

**Chechnya's war growing**

Russian artillery pounds positions north of Grozny as both sides fortify fixed positions. More than 150,000 Chechens have fled since the fighting began, with most heading to Ingushetia.



AP/Wm. J. Castelli

**Russia nearing finish of military perimeter**

GROZNY, Russia (AP) — A military security zone to separate Russia from the breakaway republic of Chechnya is nearly complete, but rebel forces were resisting with heavy fighting in some areas, Russia's defense minister said yesterday.

Russian artillery pounded Chechen positions on several fronts, and Russian authorities said they suspected Chechen militants would soon launch terrorist attacks.

"Clashes with militants continue, especially in western Chechnya," Defense Minister Igor Sergeev said in the Ukrainian town of Feodosia, where Ukraine's forces were staging military maneuvers.

He said the Russian aim of establishing a security zone in Chechnya was "close to completion," the Interfax news agency reported. The Russians said they wanted to create the buffer to prevent Chechen rebels from invading other Russian regions.

"The ultimate objective is not only to form the security zone, but also to destroy armed gangs," Sergeev said.

Both sides have been fortifying their positions in recent days, and neither has launched a major offensive.

The Russians, who have relied mostly on large artillery guns, hammered two areas north of Chechnya's capital, Grozny, yesterday. The echo of the exploding shells could be heard throughout the city.

Russian soldiers also were shelling near the western town of Bamut, which they have been attacking for several days.

For now, the front line is defined by the Terek River, which flows across the northern third of Chechnya, forming a natural defense barrier. Chechen forces control most of the more populated regions south of the river, while the Russians have most of the plains north of the river.

**Army seizes government in Pakistan**

ISLAMABAD, Pakistan (AP) — In an apparent coup, Pakistani troops took over state-run media yesterday, closed airports and announced the democratically elected government had been removed after the prime minister tried to fire the powerful army chief.

A message that scrolled across the television screen said Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's government had been ousted.

It said army chief of staff Gen. Pervez Musharraf, who had been fired hours before by Sharif, would address the nation in a broadcast speech.

Troops cordoned off the prime minister in his residence in Islamabad, took over the houses of several other top ministers and seized other government buildings.

Sharif fired Musharraf while the military leader was on a visit to Sri Lanka. Musharraf flew back to Pak-

istan and was met by a large contingent of soldiers at the airport in the southern city of Karachi.

Musharraf seized television building in preparation to deliver his speech, the army information office said.

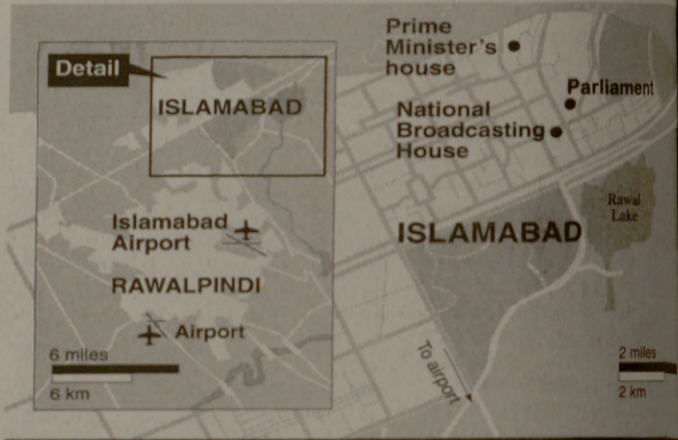
As troops moved through the main cities, many Pakistanis danced in the streets and waved flags, celebrating the apparent ouster of a government that had become increasingly unpopular.

Instability in Pakistan would heighten tensions in South Asia, home of the world's two newest nuclear powers, India and Pakistan, which clashed earlier this year in a dispute over the divided Himalayan region of Kashmir.

India's army went on a state of high alert along the border, a senior officer in India's northern command in Kashmir said on condition of anonymity.

**Coup in Pakistan**

Pakistani troops loyal to dismissed army chief Gen. Pervez Musharraf have taken over government buildings and airports in Islamabad. The government of Prime Minister Sharif has been ousted.



AP/Wm. J. Castelli

"If there has been a coup we would obviously seek the earliest possible restoration of democracy in Pakistan," U.S. State Department spokesperson James Rubin said before the army announcement.

Asked if the situation in Islamabad had raised concerns about control of nuclear-weapons technologies in Pakistan, White House spokesperson Joe Lockhart said: "No concern like that has been raised to me."

In New Delhi, Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee held a crisis meeting with his top security and

foreign policy advisers. The move from Pakistan "are causing concern," Vajpayee's spokesman, Ashok Tandon, said.

Earlier in the day in Islamabad, Sharif announced Musharraf's removal and appeared on national television shaking the hands of the country's secret service chief.

Within hours, the army was moving out in the capital and surrounding cities. Soldiers leaped over a fence around the central television station in Islamabad and seized several news agencies.

**World population reaches six billion**

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — A population clock at U.N. headquarters hit 6 billion yesterday and started racing toward seven billion as an anxious world pondered what the new millennium holds for an increasingly crowded planet.

U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan welcomed the symbolic Baby Six Billion in Sarajevo, Bosnia-Herzegovina — a boy born to refugee parents in a region returning to life after a decade of war.

Adnan Nevic's birth "should light a path of tolerance and understanding for all people," Annan said.

But the tens of thousands of children born on the Day of 6 Billion are far more likely to face

lives of poverty and illiteracy in developing countries. UNICEF head Carol Bellamy said 1 in 3 children in the world's poorest countries will not live beyond age 5.

U.N. demographers had determined the population would hit six billion yesterday, doubling the Earth's inhabitants in less than 40 years.

The population clock in the visitors' lobby at U.N. headquarters was racing so fast yesterday morning it skipped from 5,999,999,998 to 6,000,000,001.

"Somebody had triplets," one U.N. official present joked.

The clock was inside a display set up by the

U.N. Population Fund, which has adopted people's right to determine the size and timing of their families.

It is campaigning to fulfill the goal of the 1994 U.N. population conference — to provide basic education for all children, especially by 2015, since research shows educated women have fewer children.

With more than one billion people aged 15 to 24 just entering their reproductive years, the next population milestone will depend on decisions they make about family size.

"Their choices will determine how many people will be on the planet by 2050 and beyond," the Population Fund display read.

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