

Residents caught in middle of Republic of Congo battles



BRAZZAVILLE, Republic of Congo (AP) — Some fled down the Congo River on barges, lying low to avoid bullets flying overhead. Others rushed through streets during lulls in gunfire. One elderly woman, too frail to walk, was pushed in a wheelbarrow.

Foreigners and local residents sought any way possible to escape the fierce battle between government troops and a private militia Tuesday, the sixth day of fighting in the capital of this Central African country.

Witnesses described gruesome scenes: dead bodies strewn across streets littered with spent shells and shattered glass; three victims sprawled out of a bullet-riddled limousine near the luxury Meridien Hotel.

As night fell, fighting escalated and the warring sides remained deadlocked on terms of negotiation. The government hinted it would ask French forces to intervene in its former colony.

Officials close to Gen. Denis Sassou-Nguesso, a former dictator backed by the 5,000-strong Cobra militia, told Radio France-Info that hundreds of people had been killed. The toll was impossible to verify, but French troops said they had counted at least a dozen civilian dead each morning.

"We are lucky," said a Russian diplomat whose apartment exploded when a shell landed on a lower balcony. "If we had stayed in our apartment, my wife and I would have died," he said on condition of anonymity.

Sassou-Nguesso and President Pascal Lissouba are longtime rivals. The former dictator ruled for more than a decade until he was forced to introduce political reforms in 1991. Elections the next year installed Lissouba as president.

Clashes broke out Thursday when Lissouba, fearing attempts to disrupt next month's presidential elections, tried to disarm the Cobras.

Sassou-Nguesso said that for talks to begin, the government had to admit that it had instigated the violence, not him.

In Paris, Foreign Minister Arsene Tsaty-Mboungou insisted there be no preconditions to talks — and suggested he might ask French forces to come in.

"It would be for the French authorities to decide the necessity of enforcing the legitimacy and above all the consolidation of a democratic regime in a country to which they are connected," he said.

A French military spokesman said intervention was out of the question.

"I would even go as far as to say, that we try and avoid fighting as much as possible," said Alexis Jaraud, the force's spokesman in Brazzaville. "While we go toward the zones containing French citizens, if the group of (rebel) soldiers is a big one, we go back."

Omar Bongo, president of neighboring Gabon — where many of the evacuees have headed — was trying to get both sides to the table.

The U.S. Defense Department has sent about a dozen communication and security specialists into the country to assess the dangers faced by Americans remaining in Brazzaville, a spokesman said Tuesday.

"It's become quite dangerous," spokesman Kenneth Bacon said. There are about 60 Americans in the city, he said.

A force of 850 French troops on Tuesday rescued more civilians shaken by the fighting.

A French military convoy drove from the airport into Brazzaville to pick up people trapped in high-risk areas. It passed through the hands of locals, their belongings piled on their heads as they fled south. One woman was pushed in a wheelbarrow.

Report: Orphanage children were used to test vaccines in Australia

The newspaper said the children were put through experiments for 25 years

MELBOURNE, Australia (AP) — Children in orphanages were used to test experimental vaccines for diphtheria and whooping cough for several decades after World War II, a newspaper reported Tuesday.

But an infectious diseases expert said that the testing was necessary to save lives in orphanages, where children lived in close quarters and contagious diseases were rampant.

"Many children's lives were saved," said Dr. David Vaux of the Walter and Eliza Hall Institute of Medical Research at the University of Melbourne.

"I think the scientists, the medical profession and the sisters running the orphanages could be congratulated for doing their utmost to protect their children."

The Age newspaper in Melbourne reported Tues-

day that children in orphanages and children's homes in the state of Victoria were put through such experiments for 25 years, until 1970.

In Canberra, the Democrats party said a federal commission should investigate the testing. The Victoria state government also promised to investigate the claims.

"It shouldn't have happened then," federal Health Minister Michael Wooldridge said. "It couldn't happen now."

The Age quoted medical journals from the 1940s and 1950s that described experiments carried out by Commonwealth Serum Laboratories to test potential vaccines for diphtheria and whooping cough.

Vaux said the vaccines were first tested on animals for any toxic effects before being given to humans.

"At the time, there were all sorts of infectious epidemics going through children, especially where children were crowded together," Vaux said.

Many of the diseases either caused paralysis or were lethal, he said.

"People were desperate at the time to try to prevent these diseases from spreading and killing children," he said.

Malysian cows start wearing earrings

Reflectors will help prevent road accidents at night

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia (AP) — Cattle in Malaysia are getting their ears pierced.

Red plastic reflectors, like those on bicycles in the United States, are now dangling from the ears of cattle on the resort island of Pulau Langkawi.

The ornaments are designed to prevent road accidents at night.

"We feel it is very effective," said Ferdaus Mohd Abdullah, manager of a company that makes safety equipment. "I don't think any one

else in the world is offering earrings for cows."

Mechanization in rice fields has left many cattle unemployed and untended. And according to the number of accidents they have caused, cattle appear to like sitting on the roads at night.

Ismail Abu of the Automobile Association thought the earrings were a good start, but only a start.

"That takes care of the front of the cow. But what about the back?"

POLL

Continued from Page 1

"Do you tell whites you have to be more negative or tell blacks you have to be more positive?" Newport said. "The gulf is there but the question is how to deal with it."

Some measurements seem to point toward an easing of racism among whites.

In 1958, just 35 percent of whites said they could vote for a well-qualified black presidential candidate. That same year, 4 percent of whites approved of interracial marriage and 80 percent of whites said they would leave if blacks moved into their neighborhood "in great numbers."

Now, 93 percent of whites say they could vote a black person into the White House and 61 percent voice approval of mixed marriages. Just 18 percent of the whites questioned said they would flee a neighborhood if large numbers of blacks moved in.

The poll focused on several broad areas including perceptions of race relations locally and nationally, the role of government in addressing racial issues, measures of satisfaction and experiences with racism.

Among blacks, young males report far more discrimination than any other segment of the population.

Asked whether they had been treated unfairly in the past month in situations outside their homes, 45 percent of blacks overall said they had been discriminated against. That figure swelled to 70 percent when limited to black men from the ages 18 through 34.

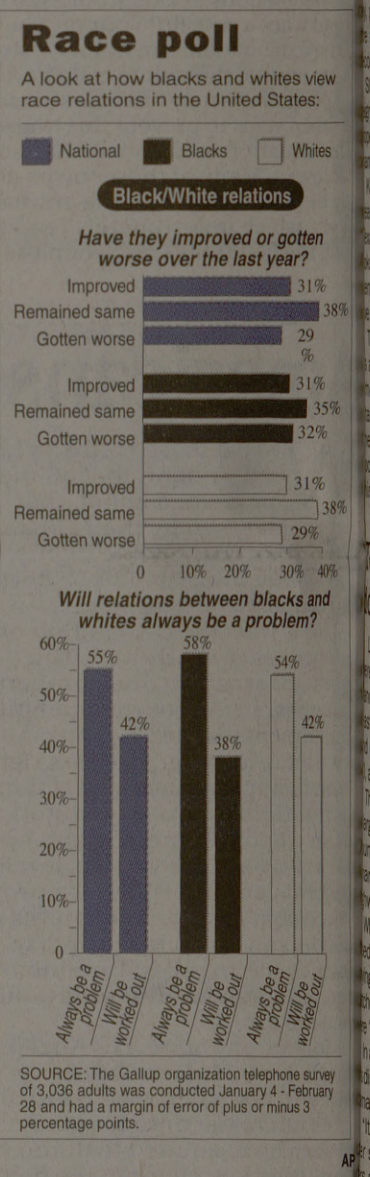
"Young black males face a different situation," Newport said.

The study also seems to confirm the adage that Sunday mornings in churchgoing America are when the nation's racial divide is the greatest. More than 70 percent of both blacks and whites say they worship where most or all fellow church members are of the same race as themselves.

A majority of both groups believe problems of race are here to stay.

Asked if race relations will always be a problem in the United States, 58 percent of blacks said yes. Among whites, 54 percent said race relations will always be a problem.

The poll was based on 18-minute telephone interviews with 3,036 adults conducted between Jan. 4 and Feb. 28 and had a margin of potential sampling error of plus or minus 3 percentage points.



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PLANS

Continued from Page 1

NORTHGATE REVITALIZATION
Ongoing Coverage

Bernie Gessner, owner of Aggie Cleaners, said the city has not considered the interests of existing businesses in Northgate while making renovation plans.

"The daytime businesses will be ill-served," Gessner said. "The paid-parking lot may not affect the restaurants and bars because people may spend three or four hours in the bars."

But the daytime businesses, where people are in and out in 15 minutes, will be affected if their customers have to pay for parking.

Chris Penn, manager of Marooned Records, said the city has not included local business owners' input in its revitalization plans.

"They're really doing it (revitalization) without our opinion," Penn said. "I think they're more interested in attracting tourists."

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