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Overthrow plot in Iraq leads to 21 executions

United Press International
BAGHDAD, Iraq — A firing squad Wednesday executed 21 prominent Iraqis, including some of the most powerful men in the country for their part in a plot to overthrow Iraq's new president, the Iraqi News Agency announced.

Another man was condemned to death in absentia Tuesday was "nowhere to be found", the agency said.

"The execution by firing squad was implemented here today", the agency announced. It said all 21 had been found "guilty of high treason".

The condemned men, including five members of the ruling Revolutionary Command Council, were condemned Tuesday by an "emergency court" in Baghdad for their part in what was described as a plot to topple the regime of President Saddam Hussein.

Another 33 defendants were given prison terms ranging from one to 15 years for indirect roles in the plot. Arab sources said they generally were convicted of knowing of the conspiracy but failing to report it.

Another 13 were found innocent by the special court.

Some observers said the plot and the executions and prison sentences could spark a crisis between Iraq and neighboring Syria.

In an official statement carried by the Iraqi News Agency, the government said "the executions come for the protection of the soil of the homeland as well as for protection of sovereignty."

The statement said the firing squad consisted of "several civil and military members of the party from all areas of the country."

The condemned men were shot to death as members of the seven-man "emergency court" and ranking members of the ruling Iraqi Ba'athist Party looked on.

Arab diplomatic sources said the planned coup involving some of the most powerful men in Iraq was uncovered in July after Abdul Hussein al Mashhadi, secretary general of the revolutionary command, was arrested on charges of stirring up unrest among Iraqi Shiites on the turbulent Iraqi-Iranian border.

Under interrogation, Mashhadi confessed to being part of a wide-ranging conspiracy that aimed to oust Hussein and bring about an immediate union with the Baath Regime in Syria, the sources said.

The Egyptian newspaper Al Ahram said in Cairo Sunday that Syrian President Hafez Assad was helping to fund the coup attempt and had offered to send Syrian troops in Iraqi uniforms to aid in the takeover.

"So far the eruption has continued without the escape of the gases inside Etna," Tazieff told reporters. "This mass of trapped gas could open new craters on the slopes of the volcano or perhaps cause a violent explosion."

The volcano, Europe's mightiest and most tempestuous, was spewing

Mashhadi reportedly made his confession during a meeting of the Iraq Baath Party leadership on July 22. As he read out the names of his coconspirators in the party command, they were dragged from the

hall with President Hussein on.

Sources say the entire scene was filmed and copies distributed to Baath Party branches throughout the country.

War criminal may lose his citizenship

United Press International
ASUNCION, Paraguay — The Paraguayan government, requesting for the first time to a 17-year-old West German extradition request, has asked the Supreme Court to annul the citizenship of the war criminal Dr. Josef Mengele.

Mengele, blamed for the slaughter of thousands of people at the Auschwitz concentration camp, where he was known as the "Angel of Death," fled to South America at the end of World War II and became a citizen of Paraguay in 1959.

A West German court requested his extradition to stand trial for war crimes in 1962. There was no response from Paraguayan authorities until Tuesday.

It was unlikely the Paraguayan move meant Mengele would be quickly extradited. His exact whereabouts remain a mystery.

President Alfredo Stroessner, the son of a German immigrant, ruled the central South American nation with dictatorial power for 25 years and has been accused of harboring several Nazi war criminals in the country.

Eduard Roschmann, known as the "Butcher of Riga" and wanted for the murder of 40,000 Jews in Latvia, died in an Asuncion hospital in 1977. Roschmann was identified only after his death.

Mengele, a concentration camp doctor who is accused of sending thousands of people to their deaths at Auschwitz in Nazi-occupied Poland, came to Paraguay during the 1950s from neighboring Argentina.

He was employed as a representative of a West German firm selling farm machinery and also was alleged to have been supported by money from a family business and relatives in West Germany.

Paraguayan authorities deny Mengele has been in the country since 1960.

Attorney General Clotildo Jimenez Tuesday asked Paraguay's Supreme Court to annul Mengele's citizenship because he had forfeited the right to Paraguayan nationality by being absent from the country for more than two years.

Pressure building in Etna scientists say

United Press International
CATANIA, Sicily — Scientists said Wednesday dangerous gas pressures are building up inside Mount Etna and the volcano, which has been erupting for the past five days and blackened beaches with its ash, could explode at any time.

The warning came from a team of experts, led by volcanologist Haroun Tazieff of Belgium, who has been studying the 10,707-foot mountain since it began its most spectacular eruption in 20 years last Friday.

"So far the eruption has continued without the escape of the gases inside Etna," Tazieff told reporters. "This mass of trapped gas could open new craters on the slopes of the volcano or perhaps cause a violent explosion."

The volcano, Europe's mightiest and most tempestuous, was spewing

lava from three separate craters of them near the summit and lower down the slopes above the evacuated village of Fornazzo.

Lava reached to within 100 meters of Fornazzo Tuesday but scientists said the front of the lava flow solidified and molten lava was only 2 miles from the village Wednesday.

Though the village appeared to be in immediate danger, officials said the lava so far had destroyed only 1,024 acres of apple, nut and olive orchards that provide a livelihood for its residents.

"This eruption is the most unusual we've seen since we've used modern instruments to study volcanoes," Tazieff said. "It's behavior makes it impossible to make any predictions."

He and other experts said the latest period of activity began July 15, when gas pressures inside the mountain began pushing up from several miles below the surface.

Said Tazieff: "We don't know where the lava will start pouring next."

He has suggested the Italian force could bomb the new craters to block them, or that barriers erected across projected paths of lava.

But this has brought immediate protests from mayors of the mountainside villages, who say if the lava is diverted it will harm them.

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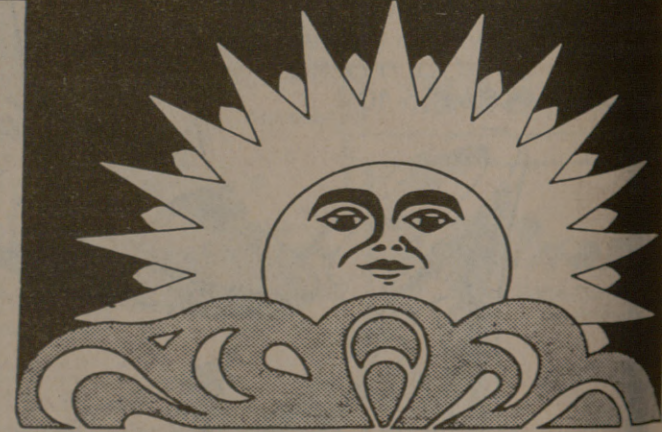
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