

Pentagon set to spearhead Somali effort

Security Council approves international military rescue

UNITED NATIONS — The Security Council launched the world's biggest armed humanitarian rescue Thursday night, ordering a U.S.-led force to silence the guns of Somali bandits and help feed hundreds of thousands of starving people.

The council voted unanimously to approve the huge operation.

After planning with his generals and working the phones to drum up troop donations from abroad, President Bush was poised to unleash the largest U.S. military operation since the Gulf War.

Given the order, 1,800 troops aboard a three-ship strike force floating in the Indian Ocean could land on Somali beaches within hours and the full force of 28,000 could arrive within weeks.

France will add as many as 2,000 troops. Italy offered unspecified help.

It came more than a year after severe food shortages and civil unrest were first reported in Somalia. And the Security Council mandate was vague: to use "all necessary means" to

create "a secure environment" for relief operations.

The resolution did not say if that might mean creating some kind of U.N.-controlled civil government in chaotic Somalia and it said nothing about how long the operation would last.

Clan battles have raged in Somalia since the collapse of President Mohamed Siad Barre's rule in January 1991, worsening a famine that has killed 300,000 people and put another 2 million at risk.

Well-armed militias have stolen at least half of the food and medicine shipped to Somalia and paralyzed a 500-member U.N. peacekeeping force in place since September.

The port and airport of Mogadishu have been virtually shut down by the threat of banditry.

The maddening delays created by the port's closure could be seen Thursday at a beach north of Mogadishu, where the Red Cross unloaded a ship filled with rice donated by French schoolchildren.

WASHINGTON — The Pentagon has ordered some 28,000 troops to stand by for deployment to Somalia to spearhead a U.N. military rescue mission to the beleaguered African nation, a senior Pentagon official said Thursday.

President Bush scheduled a meeting with congressional leaders Friday morning to discuss U.S. participation in the relief effort, the White House said after the U.N. Security Council unanimously approved the operation.

"We are pleased by the U.N. vote to authorize military forces to ensure the delivery of humanitarian aid to alleviate the starvation and human suffering in Somalia," said the statement, issued by Bush's press secretary, Marlin Fitzwater.

Earlier Thursday, Bush called his top military advisers to the White House and telephoned leaders around the globe seeking additional forces for the effort to clear a way for food and other aid to reach starving Somalis.

Bush and his advisers discussed the risks of the military operation, said spokesman Marlin Fitzwater, "but the feeling was that the need there is great... and that we can't allow the starvation to continue."

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Fitzwater said, "Our purpose is to first of all to... get the aid through and secondly to accomplish that as rapidly as possible and to turn it over to peacekeeping forces of the United Nations as soon as possible."

He even suggested that the U.S. forces could be out of Somalia by the time President-elect Clinton takes office Jan. 20.

"If we could have them out before then, that certainly would be preferable," he told reporters.

Williams also noted that Somalia is riddled with "lawless gangs of thugs" who have endangered relief workers and stolen food from humanitarian stocks and that the military would have to create "safe areas, safe havens" and corridors for delivering relief supplies.

Williams said 1,800 Marines

aboard a three-ship amphibious strike force were off the coast of Somalia, awaiting further orders.

Those Marines would move in to secure Mogadishu's port and airstrips, allowing other forces to flow in from the United States and other nations, a senior Pentagon official said.

The largest contingent would be some 16,000 Marines from the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force from Camp Pendleton, Calif.

In a second wave, up to 10,000 soldiers from the Army's light infantry 10th Mountain Division at Fort Drum, N.Y., will be added, said the official, who commented only on condition of anonymity.

Williams confirmed that units from Pendleton's 50,000 Marines had been alerted to get ready to move, as well as elements of the 10th Mountain Division, but he declined to say exactly how many might be sent to the East African nation.

In line to command the venture on the scene is Marine Lt. Gen. Robert Johnston, who was one of Gen. Norman Schwarzkopf's top aides in the Persian Gulf War and is the commander of the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force.

State Department spokesman Richard A. Boucher said the United States "would have appropriate control" over American forces in Somalia.

Oil flows after tanker runs aground on Spanish coast



LA CORUNA, Spain — A tanker crashed onto rocks outside a fog-shrouded harbor entrance Thursday, breaking apart in heavy seas and spilling millions of gallons of crude oil that threatened the area's rich fishing grounds.

Hundreds of people fled their homes after an explosion tore the stern loose and set off an inferno only a few yards offshore five hours after the ship ran aground. All 29 crew members were rescued from the Greek ship, officials said.

Curiosity seekers gathered along the rugged coastline of this city of 250,000 to watch huge orange flames boiling from the stern section. Fire licked from oil alongside the tanker and thick, black smoke billowed high over the city, which is on Spain's northwestern corner about

280 miles from Madrid.

Authorities said an oil slick up to a mile wide stretched 12 miles northeastward up the coast of Galicia, as the region is known.

Environmentalists expressed fears for fishing grounds. Fishing is Galicia's most important industry.

The tanker, the Aegean Sea, was carrying an estimated 23 million gallons of crude from Britain's main North Sea oil-loading terminal at Sullom Voe to a refinery in La Coruna when it ran aground about 5 a.m.

Antonio Gomis, a spokesman for Spain's Repsol oil company, which chartered the tanker, said two or three of the ship's nine tanks had ruptured. He said each tank held an average of 2.7 million gallons of crude oil.

"We believe about two-thirds of the oil is on the ship, and oil from two or three tanks has gone into the sea," Gomis said.

The international group Greenpeace said it was sending three international maritime and oil experts to the site. "An environmental disaster looms," Greenpeace said in a statement released Thursday evening.

Juan Lopez de Uralde, the Spanish spokesman for Greenpeace, said the possibilities of keeping the spill from fouling the coast were "practically nil" because it was so close to shore.

He said the biggest harm was likely to be suffered by the fishing and shellfish grounds in the Ria de Betanzos and Ria de Ares, two inlets northeast of the La Coruna harbor.

Gunfire hits U.N. commander's plane over Bosnia; logistics flights halted

SARAJEVO, Bosnia-Herzegovina — Gunfire hit a plane carrying the U.N. commander in Bosnia on Thursday, but the aircraft landed safely. The United Nations suspended all flights into the capital for two days.

No injuries or serious damage were reported when the Soviet-built Antonov 12 logistics plane carrying commander Gen. Philippe Morillon was hit in the rear by six bullets, said Shannon Boyd, U.N. spokeswoman in Zagreb, the Croatian capital, where the plane landed.

It was not clear who fired at the plane, Boyd said. Heavy fighting between Serb and Muslim-led government forces was reported near the airport most of the day.

Following the incident, U.N. chief Gen. Satish Nambiar suspended all logistics flights to the besieged Bosnian capital and extended the suspension of relief flights for at least another 48 hours, Boyd said.

Relief flights were suspended Tues-

day after a U.S. Air Force transport was hit by small-arms fire, but U.N. flights between Sarajevo and Zagreb had continued.

Islamic foreign ministers meeting in Saudi Arabia urged the United Nations to allow arms deliveries to Bosnia's Muslims and they appeared to give Islamic states the nod to do so if there was no U.N. action.

In a 12-page communique, the ministers said Islamic countries should "extend their cooperation to the republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina in the exercise of its inherent right to individual and collective self-defense."

In Paris, the Western European Union denounced atrocities in former Yugoslavia, including the rape of women and children and the castration of men.

The union urged member governments to "bring to justice the authors of these crimes against humanity." It dropped language in a draft proposal that explicitly blamed Serb militias

for committing the majority of rapes, mainly against Muslim women.

Despite artillery fire, Bosnia's army command said its forces successfully fended off Serb attacks on the Sarajevo suburb of Otes and had destroyed four enemy tanks since Tuesday.

The Bosnian army said Otes faced a major Serb infantry and armor attack from the west and south. Officers reported some close-range combat and an unspecified number of casualties on each side.

Defense officials reported more tank movements near Pale, the Serb headquarters east of Sarajevo.

Bosnia's Health Ministry said 41 people were killed and 118 wounded during fighting in government-controlled areas of Bosnia over the previous 24 hours, including 22 dead and 47 wounded in Sarajevo.

The fighting was keeping truck convoys from reaching Sarajevo, although one convoy did get through on Thursday, U.N. officials said.

Russian lawmakers shout, shove in Congress fracas

MOSCOW — Lawmakers plunged into a shouting and shoving match over President Boris Yeltsin's reforms Thursday, halting work on economic reform plans and debate on proposals to have Yeltsin relinquish some powers.

A leader of a hard-line group in the Congress of People's Deputies predicted there would be more chaos Friday. The upheaval caused a committee drawing up a resolution on Yeltsin's economic plans to suspend its work.

The outburst came during debate on constitutional amendments that would shift power from Yeltsin and his Cabinet to the Congress and the smaller Supreme Soviet.

The fracas also culminated two days of bitter debate in which Yeltsin and Acting Prime Minister Yegor Gaidar pushed their most controversial reforms on the unfriendly parliament, dominated by ex-Communists elected long before the collapse of the Soviet Union last year.

Speaker Ruslan Khasbulatov pushed through a motion for secret-ballot voting on the amendments. Yeltsin sat expressionless during the vote.

A handful of pro-Yeltsin lawmakers rushed to the carpeted podium in protest, screaming that the parliament's rules require at least four-fifths support to make the vote secret.

"Get away! Get away!" Khasbulatov shouted into his mi-

"Dear deputies, protect me from these deputies!"

— Khasbulatov Russian lawmaker

crophone. "Dear deputies, protect me from these deputies!" Khasbulatov cried, his plaintive voice resounding along the chamber's barrel ceiling. Deputies who remained in their seats laughed at the spectacle. One even brandished a telescope for a better view.

Plainclothes security officers and hard-line lawmakers rushed to the podium to form a barrier in front of the reformers, and a shoving match began inches from Khasbulatov and a few feet from Yeltsin. One hard-liner grabbed the lectern and held firm like a sailor on a rocking ship.

The president left the chamber in disgust. Khasbulatov left briefly and security officers restored order. The speaker returned minutes later, recessed the session without a vote and walked out again.

No injuries were reported, but plenty of egos seemed bruised. The pro-Yeltsin lawmakers said secret balloting would let undecided deputies oppose Yeltsin without reprisal.

"It was manipulation by Khasbulatov!" declared Ella Panfilova, the minister for social welfare.

Daily Nebraskan publication information including editor names (Chris Hopfensperger, Kris Karnopp, Adeana Leflin, Mark Baldrige, William Lauer), night news editors (Kathy Steinauer, Mike Lewis, Kimberly Spurlock, Kara Morrison, Don Walton), fax number (472-1761), and subscription details.