

## Indonesian president holds talks in Aceh

SABANG, Indonesia (AP) — Indonesia's president called for peace during his first official visit to strife-torn Aceh province Tuesday, hours after nine people were killed in gun battles between security forces and rebels.

Six Indonesian marines and three guerrillas died Monday night in two separate firefights in the region, 1,100 miles northwest of Jakarta, local military commander Lt. Col. Suyatno said. Six marines were injured.

President Abdurrahman Wahid left Jakarta early Tuesday for talks with community leaders in Sabang, a town on the tiny island of We, just off Aceh's northern tip.

In eastern Indonesia Tuesday, Vice President Megawati Sukarnoputri continued a separate mission to put an end to fierce fighting between Muslims and Christians in the Maluku Islands, known during Dutch colonial rule as the Spice Islands, or Moluccas.

Almost 40 people were killed there in weekend fighting, and today on Bacan Island, about 100 houses were burned.

Christians used to have a small majority in Maluku and North Maluku provinces, but an influx of Muslims from Indonesia's other islands has changed the religious makeup and fueled tensions.

Tuesday's visit was Wahid's first to Aceh since he became president three months ago. In addition to meeting with community leaders about the violence, Wahid has said he wants to boost Aceh's depressed economy by reopening a free trade zone closed in 1985.

Crowds cheered the president, who was guarded by hundreds of troops. Indonesian flags decorated buildings.



## Taliban, Pakistan reject U.S. request to fight terrorism; share concern

ISLAMABAD, Pakistan (AP) — Afghanistan's ruling Taliban and Pakistan's military leaders have rebuffed U.S. appeals to crack down on terrorism, and one militant group warned Tuesday of a violent backlash if they tried.

On a visit to the region last week, a top American envoy urged the outlawing of a group blamed for hijacking an Indian plane last month and that steps also be taken to bring terror suspect Osama bin Laden to justice.

Pakistan did not agree to any specific actions. India charges that Pakistan had a hand in the hijacking, a claim that the United States has rejected.

And in neighboring Afghanistan, Taliban leaders have refused to hand over bin Laden, charged in the United States with masterminding the deadly bombings of U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in 1998.

Of particular concern to the United States is Harkat ul-Mujahedeen, the successor to a Pakistani-based organization that has been declared a terrorist group by Washington.

A spokesperson for a sister organization, Harkat ul-Jehad, warned of violence if the government tried to close the group's offices in Pakistan.

"We will not hesitate to take any action and believe me there will be a free-for-all here in Pakistan. It will be anarchy," Abu Mahmood Ashraf said. He added that his group trains in Pakistan and Afghanistan to fight in Kashmir and "in other Muslim countries where Muslims are being attacked."

Ashraf also called bin Laden a hero to Muslims worldwide. "Any injury, death would be a great shock to us and we would not stop until we have severed the United States," he said.

India accuses Harkat ul-Mujahedeen of staging the Indian Airlines hijacking ended with 155 hostages freed in exchange for the Indian government's release of three members of the group.

Pakistan has strongly condemned the hijacking. President Clinton said Tuesday there was no evidence that Pakistan supported it.

But State Department spokesperson James P. Foley cited concerns for some time "that agencies of the Pakistani government have provided general support to a number of groups operating in Kashmir, including Harkat ul-Mujahedeen."

U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Karl Inderfurth said Tuesday that terrorism concerns last week when he met with Gen. Pervez Musharraf and other leaders of Pakistan.

"We hope that the government of Pakistan will take steps against such extremist groups which carry out violence inside Pakistan, as well as in the region," Inderfurth said, specifically naming Harkat ul-Mujahedeen.

Pakistan did not promise to crack down on such groups. What Inderfurth said in a statement sharing Washington's concern about terrorism.

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— Abu Mahmood Ashraf  
Military leader

## Church may ease restrictions on remarriage

LONDON (AP) — The Church of England, established by the much-wedded King Henry VIII, took a step Tuesday toward approving remarriage for divorcees — an issue that may be of keen interest to Britain's next king.

Recommendations published by a group of bishops, if adopted by the church's governing General Synod in 2002, could make it easier for Prince Charles to contemplate marriage to his longtime love, Camilla Parker Bowles.

But the church's main concern is dealing with the realities of a nation with one of the highest divorce rates in Europe. Roughly one-third of Anglican priests already remarry divorcees, and the church said 10 percent of its marriages now involve divorcees.

"If these proposals win acceptance, the church will not simply marry anyone who turns up and asks to be married," the Right Rev. Michael Scott-Joynt, bishop of Winchester and chair of the bishops' working party on remarriage, said.

Among the conditions: Divorced people should be honest about the reasons for the failure of their previous marriage, adequate provision should be made for supporting children, the new relationship should not be the cause of breaking up the previous marriage, and "a reasonable time" should have passed since the divorce.

Bishops also recommended that remarriage should normally not be permitted for people who have been involved in more than one divorce.

The decision in each case would be made by the local priest in consultation with the bishop. The recommendations said that no priest should be compelled to preside at a remarriage against his or her conscience.

"This report in effect codifies what has already become practice in many parishes," said the Right Rev. Mark Santer, bishop of Birmingham.

The proposals would have to be approved by two-thirds majorities in all three houses of the General Synod — bishops, clergy and lay members.

In 1981, the General Synod adopted a resolution affirming its belief that "marriage should always be undertaken as a lifelong commitment," but noted that circumstances exist in which it would be right for a divorced person to remarry in church while the former partner remains alive.

At a news conference announcing the recommendations, church officials refused to be drawn into comment on the case of Prince Charles, who is next in line to succeed Queen Elizabeth II as monarch and temporal head of the church.

Charles, who has been free to remarry since his first wife Princess Diana died in a 1997 car crash, said he has no intention of doing so.

Under current rules, however, he could not remarry because she is a divorcee and her husband is still alive.

He has acknowledged adultery with Parker Bowles while they each were still married. Diana blamed the dissolution of her marriage to Charles on his infidelity, but she said she was faithful to him until the marriage broke down.

Nearly 40 percent of marriages in England end in divorce — one of the highest rates in Europe. The church, which broke from Rome because of King Henry VIII's wish to be freed of his first wife, officially barred second weddings in church since the 17th century.

In 1955, the queen's sister, Princess Margaret, decided against marrying the man she loved, Group Captain Peter Townsend, because he was divorced. The queen's uncle, Edward VIII, abdicated in 1936 to marry a divorced American, Wallis Simpson.

Charles' divorced sister, Princess Anne, married her second husband in the Church of Scotland, an Anglican church that is not part of the Anglican Communion.

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