

Fighting persists despite agreement

SARAJEVO, Bosnia-Herzegovina — Bosnian Serb tanks lumbered into the long-suffering Muslim enclave of Gorazde Sunday even as United Nations officials spoke of reaching an agreement for the Serbs to pull back. Sylvania Foa, a spokeswoman for the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees, said U.N. staffers in Gorazde reported that Serb tanks were within the city and residents were in panic. "Shells and sniper fire are shaking the building and it's suicidal to step outside," Foa said, referring to the building for U.N. staff in Gorazde. "We're now up to about 30,000 panicking people who have moved into the center of town. Our building is full of people fleeing." Maj. Dacre Holloway, a spokesman for U.N. peacekeepers, spoke of Bosnian Serb movement either toward or into Gorazde. A few minutes earlier, he had told reporters that talks between the United Nations and Bosnian Serb officials had brought an agreement for the Serbs to withdraw from a 1.8-mile zone around the southeastern city. The Bosnian army high command

also said tanks were moving into Gorazde. An official in the high command said talks in between the U.N.-Serb talks had been a "trick" to win time for the Serb advance.

The fall of Gorazde would permit the Serbs, who already hold more than 70 percent of Bosnian territory, to link eastern and southwestern holdings. It would be more salt in the wounds for the United States and other Western countries whose efforts to end the war have been criticized as weak and unfocused.

Gorazde, which has been under siege for most of the two-year war, has been an especially potent symbol for critics. The United Nations declared it a protected "safe area" for Muslims last year, but the siege continued without foreign retaliation until last week, when the Serbs advanced to the edge of the city.

Earlier Sunday, Holloway had said that the talks held at Bosnian Serb headquarters had yielded agreement on suspension of the Serb siege of Gorazde, permitting hundreds of U.N. peacekeepers access to the area.

Rabin opposes PLO, Hamas accord

JERUSALEM — Israel will strongly oppose any military cooperation between the PLO and a militant Muslim group that has claimed responsibility for two suicide bomb attacks this month, Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin said Sunday.

The warning came amid reports that the Islamic Resistance Movement, or Hamas, held meetings with officials of PLO chairman Yasser Arafat's mainstream Fatah faction in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Reports carried by state-owned radio and other Israeli media said Hamas sought Fatah's agreement to continue attacks inside Israel. But Palestinians said the meetings focused on arrangements between the two rivals after self-rule starts in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank town of Jericho.

"Israel will thoroughly check the reports of cooperation, and if there is any truth to it, Israel will be strongly against it," Rabin spokesman Oded Ben-Ami quoted the

prime minister as telling the weekly meeting of his Cabinet.

Rabin later told reporters after a meeting of his Labor Party, "I don't consider it possible that we will reach agreement with the PLO if it reaches agreement with Hamas to avoid a civil war but allows attacks on Israelis."

Hamas, which enjoys significant support among Palestinians, is the leading opponent of the Israeli-PLO accord. The agreement provides for an Israeli withdrawal and Palestinian autonomy in Gaza and Jericho, but has been held up for months by violence and disputes over security arrangements.

Hamas wants assurances from the PLO that it will be permitted to continue attacks within Israel after autonomy begins, Israel radio reported Sunday, citing Palestinian sources. The PLO has rejected the demand, the radio said.

A meeting between Arafat and a Hamas leader, Ibrahim Abu Marzouk, in Sudan last year collapsed after Arafat rejected Hamas

demands for a large share of power in the PLO. There have been no known attempts since then to reconcile the two groups.

However, a senior Fatah official told The Associated Press there had been talks with Hamas about local issues such as how to handle land disputes, control welfare institutions, share power in the Gaza municipality and prevent friction between Hamas and the PLO.

The official, who demanded anonymity, said there had been about 20 meetings in recent months.

Sufian Abu Ziad, a top Fatah official in the Gaza Strip, told Israel Radio that there was "nothing new" in the negotiations but that Fatah rejected any independent Hamas military operations against Israel.

Hamas has claimed responsibility for two bus bombings that have killed 12 Israelis since April 6. It has threatened three more attacks to avenge the Feb. 25 Hebron mosque massacre in which 30 Muslims were slain by a Jewish settler.

Ban disagreement may stall crime bill

WASHINGTON — Supporters of a ban on assault weapons are 15 to 20 votes short in the House of Representatives, a key congressman said Sunday.

In the latest count by House Democratic leaders, a bill banning assault-style weapons such as Uzis and AK-47s is shy of a majority, raising the prospect of a major disagreement between the House and Senate on anti-crime legislation.

"I find it very surprising with all the mayhem going on in the streets," Rep. Charles Schumer, D-N.Y., said in an interview Sunday. "The House voted against an assault weapons ban two years ago, but a lot has changed since then."

Schumer is chairman of the House Judiciary subcommittee on crime and leading sponsor of the assault weapons ban.

The Senate last fall passed a \$22 billion crime bill that included the weapons ban.

Differences between House and Senate bills are common. But if the disagreement packs enough political weight, it can sink an entire bill.

Schumer said aggressive lobbying by the National Rifle Association was behind the soft support for the assault weapons ban in the House.

Sen. Joseph Biden, D-Del. and chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, said Sunday he would insist that the final crime bill ban assault

weapons.

Schumer and other House members are hoping to get a vote on the weapons ban as a separate bill. If it passes, House-Senate negotiators working on the crime bill would probably include the ban in the final version, Schumer said. If the House defeats the ban, the negotiators would have to resolve the differences between the House and Senate bills.

Major elements of both the House and Senate crime bills include crime prevention programs, money to build more prisons and put more police on the streets, and versions of a "three-strikes-and-you're-out" provision that would imprison three-time violent felons for life.

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