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Serb forces launch offensive one day before peace talks

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

SARAJEVO, Bosnia-Herzegovina — Bosnian troops were rushed to western suburbs Thursday as the Serbs opened a new offensive that the U.N. commander characterized as an attempt to grab territory before peace talks open Friday.

Sarajevo radio said Thursday night the Serbs used more than 20 tanks and armored personnel carriers in the drive, but claimed it was halted by Bosnian government forces in the district of Stup outside the capital. It cited the Bosnian armed forces headquarters as its source.

No independent confirmation was possible. Bosnia's increasingly isolated government rejected a Serb proposal to use the talks to start dividing the republic into ethnic regions.

Forces of the Muslim-led government poured into Stup and Azici after Serb rebels launched a fierce attack with tank guns, artillery and mortars on the western neighborhoods. The government forces had been pushed back into that area in recent fighting.

Gen. Hussein Aly Abdel Razeq, the Egyptian commander of U.N. forces in Bosnia, said the battles appeared to be an attempt to lay territorial claims.

"They are going to the Geneva talks, and they are going with some cards in their pockets," he said.

Although the fighting was escalating, he said it was a "war of attrition" and that neither side had much chance of winning.

Bosnian government defense headquarters were deserted because all available officers and troops rushed to reinforce the Stup and Azici fronts, where the fighting sent columns of thick

black smoke into the sky.

Although the battles were virtually next-door to the airport, Abdel Razeq announced that a U.N. relief plane would fly into Sarajevo as a test, and if it went well, aid flights to the capital could resume next week. He set no date for the flight.

Humanitarian flights were halted on Sept. 3 when an Italian plane crashed on an aid mission. The Italian government has said in a preliminary report that the plane was hit by a heat-seeking missile, but it did not say which side launched the rocket.

Abdel Razeq said U.N. monitors counted 420 rounds of shelling on Thursday — all from the Serb side — between 7 a.m. and 4 p.m.

Other U.N. officers interviewed near Sarajevo said they had 11 Serb positions under observation and four government positions, and that the combat was intense. The spoke on condition of anonymity.

The Bosnian government said Thursday that casualties in the previous 24 hours had been 31 dead and 198 wounded in the republic, including 10 dead and 60 wounded in Sarajevo.

Fighting has claimed at least 10,000 lives since February, when the republic's Muslims and Croats voted for independence from Yugoslavia. Serbs, who make up one-third of the population, boycotted the February referendum.

With the backing of Serbia, the dominant force in the truncated Yugoslav federation, they started an armed rebellion that has captured two-thirds of Bosnian territory in six months of brutal warfare.

So far, neither peace talks nor intense diplomatic and economic pressure on Serbia has succeeded in bringing the warring factions to heel.

NEWS BRIEFS

Fischer wins third consecutive game

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

SVETI STEFAN, Yugoslavia — Bobby Fischer pounced on yet another error by Boris Spassky on Wednesday to win a third consecutive game and take a 4-2 lead in their \$5 million chess rematch.

Spassky, playing black, resigned on his 21st move in the shortest game of the series so far.

American grandmaster Yasor Sairawan said a "horrible blunder" cost Spassky the game.

Europeans wrestle financial problems

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

LONDON — The currency crisis that pitched Europe into political and monetary turmoil widened Thursday, but central banks managed to keep order even as financial markets swung wildly.

Among Thursday's currency developments:

- Spain's peseta was devalued by 5 percent.

- Central banks bought French francs, Irish pounds and the Danish krone to support them against the mark.

- Sweden announced it would maintain its astonishing 500 percent interest rate at least through Monday, to protect the krona from sell-offs by speculators.

- Greece raised its overnight interbank lending rate to 35 percent from 28 percent to defend the drachma.

Ecuador considers plan to leave OPEC

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

QUITO, Ecuador — President Sixto Duran-Ballen announced Thursday night that Ecuador had decided to become the first country to withdraw from the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries.

Energy Minister Andres Barreiro Vivas, currently at an OPEC meeting in Geneva, has been instructed to deliver a letter to the OPEC leadership "informing them that we are leaving the organization but will remain as associates," Duran-Ballen said.

Barreiro said earlier Thursday that Ecuador might be forced to leave OPEC because of the annual \$2 million membership fee it must pay and the cartel's refusal to raise Ecuador's production quota from the current 320,000 barrels per day.

Barreiro said those conditions were hurting the struggling Ecuadorian economy.

Of the 13 nations in the three decades-old cartel, only Gabon produces less oil than Ecuador.

Duran-Ballen said Ecuador's withdrawal would take place "as

soon as our contractual obligations permit it."

Norway, Mexico and England are oil-producing nations outside of OPEC, Duran-Ballen said at a news conference, "and it isn't doing them any harm."

Barreiro had said Thursday at the oil ministers meeting that Ecuador would not decide until November whether to remain a full member.

Committee calls for ethics investigation

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — A member of the House Select Intelligence Committee is calling for an ethics investigation of Rep. Henry B. Gonzalez, who has been releasing classified information in speeches on the House floor.

The action pits two Texas congressmen against each other.

Republican Rep. Larry Combest Thursday introduced a resolution requesting that the House ethics committee investigate Gonzalez, a Democrat, for releasing information on the Bush administration's pre-war relationship with Iraq.

Congress votes to regulate cable TV

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — The House responded Thursday to consumer complaints about escalating cable television rates and indifferent service by voting to put the industry under government control.

Rep. Edward Markey, D-Mass., sponsor of the bill that passed 280-128, called it the most important consumer legislation Congress would face this year. President Bush said he would veto it because it "will hurt Americans by imposing a wide array of costly, burdensome and unnecessary requirements on the cable industry."

The measure now goes to the Senate, which was expected to act on it next week.

The cable industry has aggressively opposed the bill supported by such groups as the Consumer Federation of America, the AFL-CIO and the American Association of Retired Persons.

Key to the measure is Federal Communications Commission regulation of basic cable service which would consist of cable-delivered local broadcast affiliates of ABC, CBS, NBC, Fox and PBS and public, educational and government cable channels, but not C-SPAN.

The commission also would:

- Set service standards to protect against chronic outages.

- Guarantee that customers get quick telephone response to questions about billing, refunds and service problems.

- Streamline its system for handling consumer complaints.

- Step in if cable charges for additional programming became exorbitant.

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8:45 PM	T	Aggie Singles Club	(3)Mix	Oct. 6
8:45 PM	W	Bonfire Buddies	(4) Mix	Oct. 7
10:00 PM	TH	Best Dorm on Campus	(4)Mix	Oct. 8

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VIP RESEARCH

SKIN INFECTION STUDY
 VIP Research is seeking individuals 12 years of age or older with uncomplicated skin and skin structure infections. If you have a skin infection, you may qualify for a four week research study using a currently available antibiotic medication. Participants who qualify and complete the study will be paid \$200.

GENITAL HERPES STUDY
 Individuals with genital herpes infection are being recruited for a 3 week research study of an investigational anti-viral medication. If you would like to find out more about this study, call VIP Research. \$400 will be paid to qualified volunteers who enroll and complete this study.

ANXIETY STUDY
 Individuals are being recruited for a research study on Generalized Anxiety Disorder. If you experience anxiety or would like to find out more about this study, call VIP Research. \$200 will be paid to qualified volunteers who enroll and complete this study.

ANGINA STUDY
 VIP Research is seeking individuals 10 years of age or older with angina. If you have physician diagnosed angina, you may qualify for a nine week research study using a currently available antiana in a medication. Participants who qualify and complete this study will be paid \$600.

ACNE STUDY
 VIP Research is conducting an ACNE research study with a reformulation of a currently available topical anti-acne medication in gel form. If you are 13 to 40 years old and have mild-to-moderate facial acne, you may qualify for this study and receive up to \$150 for your participation. No blood drawn.

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