

Bosnian homemaker, secret agent dies in car crash

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

SARAJEVO, Bosnia-Herzegovina — The death notice in the newspaper was brief: "One last goodbye to Carmen Emini Konda."

It had to be that way. "There was too much to say, so I couldn't say anything," her husband said.

Bosnian soldier, intelligence operative and karate aficionado, Carmen Konda died following a car accident late last month under heavy Serb gunfire.

She was a homemaker who missed her children, cooking and dancing — one of thousands of ordinary Yugoslavs forced by war to do extraordinary things.

Her death was one of hundreds recently among the Bosnian army, which has fought Serb rebels since Bosnia-Herzegovina's majority Muslims and Croats voted for independence from Yugoslavia in February.

The 32-year-old woman cut a dashing figure among the fighters of her team in Stup II, a western Sarajevo suburb.

She moved daily behind Serb lines, gathering intelligence about enemy positions.

"Me and my boys, we crawl to within five meters of them," she said in an interview with The Associated Press early last month. "We have to be patient. Sometimes it rains shells and we just look how to save ourselves. But it's never boring."

Clad in camouflage or jet black overalls, toting a Czech-made Scorpion semi-automatic machine pistol, Carmen was a sight among the rag-tag forces of Bosnia-

Herzegovina.

"She was the most beautiful woman in the world," said Atif Saronjic, her 39-year-old husband. "When she died, I lost everything."

Saronjic, a thin man with a striking face and charcoal beard, met Carmen late last year in the Croatian port of Split as war in that former Yugoslav republic raged between Serb and Croat forces.

"She came to my karate class," said Saronjic, once a member of Yugoslavia's national team. "She

was tough, but soft. You know that kind of combination in a woman. We fell in love."

A former marine commando with the Yugoslav navy, Saronjic went to Sarajevo to help form the defense forces of this small country — sandwiched between Croatia and Serbia — as tensions mounted. He had recently left his wife, so Carmen accompanied him.

Three sons — two his and one hers from previous marriages — were left with Carmen's mother in Split.

Love during wartime is said to be the most passionate and also the most tragic. Theirs was no exception.

"Nobody loved me that way before," said Saronjic. "It burned into me. It's like I'm branded like a sheep. I can't forget."

In April, soon after Serb militias began grabbing chunks of Bosnia, Serb forces arrested the couple as they drove near Stup. He was carrying a walkie-talkie and she some bullets.

Twenty-four days later the were released.

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U.N. inspections to continue

Increased security for weapons experts follows 'no-fly' zone

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

MANAMA, Bahrain — Nuclear weapons experts went to work Tuesday under tightened security in Baghdad on the first U.N. inspection mission since U.S.-led allies set up the "no-fly" zone in southern Iraq.

A U.N. official, reached by satellite telephone in Baghdad, said there were "no problems" during the team's full day of work.

The official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said "a lot" of Iraqi security personnel accompanied the team, but gave no specifics.

The 21-member team — which includes experts from the United States, France, Germany, Italy and Poland — set out from its Baghdad hotel early Tuesday without disclosing its destination. The team returned at sunset.

The mission has been conducted under unusually high security and secrecy. The United Nations placed its workers on maximum alert after a bomb was found attached to the car of three U.N. guards in northern Iraq on Friday. U.S. and allied jets last Thursday began patrolling the "no-fly" zone — the part of Iraq south of the 32nd parallel. Iraqi military aircraft have been banned from the zone, which shel-

ters Shiite Muslims who have been under attack since trying to overthrow Saddam Hussein last year.

Baghdad has declared creation of the zone an act of war and has pledged retaliation. Some Iraqi officials have hinted the retaliation could take the form of challenging the U.N. inspection teams or U.N. relief efforts.

Team leader Maurizio Zifferero, an Italian official of the U.N.'s International Atomic Energy Agency, has said he expects "a very quiet mission — and fruitful one."

He also has tried to disassociate his U.N.-supervised hunt for nuclear weapons from the "no-fly" zone controversy.

Under the U.N. Security Council resolution that set the terms of the Gulf War cease-fire, Iraq is prohibited from possessing or developing weapons of mass destruction. The inspection teams are to ensure that Iraq does not retain nuclear, chemical or biological weapons, ballistic missiles, or the facilities to make them.

Baghdad last month served notice that it will prevent access to ministry buildings. The team that was last in Iraq did not challenge the Iraqis on that score.

Zifferero said he did not know if the U.S. Special Commission, which supervises weapons destruction, would ask him to challenge the ministry ban.

Romanian orphans surviving war by begging on streets of Bucharest

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

BUCHAREST, Romania — In Bucharest's chaotic main train station, 13-year-old Andrei Bentea has found a home begging, sniffing glue and sleeping on a filthy patch of cement.

Battles over turf with other street children have left his leg badly scarred from razor blade cuts. With a practiced wince, he explains it provides "a begging advantage" over other children, who must fake infirmity.

Andrei fled his home in the northwest city of Cluj just after the December 1989 uprising that toppled Nicolae Ceausescu and his Communist system. He and many children like him already have been twisted by the poverty and chaos Ceausescu left behind.

Tens of thousands of unwanted children were born as a result of Ceausescu's ban on contraception and abortion, aimed at increasing

the country's population.

Many impoverished parents turned them over to orphanages. Of the 87,000 children who still live in state institutions, most were abandoned.

More than 1,000 children live on Bucharest's streets, a sixth of estimated number of homeless children nationwide, according to the state Adoptions Commission.

Since Ceausescu's overthrow, contraception has remained scarce. But abortions have skyrocketed to about 1 million a year. In addition, under President Ion Iliescu's free-market reforms, some people are even poorer.

"A growing number of children are being abandoned as a result of the drop in living standards," said Labor Ministry Director-General Silvia Pasti.

But the ill-funded, dilapidated orphanages are already bursting at the seams, and a massive effort on behalf of the children is for

now considered unlikely.

Rodica Mitulescu, who runs the Labor Ministry's Street Children Project, said about \$18,000 was allocated to create special centers for street children. But she acknowledged, the facilities are very limited.

"We are ensuring protection only to one group of kids, those with the tiniest street experience... who have a high potential for re-integration into society," she said.

Markus Heil, director of the Vienna-based Caritas Catholic charity in Romania, noted that many children prefer the streets because they are not given proper food, care or housing in state-run orphanages.

"Orphanages are run in such a way that the kids don't want to stay there," said Heil, whose charity has set up four child-care houses where about 100 former street children sleep.

Political race hits NASCAR circuit

Candidates visit Darlington

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

COLUMBIA, S.C. — Stock car fans long for the roar of the engine, the smell of burned rubber, the flutter of the checkered flag. This year — whether they like it or not — they're also getting the presidential campaign.

In the scramble to woo this year's crucial "average guy" voter, candidates are practically bumping into each other at the speedways.

"The NASCAR crowd is the pure definition of the Bubba vote," said Claiborne Darden, an Atlanta pollster who once worked for the Atlanta Motor Speedway. "It's the middle of the middle class, the blue collar, the lower-white collar workers. They are the ones who elect the president."

This weekend, 95,000 people are expected to watch the Southern 500 in Darlington, S.C. And it's likely Vice President Dan Quayle will lead the kickoff parade on Saturday, while Democrat Bill Clinton will serve as grand marshal for the main race on Sunday.

President Bush opened the Pepsi 400 in Daytona, Fla., in early July and Quayle started the Diehard 500 in Talladega, Ala., later that month.

"If you got all the grease out from under the finger nails of all of them, you probably couldn't fill up a small-size thimble," Darden said of this year's candidates, scions of family fortunes or Ivy League educations or both. "But Clinton, (Democratic running mate Al) Gore, even Quayle, certainly Bush, ought to be at ease."

The size of the crowd may be the big reason the races have become a popular stopping point for politicians.

Companies making consumer products figured that out a long time ago. Dozens of them use the races and the cars themselves to market their wares.

"In this day and age, they're marketing a candidate just like Tide is marketing a product on the car," said Doug Jennings, a Democratic state legislator who frequently drives the pace car at Darlington.

NASCAR's base is the all-important South, where Democrats hope to break the Republican lock in presidential elections. The sport also has gained popularity in key electoral states like Michigan and California, said Chip Williams, a spokesman for Daytona-based NASCAR.

Jennings knows that blending the sport and Southern politics can work. Until he found out he was unopposed in an election last year, Jennings had lined up driver Dale Earnhardt for a fund-raising barbecue.

"A heck of a lot more people are likely to attend such an event if Dale Earnhardt shows up than if I brought (Sen.) Fritz Hollings, Al Gore or Bill Clinton here," Jennings said.

"This is what basic America does for entertainment," said Warren Tompkins, a Bush aide from South Carolina directing the campaign in the South. "That's what they like. Stock car racing, bowling, that's what a lot of us average guys like to do when we get time."

Doug Heyl, a Clinton campaign aide who is from South Carolina, said too much may be made of the strategy involved in going to Darlington. "We got invited and it sounded fun," he said.

Darden said visiting the stock car races presents little risk for the candidates — as long as they don't act too self-important.