

Tuesday, January 22, 1991

The Battalion

Soviet crackdown

Latvia forms home guard, boosts defense



President Bush (left) urged Soviet president Mikhail Gorbachev (right) to resist the use of violence in Latvia.

RIGA, U.S.S.R. (AP) — Latvia's parliament voted Monday to form a volunteer home guard and authorities bolstered defenses at public buildings after Soviet commandos staged a pre-dawn assault that killed five people and wounded 10.

Parliamentarian Anatoly Denisov told a news conference in Moscow that Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev may declare presidential rule in Latvia after meetings with leaders of the Baltic republics.

Supporters of Latvia's pro-independence government reinforced concrete barricades that protect the

front of the parliament in Riga, the capital. They propped sandbags in front of the building's windows.

Parliament, meeting in emergency session, approved a decree calling on the government to establish a self-defense unit of draft-age volunteers. The decree takes effect immediately.

It was uncertain whether the unit would resemble the ragtag group that holed up in the parliament building of Lithuania following a Jan. 13 assault on a broadcast station there. Fourteen people were killed in that attack.

U.S. officials have been critical of the crackdown in the Baltics. Speaking to reporters in Washington, President Bush said Monday, "I would again appeal to the Soviet leaders to resist using force."

The United States has never recognized the forcible incorporation of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia into the Soviet Union in 1940. The Baltic republics were independent states between the two world wars.

The Kremlin has been pressuring the Baltics to nullify the independence declarations passed last year by their democratically elected parliaments. Pro-Soviet factions in the republics have urged direct rule by Gorbachev.

U.S. planes provide cover for rescuers saving pilot

DHAHRAN, Saudi Arabia (AP) — In a daring dash into enemy territory, a U.S. Air Force rescue mission plucked a downed Navy pilot from the Iraqi desert Monday and flew him back to safety, military officials said.

An Air Force search-and-rescue helicopter picked up the A-6 "Intruder" pilot shortly after two A-10 ground support bombers strafed an Iraqi army truck headed straight toward the airman, Air Force officers said.

"We could not allow him (the truck) to be there," said Capt. Randy Goff, one of the A-10 "Warthog" pilots. "We couldn't take the risk."

Military officials did not release the identity of the rescued flyer.

They said he ejected into a featureless expanse of the desert after being hit by ground fire while taking part in the bombing of Iraq.

Goff, 26, from Jackson, Ohio, and Capt. Paul Johnson, 32, of Dresden, Tenn., members of the 354th Tactical Fighter Wing from Myrtle Beach, S.C., spent more than eight hours in the air, refueling four times as they located the Navy pilot around midday and talked to him over the radio.

A plan was formed to bring in the rescue helicopter.

Gorbachev abandons democracy, Yeltsin says

MOSCOW (AP) — Russian president Boris Yeltsin accused Mikhail Gorbachev on Monday of abandoning democracy, and called for an investigation of the defense and interior ministers for the military crackdown in the Baltic republics.

Yeltsin, a frequent Gorbachev critic, told the Supreme Soviet legislature of his Russian federation that the Kremlin had veered from its peaceful course in favor of "violence and pressure."

Gorbachev has amassed so much power, he said, "you can't speak about any democracy."

Yeltsin spoke one day after participants opposing Gorbachev chanted "resign" in the largest political rally in Moscow in at least a year. Many accused Gorbachev, the 1990 Nobel peace prize winner, of responsibility for the army attack in Lithuania on Jan. 13 in which 14 people died.

More deaths occurred Sunday night in Riga, capital of neighboring

Latvia, when elite Soviet interior ministry troops attacked the republic's Interior Ministry building, killing five people and wounding 10.

Yeltsin and Gorbachev have clashed frequently on economic issues, but in recent days the Russian leader has expanded his criticism to include the Kremlin's policy on ethnic conflicts.

The shadowy, self-styled committees are striving to replace constitutional organs, Yeltsin said.

Analyst calls overland attack 'loser'

WASHINGTON (AP) — Military analysts say allied air attacks must still take out Iraqi roads, supply depots, communications links, missiles and anti-aircraft sites before a land war can be waged with minimal losses.

And that may not happen until February, some say.

While not predicting when a ground campaign will begin, the U.S. military acknowledges it can be launched only after extensive air strikes against Saddam Hussein's entrenched forces.

"At the present time, I would say there are probably some of the most formidable defenses that you could ever run into anywhere," Gen. H. Norman Schwarzkopf III, the U.S. field commander in the Persian Gulf, said Sunday.

Dr. William Taylor, a senior military analyst with the private Center for Strategic and International Studies, said, "I'm assuming we won't take on a suicidal mission pitting our weaknesses against their strength. Attacking overland is a loser."

Iraq has the fourth largest army in the world, with 545,000 troops deeply entrenched across the rugged Kuwaiti and southern Iraqi landscape.

"After the Soviets, fighting Iraq has always been the worst case scenario," said one military source.

Taylor's center has estimated that a 20-day land campaign would produce 20,000 allied casualties, including 4,000 deaths.

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