

## Yeltsin's quest gaining more strength

The Associated Press

MOSCOW — President Boris Yeltsin's bid to control Russia gained strength Wednesday, buoyed by support from the army and cheering crowds. His hard-line opposition sat barricaded in parliament.

Bonfires burned for a second night outside the Russian parliament building, where as many as 5,000 anti-Yeltsin demonstrators ringed the building to protest his suspension of parliament Tuesday. Protesters waved red Soviet flags and stockpiled rocks, pipes and Molotov cocktails.

Despite appeals by Yeltsin's opponents for a nationwide strike, there were no reports of protests elsewhere.

Hundreds of people applauded and shouted "We support you!" when Yeltsin and his military commanders made an impromptu visit to Moscow's downtown Pushkin Square.

"He should have done this a long time ago," said Alexander Kuznetsov, 47, who sells photographs to tourists in the square. "The Russian people have put up with a lot, and the parliament is just resorting to hooligan tactics."

"We would not like and do not

### Supporters boost Russian president's decision for suspension of parliament

intend to use any force," Yeltsin said. "We want everything to go peacefully, without blood."

Defense Minister Pavel Grachev said the military "unequivocally supports the president as commander-in-chief." In an apparent show of force, the

The opposition has demanded presidential elections.

Support for Yeltsin poured in from world leaders, including President Clinton, and from neighboring republics of the former Soviet Union.

About 150 members of the

named Vice President Alexander Rutskoi acting president and voted to replace the heads of the military, police and security police.

Lawmakers also unanimously adopted amendments to Russia's criminal code to add a new article imposing capital punishment for the "violent alteration of the constitutional system."

Legislators were trying to bring Yeltsin's ouster to a vote before the full parliament. Legislator Ivan Shashvashvili said 60 of the 1,041 members of the congress had signed up for a session set for Thursday; 689 are needed for a quorum.

The lawmakers urged Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin to join them. In an emotional speech to regional leaders Wednesday, Chernomyrdin called his support for Yeltsin "unequivocal" and said new elections are necessary to bring stability to Russia. He urged calm until then.

"Would we unleash a massacre because of two months? Would history and the people forgive us?" he asked.

Chernomyrdin said the Cabinet backed Yeltsin, although Foreign Economics Minister Sergei Glaziev submitted his resignation, calling Yeltsin's decree unconstitutional.



"We would not like and do not intend to use any force. We want everything to go peacefully, without blood."

—Boris Yeltsin, Russian President

army held troop exercises in several cities.

Yeltsin has been locked in an 18-month power struggle with lawmakers who want to slow the country's transition to free markets, prop up state industries and pursue a more nationalistic foreign policy. Yeltsin has long sought parliamentary elections and a post-Soviet constitution.

Supreme Soviet, remained held up in the White House, or parliament building, where they gathered following Yeltsin's Tuesday night announcement stripping them of power and calling for elections to replace them in December.

Led by speaker Ruslan Khasbulatov, the legislators declared Yeltsin's action unconstitutional and moved to impeach him. They

## Georgia rebels shoot down another passenger plane

### Terror in the skies continues, 80 people killed

The Associated Press

TBILISI, Georgia — Rebel fire downed the second passenger plane in two days in Georgia Wednesday, reportedly killing 80 people. At least 26 people reportedly escaped after the plane crashed in Sukhumi.

The plane was only the second to land at Sukhumi airport since it reopened earlier in the day, following the shooting down of a TU-134 jet over the Black Sea on Tuesday. Twenty-eight people died in Tuesday's airplane attack.

At least 80 passengers were killed Wednesday, the Russian news agency Interfax reported, quoting Georgian leader Eduard Shevardnadze's press service. The report could not be immediately confirmed.

Twenty-six people scrambled off the burning jet before it exploded, presidential spokesman Vata Djordjikia said.

"More died than escaped," he said. "It was not immediately known how many people were on board the plane, which had been traveling from the Georgian capital, Tbilisi to Sukhumi, the Georgian government's last stronghold in the separatist region of Abkhazia."

The rebels have been fighting the government for more than a year over their demands for self-rule.

Djordjikia said the plane was a TU-154, which can carry up to 180 passengers. The six-member crew managed to evacuate 20 passengers, Djordjikia said.

The plane had been carrying humanitarian aid, Georgian officials said.

Like the plane that was downed on Tuesday, the plane was hit by a heat-seek-

ing missile fired from a gunboat of the Abkhazian separatist forces, Georgia's Interior Ministry said.

A third plane was about to land at Sukhumi on Wednesday when it saw the explosion and turned back to Tbilisi.

Fierce fighting was reported around Sukhumi on Wednesday as government troops tried to break through to the airport. Details of the fighting were sketchy because phones to Sukhumi were cut Tuesday night.

Sukhumi is the government's last stronghold in the separatist region of Abkhazia.

Shevardnadze has remained in the city despite the fighting, and visited the front Wednesday to boost troop morale.

In an offensive that began a week ago, the rebels have reached the city's outskirts but have been held off by government troops.

Georgian troops claimed some progress Wednesday in their push north from Tbilisi along the coastal highway linking Sukhumi with the rest of Georgia. The Abkhazians also reported gains, according to ITAR-Tass.

Shevardnadze's chief of staff, Vhaja Lortkipanidze, quoted the Georgian leader as telling reporters: "The situation in Sukhumi is improving ... our forces are advancing toward us."

Georgian military spokesman Vladimir Chikovani reported heavy casualties.

Shevardnadze has appealed to Russia and the West for help. Parliament speaker Vakhtang Gogvadze issued a statement Wednesday supporting Boris Yeltsin in the Russian president's power struggle with hard-line lawmakers in Moscow.

## UNICEF Report: U.S. children face higher poverty rate

The Associated Press

LONDON — American and British children are worse off now than in 1970, while many developing countries have made great strides in reducing birth rates and child mortality, UNICEF reported Wednesday.

Many African women have a one-in-five chance of dying in childbirth. For an Israeli, the chance is three in 100,000.

The United Nations Children's Fund said the gap is narrowing between rich and poor.

The report, "The Progress of Nations," said one-fifth of American children live below the poverty line — four times the rate of most industrialized countries, and twice that of the next worst performer, Britain.

UNICEF Executive Director James P. Grant blamed cutbacks in government services for the decline in the United States and Britain, but said that President Clinton's health care reforms would improve things.

The U.S. child mortality rate of 11 per 1,000 ranked 19th among industrialized nations. The 18 per 1,000 death rate among black American children was more than twice that of whites. The world average rate is 97 per 1,000.

Sweden had the lowest child mortality rate among those nations, with five per 1,000.

The report said, "The United States has by far the highest percentage of children living in poverty: 20 percent, which represents a 21 percent increase since 1970."

Conditions for American children have deteriorated over the last 30 years because more mothers have to work and more children are growing up without fathers, the report said. One in four American children are raised by single mothers, up from 10 percent in 1960.

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