

## Officials urge civilians to flee Chechen capital

GROZNY, Russia (AP) — Russian officials yesterday urged civilians hiding in basements beneath ruined homes in Grozny to flee the Chechen capital — a risky endeavor with Russian rockets screaming relentlessly into the city.

Federal forces showed no signs of easing up raids on the breakaway republic of Chechnya, even as a top international mediator held talks in Moscow to arrange a visit to the republic. The Kremlin has dismissed international criticism of its campaign in Chechnya as meddling in Russia's internal affairs.

The Russians have intensified their bombardment of Grozny in the past

week, leaving hundreds dead or wounded and destroying scores of buildings and homes. Russian officials estimate 50,000 civilians remain in the city, many of whom are old, infirm or lack transportation to leave.

In brief intervals between the strikes yesterday, civilians crawled out of basement shelters to fetch water and try to find food.

"It's like an endless lottery, with death being the only stake. Every day brings new death," Marzhan Khakimova, a 72-year-old woman living in a Grozny basement, said.

Yesterday's raids hit one of Grozny's main thoroughfares, Avtarkhanov Avenue, as well as residential neighbor-



AP

hoods and a car market. Witnesses said there were casualties, but no figures were immediately available.

In Moscow, Deputy Prime Minister Nikolai Koshman, Russia's representative to Chechnya, said Moscow would rebuild Grozny when the war was over, but now was the time for civilians to flee.

## Survivor returned to family in Cuba

CARDENAS, Cuba (AP) — The 5-year-old Cuban boy who survived a boat capsizing en route to the United States was handed over to his relatives in Miami yesterday, and his father in Cuba accused them of trying to make money off his son.

The boy, Elian Gonzalez, was quickly becoming the focus of an international tug-of-war. While his father and the Cuban government have demanded his return, U.S. authorities temporarily turned him over to relatives who were fighting to keep him in the United States.

Juan Miguel Gonzalez, the father, said he initially was thankful that his aunt and cousin in South Florida were taking care of Elian, but had come to believe

that they were "enriching themselves" with the highly politicized case.

"[Elian] has been kidnapped," he told "Associated Press Television News" in an interview yesterday at his coastal home east of Havana. "If I have to go and look for him, I will."

"Here, he has his health care and education free," Gonzalez, 31, a park employee, said. "He does not lack anything."

About 50 of Gonzalez's neighbors and co-workers had rallied at his home earlier in the day to support his efforts to bring Elian back to Cuba.

Later, inside the living room dominated by a poster of revolutionary icon Ernesto "Che" Guevara, Mariela Quintana, 51, Gonzalez's mother and grandmother, pleaded for the boy's return. His second wife, Nelsi, 28, nursed her baby, 2-month-old half-brother.

Elian was found on the coast of Fort Lauderdale, Fla., Thursday after a powerboat carrying refugees capsized. Three survivors were rescued in Biscayne, Fla.

Seven bodies were found before the U.S. Coast Guard off the search. Three people are presumed dead.

Cuba blames the United States for the tragedy, the child had been taken by his mother, who left the voyage.

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