

Clinton promises 'no more empty threats'

WASHINGTON — The Clinton administration called on its allies Monday to extend a protective shield to civilians in Sarajevo by threatening air strikes if Bosnian Serbs continue their attacks. No more empty threats, the president said.

The aim is to end the siege of the Bosnian capital, where 68 civilians were killed and some 200 injured in a mortar attack on a Muslim marketplace Saturday.

It would require a change of heart by the European governments to whom the Clinton administration has as-

signed the primary responsibility for ending the fighting in the Balkans.

In Houston, Clinton answered questions about why the Serbs should take this latest threat of air strikes seriously, given the West's previous saber-rattling.

"Let's see what happens in the next couple of days," the president said. "You know what I feel about that. I don't think we should have any more empty threats."

The NATO allies last year blocked a U.S. appeal to both lift an arms embargo against the Muslim-led gov-

ernment and to bomb Bosnian Serb artillery and mortar sites if attacks continued.

Partly out of concern U.N. peacekeepers might get caught in the crossfire, the allies shied away from forceful intervention. Continued blood-letting from what Secretary of State Warren Christopher called "unacceptable actions" by the Serbs was expected this time to result in allied unity.

"We expect the North Atlantic Council will decide on a course of action, on an overall strategy, within the next few days," Christopher said

after President Clinton's senior advisers met for a second day at the White House.

The NATO meeting will be held Wednesday in Brussels, Belgium. The ambassadors to NATO from the 16 allied countries are expected to attend.

In Brussels, European Union foreign ministers Monday urged the NATO nations to use all means, including the use of air power, to lift the siege of Sarajevo.

U.N. Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali on Sunday asked the

NATO allies to authorize use of air power in response to the shelling of Sarajevo.

Clinton, in a speech in Houston, said he had long hoped the U.N. official would take the step. The president said, though, that "until those folks get tired of killing each other over there bad things will continue to happen."

Christopher said he expected the NATO Council to approve Boutros-Ghali's proposal to give commanders on the ground authority to call for air attacks.

Vietnamese release remains of 12 soldiers

HANOI, Vietnam — Vietnam turned over to the United States what are believed to be the remains of 12 more Americans missing from the Vietnam War, four days after President Clinton lifted a trade embargo.

"This is the first repatriation ceremony since the embargo has been lifted," Army Lt. Col. John C. Cray, head of the U.S. MIA office in Hanoi, said. "I think that instead of hurting, it will in fact enhance our process."

But Cray said that while the Vietnamese government was not holding back remains of the MIAs as a bargaining tool for the next step — the resumption of diplomatic ties — he

believed that villagers may have been holding them or at least knew about them. Some of the remains the United States received Monday were turned in by villagers.

President Clinton had made the lifting of the 19-year embargo contingent on Hanoi's cooperation and progress in the fullest possible accounting of MIAs.

U.S. veterans' groups and families of MIAs opposed the end of the embargo, saying the United States would lose its leverage in forcing Vietnam to cooperate in accounting for the 2,238 American MIAs.

But Cray said that since the lifting of the embargo, the Vietnamese had shown their commitment to the fullest possible accounting, and over the past weekend made final plans to join more than 100 American specialists in another major search operation beginning Feb. 26.

"I believe that they will continue to work with us," Cray said.

The repatriation ceremony had been planned weeks in advance of the lifting of the embargo, and the Vietnamese were not holding back remains as families of MIAs and veterans groups have charged.

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