

Kurdish rebels retreating into mountains

OUTSKIRTS OF DOHUK, Iraq - Kurdish rebels Monday retreated on foot into their traditional mountain strongholds, surrendering more urban centers under a steady onslaught by Iraqi loyalist forces.

Also Monday, Iraq said it captured documents proving the complicity of more than one foreign government in unrest designed to unseat Saddam Hussein and accused the United States of 92 "provocative" reconnaissance flights last weekend.

Baghdad said its troops had retaken Dohuk, Erbil and Zahko.

Low on morale, frightened refugees asked why President Bush and his allies were allowing Saddam to use artillery and helicopters to break the rebellion.

"Why have they abandoned us to Saddam?" refugees repeatedly asked

Western reporters. Hundreds of thousands of Kurds fearing government reprisals were fleeing by any means possible into the mountains along the Iranian and Turkish borders, turning roadways into ribbons of humanity.

Many women and children were forced to walk. Some laid on the roadside without food or water. Refugees camped in the mountains, without protection from rainstorms and the cold.

In Washington, State Department deputy spokesman Richard Boucher said heavy fighting continued in northern Iraq.

The oil center of Kirkuk "seems to remain in government hands despite renewed fighting in that city late Friday and Saturday," he said. Government forces had taken control of Erbil

and Dohuk, and have also moved against rebel forces in the Zahko area along the Iraqi-Turkish border.

Boucher also said there had been additional fighting near Basra and in the lower Euphrates and Tigris rivers.

U.S. officers said Iraqi troops had crushed uprisings by Shiite Muslims in southern Iraq, and some units were being redeployed north to put down the Kurdish uprising.

"Whoever is revolting is losing," said Lt. Col. John Kalb of Bay Village, Ohio, whose 3rd Armored Division units operate a refugee camp inside allied-occupied Iraq.

One of the senior U.S. Army commanders along the border area, Col. Bill Nash of the 3rd Armored Division's First Brigade, said some Iraqis arriving at the camp or nearby checkpoints claim to be resistance

leaders and have asked for arms to combat Saddam's forces.

The Bush administration last week said it would not help the rebels, although it remains hopeful that Saddam's forces have been weakened enough that the Iraqi leader could be deposed at some point.

Both the Kurds and the Shiite Muslims of southern Iraq rose against the Iraqi government after U.S.-led coalition forces routed Saddam's troops from Kuwait in February. Iraqi troops moved against the Kurds after beating back the Shiites.

"Iraqi forces attacked the towns of Erbil and Dohuk with air and artillery shellings. Helicopter gunships, fixed-wing aircraft and multiple rocket launchers were used indiscriminately," Hoshiyar Zebari of the Kurdistan Democratic Party said in London.

The umbrella Iraqi Kurdish Front

on Sunday accused loyalists of using napalm, phosphorous bombs and other weapons in Erbil.

INA quoted the government-run newspaper Al-Joumhuriya as saying Monday that searches Friday in Erbil and Kirkuk produced "weapons, equipment and documents that confirm the involvement of more than one foreign party in the events of March in the region."

In other gulf developments Monday:

●The U.N. Security Council scheduled its first consultations on the proposed gulf war cease-fire resolution.

●Ayatollah Mohammed Taki Mo-daresi, a Shiite Muslim rebel leader, claimed in Damascus, Syria, that southern rebels made a nighttime attack on government headquarters in the holy city of Karbala.

Iraqis still in control of Kuwaiti territory

ABDALY, Kuwait - More than a month after President Bush declared Kuwait liberated, Iraqi forces still control a small pocket of the emirate's territory, a Kuwaiti tank commander said Monday.

About 300 Iraqi soldiers remain inside Kuwait, just south of the Iraqi port of Um Qasr, Capt. Nasser Al-Duwaila said. He badly wants to get them out.

"This is our land," said Al-Duwaila, the acting commander of Kuwait's 7th Armored Battalion. "Kuwait is not free if there is one Iraqi soldier on our land."

Al-Duwaila said there were no Kuwaiti officers in authority when allied units first moved into the area, apparently producing brief uncertainty about the border's location.

"This is a big mistake here," Al-Duwaila recalled telling allied officers when he reached the area later. "They said, 'No, there's a cease-fire.'"

Bush called off the pursuit of Iraqi forces on Feb. 28, declaring that "Kuwait is liberated, Iraq's army is defeated."

The area in question covers about two square miles directly south of Um Qasr, and was attacked by Iraq once before, in 1973, Al-Duwaila said.

He said the Iraqis occupy scattered Kuwaiti military facilities, including a barracks and an observation post.

They have built new roads "so they can say to the world, 'there are our roads, this is our area,'" he said. "Their plan is to cut up our land piece by piece."

The matter has been brought to the attention of allied headquarters in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

One of the senior U.S. Army commanders along the border area, Col. Bill Nash of the 3rd Armored Division's First Brigade, said he knew of the Kuwaiti complaints but expressed no interest in getting involved.

"Our task is to defend the DML (the demarcation line established at the end of hostilities), not the international boundary," he said. "I'm where I'm supposed to be, and nobody has intruded into my space."

Nash of Hayden, Ariz., said there was no indication of significant Iraqi military movements in the region as a formal cease-fire becomes increasingly likely. "There's no military threat to my command," he said.

Al-Duwaila said he was confident that the U.S. commander, Gen. Norman Schwarzkopf, would eventually



ensure that Kuwait's long-disputed borders with Iraq were protected.

"We are a small country and we can't afford to lose any piece of our land," he told reporters visiting his command post. "We want it back immediately."

Al-Duwaila said he told allied officers at a weekend meeting that they should oust the Iraqis themselves, or allow Kuwaiti troops to reclaim the area, or let Kuwaiti forces occupy a similar-size portion of Iraq until a formal cease-fire is signed.

Nationwide price hikes Moscow food stores close

MOSCOW - Food stores in the Soviet capital closed Monday to curb panic-buying on the eve of whopping nationwide price hikes. City officials warned of unrest, and bakers boosted output for an avalanche of shoppers.

"We haven't had time to unload the bread from one truck to another!" said Nina Vorokina, controller at a major bread store on Novoarbat Prospect.

Elsewhere in the capital, long lines formed outside bakeries, and the scene was repeated in the Soviet cities of Irkutsk, Tashkent and Leningrad.

On Tuesday, prices across the Soviet Union were to double for milk, triple for beef, pork and mutton and quadruple for rye bread. Increases ranging from 250 to 1,000 percent were set for such consumer goods as television sets, refrigerators, clothes, shoes and baby carriages.

The price hikes were the government's most decisive steps in 30 years to close the gap between the low prices it charges consumers and rising production costs.

But the prevailing mood among Moscow shoppers was that the economy would gain little from the changes, nor would they benefit from the complex system of wage hikes and other compensation that Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev ordered to ease resulting tensions.

"It may help the economy," said Lyubov Biryukova, who is on maternity leave from her job at a Moscow brewery. "All this compensation is not enough."

Most food stores and farmers' markets in the Soviet capital were closed Monday. Employees said they expected to post new prices on freshly delivered goods overnight.

The Communist Party newspaper Pravda also published a presidential order threatening to punish state-owned stores that exceeded new centrally set prices.

Roman Poderny, an employee of a geological institute, called the price hikes "inevitable" but said they should have come last fall when Gorbachev agreed with Yeltsin on the so-called 500-day plan to shift from a central-

Soviet Price Hikes

Here is a look at some of the price increases facing Soviet consumers. The average salary is 270 rubles a month, or about 1.50 rubles an hour.

Food	In rubles, per kg	Old prices	New prices
Beef		2.00	7.00
Pork		1.90	5.30
Chicken		3.40	5.60
Cheese		3.20	6.40
Wheat flour		0.46	1.40
Rice		0.88	2.20
Sugar		0.85	2.20
Tea		9.60	18.00
Eggs (ten)		1.30	2.60
Milk (liter)		0.28	0.50
Bread			
Rye		0.12	0.48
White		0.50	1.20

Consumer goods

T-shirt	1.34	4.70
Man's suit (wool blend)	107.00	245.00
Girl's school uniform	12.00	62.00
Baby carriage	68.00	136.00
Sofa	188.00	346.00
Color TV	755.00	1,218.00

*The Soviet Union has four exchange rates: the official rate of 1.75 dollars per ruble; the commercial rate of 58 cents per ruble; the tourist rate of 17 cents per ruble and the black market rate of 3-4 cents per ruble.

Communists claim victory

TIRANA, Albania - Communists claimed a convincing victory Monday in Albania's historic multiparty elections, but the opposition scored wins in all major cities and beat President Ramiz Alia in his parliamentary race.

The main opposition Democratic Party conceded it had garnered fewer than one-third of the seats in the legislature, but predicted the Communists would soon lose their grip on power anyway.

Sunday's election effectively ended one-party rule in Albania, which had been the last hard-line Communist holdout in Europe.

Official results were not yet available. Transportation and communications are primitive in the impoverished Balkan nation, which is struggling to emerge from nearly a half-century of Stalinist rule and international isolation.

The Party of Labor, as the Communists call themselves, said it won about two-thirds of the 250 seats in the People's Assembly parliament.

Communist spokesman Xhelil Ghoni said the results showed the party is "the major political party in our country, and it enjoys the full trust of the people."

The opposition had been euphoric late Sunday as initial results showed it doing well in Albania's cities. But when returns began coming in from

“Yesterday, we marked not a Democratic victory, but a victory for democracy.”

Pashko Democratic Party leader

the countryside, it became clear the Communists would keep the power they have guarded for 46 years.

It was unclear whether the Communists and the opposition could cooperate in the legislature after the election, which split Albania's 3.2 million people along geographic and demographic lines.

One of the Democrats' leaders, Sali Berisha, told about 3,000 supporters at a rally outside party headquarters that "there will be no coalition" with the Communists.

Berisha said his party would take about 72 seats.

Official television said the Party of Labor would win about 167 seats in parliament. It projected the Democrats would win 65 seats. It said an ethnic Greek party had won three seats.

Elections were not held in one

district in the city of Pogradec because of a controversy over the Democratic Party candidate. Runoffs will be held next Sunday in a handful of districts where no candidate received a majority.

Opposition leaders urged their supporters to be calm, fearing their dashed hopes would translate into violence, and predicted they would eventually dislodge the Communists' grip on power.

"Yesterday, we marked not a Democratic victory, but a victory for democracy," said Democratic Party leader, Gramoz Pashko, said. "The Communists who sucked our blood for 46 years are finished. Within two months they will be in pieces."

Their supporters greeted the speeches by Pashko and Berisha with shouts of "Down with the dictatorship!" Some wept in disappointment.

Pashko and Berisha had strong leads in the unofficial tally in their urban districts in Vlova and Kavaje, party officials said.

Alia, who succeeded Stalinist leader Enver Hoxha, suffered an embarrassing defeat in his Tirana district race.

Sources said he won only 36 percent of the vote in his contest with the Democrats' Franko Krrogi, a little-known engineer, despite the fact that soldiers had been brought in to vote in his district. That is legal under Albanian election law.

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