasperation with the blockades and the need to strike before its effectiveness is further eroded.

Thousands of recruits have deserted in recent months, and morale has worsened as the Croatian campaign drags on. Heavy fighting into the winter would hamper the army, which relies more on heavy equipment than the Croats.

Many ethnic Serbs in Croatia, who account for 12 percent of the republic's 4.75 million people, say they want to remain part of Yugoslavia rather than be citizens of an independent Croatia. They are supported by Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic and some of the army's generals.

Soviet coup leaders to face trial in 1992

MOSCOW (AP) — Former officials accused of leading the hard-line coup will not face trial until next year, and are meanwhile dining well on meals such as pea soup and boiled potatoes with herring, news agencies reported Wednesday.

A spokesman for the Russian prosecutor's office denied press reports that the men were living in unhealthy prison conditions, the Soviet news agency Tass said.

The spokesman, who was not identified, said the prisoners are allowed to receive packages from home, some containing costly treats such as chocolates and caviar, and meet monthly with family members.

The seven surviving members of the eight-man committee accused of organizing the failed Aug. 18-21 coup have been charged with high treason. Also charged are several top KGB, military and presidential staff officials.

The prosecutor's office told the Russian Information Agency that their trial will not be held until 1992. The agency said it was still unclear whether the trial will be open or closed to the public.

Archbishop Dimitrios dies

ISTANBUL, Turkey (AP) — Patriarch Dimitrios I, spiritual leader of the world's 300 million Eastern Orthodox Christians and a champion of Christian unity, died Wednesday of a heart attack, his doctor said.

The 77-year-old archbishop had been in the intensive care unit of the American Admiral Bristol hospital since Monday after suffering a seizure. After some improvement Tuesday, he suffered another attack Wednesday night, went into shock and died at 10:20 p.m. (4:20 p.m. EDT), said Frank Turnaoglu, the doctor attending Dimitrios.

Dimitrios, installed in 1972, held the title Archbishop of Constantinople and was known as "primus inter pares" of the five senior Eastern Christian leaders, Latin for "first among equals."

Based in the city now known as Istanbul, he presided over worldwide Orthodoxy, which is divided into 14 churches of many ethnic groups, including Albanian, Bulgarian, Ukrainian, Georgian, Greek, Serbian, Romanian and Russian.

Six million followers of Eastern Orthodoxy live in the United States.

While keeping a low profile at home and staying out of Greek-Turkish political disputes, the patriarch traveled widely abroad to meet the faithful and promote unity among Christian churches.

He made a 27-day visit to the United States last year, the first ecumenical patriarch to visit the United States.

Although the patriarch holds little authority over the independent Orthodox churches, his influence remains strong. He is considered first among equals in the leadership of Christian Orthodoxy, divided among national churches that share common faith and sacraments.

Haiti's army chief warns ex-president not to return



PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (AP) — The nation's army chief said Wednesday the military would hand over power to Parliament, but warned ousted President Jean-Bertrand Aristide not to attempt a return from exile.

Brig. Gen. Raoul Cedras also claimed he and others had protected Aristide from rank-and-file soldiers who staged the Monday coup, which is believed to have claimed more than 100 lives.

Aristide, who accused Cedras of leading the coup and called him "power mad," flew from Venezuela to Washington to urge the United States and other members of the Organization of American States to help restore him to power in the troubled Caribbean nation.

President Bush said he was "disinclined to use American force" to reverse the coup, but said the 32-nation OAS may discuss "a multinational force of some sort." Other possibilities include hemisphere-wide diplomatic and economic sanctions, said U.S. officials who spoke on condition of anonymity.

The United States and other Western nations have already suspended aid to Haiti, one of the world's poorest and most politically unstable nations. Coups have toppled six governments in the past five years.

Haitians cautiously ventured from their homes to buy food Wednesday, but many shops remained closed in the capital of Port-au-Prince and traffic was light. The army appealed on the radio for people to return to work. Sporadic gunfire rang out, but fewer soldiers were on the streets.

At a news conference, Cedras said soldiers, not senior officers, overthrew Aristide because of "flagrant" abuses of power.

The last straw, he said, was the alleged training of an elite presidential guard under Aristide's direct command. Some soldiers said the unit raised the specter of the Tonton Macoutes, the private army of the 29-year Duvalier dictatorship, which ended in 1986.

Cedras denied he led the overthrow of Aristide, and claimed he and other army commanders intervened to save the leftist priest-turned-politician from angry soldiers who wanted to kill him.

"I personally protected the president," Cedras said.

A senior officer, speaking on condition of anonymity, backed up Cedras' claim that the army command did not initiate the coup. He said it began spontaneously at an army base where about 50 civilians were thought to be undergoing training to form a presidential corps.

Cedras, the 43-year-old army chief, was regarded before the coup as a moderate. He said the military would give the National Assembly decision-making power, but gave no indication of who would lead the government and made no mention of elections.

But Cedras said he had not been in contact with the assembly, and it was unclear what steps, if any, were being taken to set up a new government.

Cedras said he did not want Aristide to return to office.

"I personally do not believe it's a good idea for Aristide to return."

He claimed that Aristide ordered the execution of opponent Roger Lafontant in the final hours before fleeing the nation.

Lafontant was a former leader of the Tonton Macoutes. He also led a coup attempt against the interim civilian government on Jan. 7, a month before Aristide's inauguration. Nearly 70 people died in protests following the coup attempt.

Lafontant was in the National Penitentiary along with about 1,000 other prisoners, many of whom were freed following the coup. Cedras said Lafontant was assassinated late Sunday or early Monday by a soldier acting on orders from Aristide.

The coup brought international condemnation and cut off desperately needed assistance.

Bush suspended the \$85 million U.S. aid program, and the 12-nation European Community on Wednesday froze all cooperation with Haiti, including a \$148 million aid package.

France and Canada also halted aid programs, and Canadian Prime Minister Brian Mulroney said his nation would consider all options to oust the military "thugs."

Most of Haiti's leading politicians remained silent about the coup. But one staunch advocate of democracy, Jean-Claude Roy, said Cedras "is open to negotiation."

"I regret Aristide's accusation that Cedras was mastermind of the coup," said Roy, a constitutional authority. "Cedras' hand was forced. He was acting to save Aristide's life and to permit negotiations."

"He is open to negotiation. No military junta has been formed," Roy said.

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