

NATO attack escalates; Russia seeks negotiations

By George Jahn
The Associated Press

BELGRADE, Yugoslavia — Ground-attack jets took off for Kosovo on Monday as part of NATO's expanded attacks on the Serb forces carrying out a "scorched earth policy" in the separatist province.

While tens of thousands of ethnic Albanian refugees flooded neighboring countries, specialized A-10 "Warthog" planes were spotted taking off from Aviano Air Base in northern Italy.

Air raid sirens blared Monday evening in Belgrade, the Yugoslav capital, and two detonations shook Pancevo, six miles to the north, marking the beginning of a sixth night of bombing.

As new atrocities were reported in Kosovo, Russia's prime minister announced he was going to the Yugoslav capital of Belgrade on a peace deal, and rallies for and against the air strikes took place in London, New York,

Prague and other cities.

NATO spokesman Air Commodore David Wilby said the latest air attacks targeted Serb and Yugoslav units involved in atrocities in Kosovo, a province in Serbia, the main republic in Yugoslavia.

"There are indications genocide is unfolding in Kosovo," said James P. Rubin, the State Department spokesman, citing reports of summary executions and people being forced from their homes at gunpoint.

Wilby said NATO had received reports that Fehmi Agani, an ethnic Albanian negotiator at recent peace talks in France, was "executed" on Sunday and that others had gone into hiding.

Four other prominent ethnic Albanians were also reported executed in the Serbs' "scorched earth policy," NATO said.

The Serbian Media Center in Pristina, the Kosovo capital, claimed later there was no evidence to support the accusations.

The western allies want Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic to stop his campaign against Kosovo's separatists and accept a peace plan that calls for 28,000 NATO troops to enforce the accord, including 4,000 Americans. His refusal to accept the peace-keeping force triggered the NATO airstrikes.

Ethnic Albanians make up 90 percent of Kosovo's 2 million people inhabitants. Serbs, however, consider Kosovo theirs because it was the birthplace of their culture before they lost it to the Ottoman Turks in the 15th century. Serbia regained the province shortly before World War I.

Serb reprisals against ethnic Albanians in Kosovo have reportedly escalated since NATO launched its air attacks.

French President Jacques Chirac said NATO had to act against Milosevic's troops.

"(Europe) cannot accept on its soil a man and a regime that, for nearly 10 years, has conduct-

ed...operations of ethnic cleansing, murders and massacres, of destabilization in the entire region, resulting in more than 200,000 deaths and millions left homeless," Chirac said. "It is enough."

Russia, as a longtime ally of Yugoslavia and Cold War enemy of NATO, again condemned the NATO attacks. Russian Prime Minister Yevgeny Primakov planned to go to Belgrade on Tuesday to seek "an immediate halt" to the bombing that began Wednesday.

But there were few signs of any Serb capitulation Monday. Instead, Yugoslavia geared up its war effort, prohibiting men of military age from leaving the country in an order announced Monday night.

Yugoslav forces appeared to be hastening the departure of refugees from Kosovo. Since the attacks began Wednesday, between 80,000-100,000 ethnic Albanian refugees have fled Kosovo, the U.N. relief

agency said Monday.

People forced across the border to Albania were being stripped of their passports, identity papers, even their car license plates, in an effort to make it impossible for them to return, NATO authorities said.

"The pattern that emerges is paramilitary forces arriving, rounding people up and telling them at gunpoint to go," said U.N. refugee agency spokesman Kris Janowski. "So we are seeing officially sanctioned ethnic cleansing of the Albanian population in Kosovo."

One refugee from the Suva Reka area of southern Kosovo said that when NATO airstrikes began, Serb police "came to our village and told us to go to America, go to NATO and they will help you."

Demonstrations over the NATO attacks continued around the world Monday, and one man was shot dead at a rally in Prague after clashes between Kosovo Albanians and Serb demonstrators.

Serbs express hatred toward United States and NATO

By George Jahn
The Associated Press

BELGRADE, Yugoslavia — Some sit in cellars, waiting for the bomb or missile that could destroy their homes and lives. Others defy NATO, going about their daily routines while air raid sirens sound.

In either case, many Serbs in Belgrade see themselves as innocent victims of aggression.

"This is how they teach us democracy? With bombs and missiles?" Ranko Popovic asked Monday as he stood on the staircase of his tenement, torn between seeking shelter and ignoring the latest threat of airstrikes.

A few yards away in the shelter, a dignified, gray-haired woman who identified herself only as Mrs. Scekcic held back no words about whom she holds responsible.

"This is all because of the impudence of one degenerate, decrepit man," she said. "Clinton will burn in hell."

Popovic, a young doctor, and Scekcic, a 65-

year-old pensioner, were luckier than most in Belgrade. While others have only makeshift air raid shelters set up in storage cellars, their hideaway, in the basement of a 10-year-old brick building, is as safe as it could be.

Two flights of stairs below the ground floor lead to a 10-inch-thick steel door. Inside, 60 bunk beds are lined up in a room about 30 feet square. All have thin mattresses and blankets. The air is close — stuffy.

But it is daylight, and most of the dozens of people who normally spend the night have not yet arrived. The door is open and unguarded. Only two families and a few elderly people are inside, sitting on cots, their faces empty and anticipatory.

No one mentions Kosovo, or their feelings about Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic. The missiles — and who is launching them — is all anyone can talk about.

"It's completely unjust," says Stanko, a mailman, who would not give his last name.

One family improvised a picnic, cutting bread and layering the slices with margarine and salami.

Nena, a young mother of a 2-year-old boy, was getting antsy after six days of NATO attacks and endless hours in the shelter.

"I'm going out now," she said resolutely. "It's not so bad during the day. But in the night, to sit here for hours on end ... it's a nightmare."

Milena Bukvic, 80, says this is her last day underground — her rheumatism and aching joints make the shelter too uncomfortable.

"Thank God my grandson lives in Canada," said the frail woman. "My time is over and done with, my only consolation is that he will not be drafted."

Up above, life goes on. Ten thousand people gathered in Belgrade's Trg Republike square for a second day. On Sunday, the

music was rock. Monday, it's folk. But the message to the world is the same: We are not afraid.

Among the performers is Ceca Raznatovic, the wife of Zeljko Raznatovic. He is more popularly known as Arkan, the man Western leaders accuse of committing atrocities during the 1991 Serb rebellion in Croatia, and later in Bosnia.

Arkan, a tough-looking man, cradled his two children in his arms at the concert. He denied Western allegations that he and his fighters went to Kosovo.

Some of the posters hoisted in the mostly blue-collar crowd made vulgar references to President Clinton and former White House intern Monica Lewinsky. Others cursed Columbus for discovering America.

One young man weaved through the crowd with a sign pinned to his black leather jacket.

"NATO, here I am," it said. "Come and get me."



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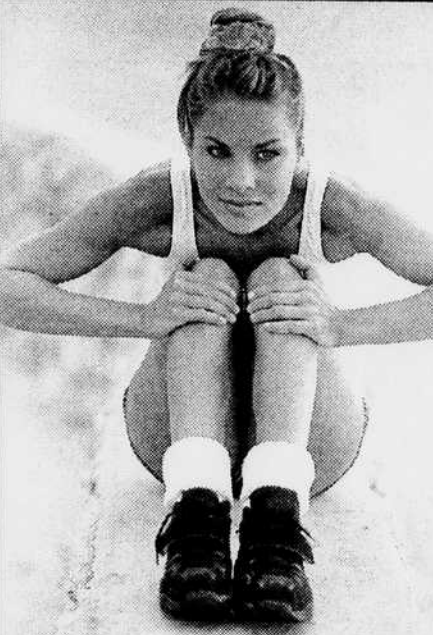
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