

NATO launches air strike on Gorazde

SARAJEVO, Bosnia-Herzegovina — Two U.S. war jets dropped bombs on the Muslim enclave of Gorazde Sunday after Bosnian Serb forces overran government defenses to reach the outskirts of town.

Maj. Dacre Holloway, a U.N. military spokesman in Sarajevo, said planes struck in the Gorazde "pocket," but he did not say what was hit.

NATO headquarters in Naples, Italy, released a statement identifying

the planes as U.S. F-16Cs based in Aviano, Italy. NATO also did not specify the target.

It was the first time NATO has launched an air strike. In late February, NATO war jets downed four Serb planes violating the "no fly zone" over Bosnia. However, that decision did not require previous U.N. approval.

Gorazde, about 35 miles south of Sarajevo, is one of the six "safe areas" for Bosnian Muslims that the United

Nations established last year. But after that designation, Serbs continued to besiege the city — as they have for most of the two-year war — defying the U.N.'s intent.

The U.N. commander in Bosnia, Lt. Gen. Sir Michael Rose, in brief comments to reporters in Split, Croatia, had suggested air strikes may be in the offing if the Serb attack persisted.

Esad Ocranovic, a Gorazde city

official, speaking with reporters in Sarajevo via a ham radio linkup, said earlier Sunday that Bosnian Serb troops were at the southeastern edges of town.

A U.N. source in Belgrade, speaking on condition of anonymity, said there had been two strikes in the pocket and that Bosnian Serbs responded with anti-aircraft fire.

Shortly before U.N. bombing announcement, Charles Redman, the

U.S. special envoy on former Yugoslavia, told reporters in Sarajevo, "this is serious and we all agree on that," but he would not elaborate on what action the United Nations might take.

"The developments since this afternoon did that. That's what has changed the situation," Redman said after meeting with members of Bosnia's Muslim-led government. "The situation is very serious because of the Serb advances."

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Fighting slows in Rwanda

KIGALI, Rwanda — Fires burned on the outskirts of the devastated capital of Rwanda, and hundreds looted aid warehouses Sunday as fighting abated after three days of savage chaos.

At a hospital in Kigali, doctors claimed, soldiers slaughtered patients in their beds.

Relief officials estimate as many as 10,000 people have been killed in Kigali alone. The fighting — the result of a decades-old struggle between the Hutu and Tutsi ethnic groups — has forced hundreds of Europeans and Americans to flee the country, many for neighboring Burundi.

Foreigners were leaving by air from Kigali airport or by convoy to Bujumbura, Burundi's capital.

Secretary of State Warren Christopher said Sunday on NBC's "Meet the Press" that most Americans had left and "as far as we know, there are no Americans who are unsafe." About 250 Americans, mostly missionaries and aid workers, were in Rwanda.

In Kigali, Eric Bertin, a coordinator for the French Doctors Without Borders, said when he and colleagues arrived at a hospital Sunday, they found patients they had treated the day before had been killed by soldiers overnight.

Many were in beds in tents set up around the hospital, he said.

"We have decided it is no use to work here anymore," Bertin said. "It is useless to cure someone who is

going to be killed anyway. They were just lying in their tents dead."

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—Bertin,
coordinator for Doctors Without Borders

Elsewhere in the city, bodies were strewn in the streets. Fighting had raged since the presidents of Rwanda and Burundi, Juvenal Habyarimana and Cyprien Ntaryamira, died in a suspicious plane crash Wednesday.

They were returning from a conference in Tanzania aimed at ending ethnic strife in their countries.

The Rwandan government said the plane was shot down by unidentified attackers. U.N. officials were prevented from going to the crash site.

In the rampage that followed, residents were dragged from their homes and shot to death or hacked to pieces. The acting prime minister was slain as she sought refuge. Aid workers, priests and nuns were targeted in the massacres.

Outside the capital, fighting has pitted the Hutu-dominated army and

the mostly Tutsi Rwandan Patriotic Front. The two sides reportedly agreed to a cease-fire on Sunday, but its effectiveness was in doubt.

"Both parties reached an agreement on a cease-fire and apart from some sporadic gunfire, it seems to be respected," Col. Luc Marchal of the Belgian U.N. contingent in Kigali told Belgian television network RTBF.

But just hours later, France-2 television broadcast comments from RPF leader Theogene Rudasingwa, who said "We have little option" but to continue advancing toward Kigali.

Foreigners continued leaving the capital Sunday, carrying whatever they could gather. One man toiled a tennis racket, another held a thermos bottle.

Four Belgian planes and 250 paratroopers arrived in the capital to assist in the evacuation, and about 330 U.S. Marines were in Burundi. The Americans took evacuees to Nairobi, Kenya, aboard four C-130s and two C-141 transports.

Cereal prices indicate low inflation

NEW YORK — Those little tan O's floating in your breakfast bowl may seem like ordinary Cheerios. But to some economists they're leading indicators of low inflation.

Last week General Mills lowered the price of the oat-based cereal by 12 percent. Despite rampant anxiety in the financial markets about rising inflation, some forecasters insist the opposite may now be true: Consumer prices are actually falling in some parts of the economy. While rolling back Cheerios prices, General Mills Inc., the nation's No. 2 cereal maker behind Kellogg Co., made similar cuts in the prices of Wheaties and other popular cereals.

"That to me was a very telling statement," said Bruce Steinberg, an economist at Merrill Lynch & Co.

"In a few selected parts of the economy, relating mainly to autos or steel, there are some pricing pressures that have shown up. But in much

broader parts of the economy, there's pretty intense disinflationary pressure under way."

Attention to signals of inflation has contributed to a powerful sell-off in the financial markets in the last month. Investors abhor inflation, partly because it eats the value of investments such as bonds, which pay fixed interest rates.

Not all economists think investor fears are overblown. Because market players tend to invest in financial instruments for the long haul, they must look beyond current inflation trends and try to anticipate consumer prices over the next year and beyond.

"If people are worried over the long-term that their dollars are worth less, they start taking action immediately to ensure they don't lose money," said Scott Lummer, an investment expert at Ibbotson Associates in Chicago, an investment consulting firm.

But to everyday Americans whose

paychecks stretch virtually as far as they did one year ago, evidence of inflation is spotty at best.

Oil prices are at five-year lows. Many food items cost less. Growth in health-care costs, a major cause of past inflation, has slowed. Car price increases are subdued. Workers are hesitant to ask for salary increases with all the recent layoffs.

A sustained financial market decline also could help keep a lid on inflation, according to William Sullivan, director of money market research at Dean Witter, Discover & Co.

That's because weakened stock and bond markets could dampen consumer confidence and push up interest rates. High interest rates cut into new home sales, which are a fulcrum of consumer demand for all sorts of goods and services. High demand for goods in limited supply is a cause of inflation.

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