

## Gunmen defy massive assault

PERVOMAYSKAYA, Russia — The Chechen guerrilla war flared outside Russia's borders for the first time Tuesday, with gunmen seizing more than 100 people aboard a Turkish ferry. Their hostage-holding comrades battled Russia's best troops in a burned-out village filled with dead.

Chechen gunmen clung to their positions as Russian tanks and helicopter gunships assailed Pervomayskaya for a second day. Despite salvo of missiles and artillery fire, they refused to release dozens of hostages.

Tank rounds slammed across frozen fields and rockets from helicopter gunships exploded in the burning remains of the village as black columns of smoke rose in the winter sky.

At least 100 people had been killed

and injured in the fighting. It was not known if any hostages were among the dead.

Maj. Gen. Alexander Mikhailov, a spokesman for the Federal Security Service, claimed the rebels had suffered terrible losses. "We're not counting them in terms of corpses — we're counting them in terms of arms and legs."

Russian jets rocketed a convoy of guerrilla reinforcements trying to reach Pervomayskaya, leaving about 150 rebels dead, according to Yevgeny Ryabtsev, an Interior Ministry spokesman. There was no independent confirmation of the reported clash 12 miles southeast of the village.

Hundreds of miles away, masked gunmen seized a ferry in Trabzon, Turkey, on Tuesday and threatened to

kill all the Russians on board, the semi-official Anatolia news agency said.

The gunmen shouted slogans demanding independence for Chechnya, then set sail for an unknown destination, reportedly with 165 people on board. It was not known how many were Russian; the ferry was scheduled to have gone to the Russian city of Sochi.

A Russian woman who escaped from the vessel told Anatolia several people were wounded. Anatolia said one passenger was killed.

Chechens have turned to hostage-taking as they fight for independence from Moscow. In Pervomayskaya, a village in the southern Russian republic of Dagestan on the border with Chechnya, they were believed to be

holding between 70 and 120 hostages before the Russian assault began Monday morning.

Since then, Russian troops have brought out 24 people from the village, said Mikhailov, the Russian security service spokesman. Most were hostages, but at least two were journalists.

Despite two days of fighting involving dozens of tanks and armored vehicles backed by several battalions of shock troops, the government forces appeared to control only part of the small village.

The guerrillas were hiding in deep bunkers in the foundations of houses, sniping at the attacking Russians. The roar of automatic weapons fire popped and cracked without halt as darkness fell Tuesday.

## TV exec denies remarks

NEW YORK — CBS promises "appropriate action" if it confirms that a network executive suggested that blacks are a key late-night audience because they don't have to get up to go to work and have short attention spans.

John Pike, head of the network's late-night programming, denied making the remarks attributed to him in February issue of Details magazine.

The story in Details was about a comedy troupe's travails in making a Halloween special for CBS. The author, David Lipsky, reported that the remarks came at Pike's first meeting with the troupe's producers.

Lipsky acknowledged he was not at that meeting but said Pike's comments were relayed to him by others who were.

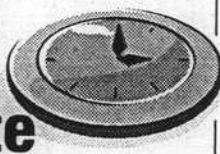
Pike, Lipsky wrote, "flatly explains that research shows there are three reasons why African-Americans are an important part of the late-night demographic: First, they have no place to go in the morning — no jobs — so they can stay up as late as they like; second, they can't follow hour-long drama shows — no attention span — so sketches are perfect for them; third, network TV is free."

"CBS finds these alleged statements to be reprehensible and hopes the allegations are not true," said CBS Entertainment President Leslie Moonves. "If they do prove to be true, the company will take appropriate action."

Gil Schwartz, CBS senior vice president for communications, would not elaborate on what "appropriate action" could encompass.

Pike, who is white, said his remarks were "taken out of context by a reporter who was not even in the room."

## News in a Minute



### Rabin assassin changes story

JERUSALEM — Yitzhak Rabin's confessed assassin says he didn't want to kill the Israeli prime minister, but only to injure him.

"If I could have paralyzed him it would also have been good," Yigal Amir told a state commission investigating Rabin's death, in testimony made public Tuesday.

Amir, who confessed to killing Rabin to stop the Mideast peace process, said he aimed for the prime minister's spine and not his head.

The 25-year-old Jewish nationalist shot Rabin twice at close range after the prime minister appeared at a Nov. 4 peace rally in Tel Aviv. Rabin died almost immediately.

Amir's testimony to the commission, which he gave Dec. 25, contradicts statements police say he made earlier.

According to published transcripts of a police interrogation, Amir said he had planned to kill Rabin for several years and, on the day of the assassination, went to a synagogue to pray for forgiveness for the murder.

Amir's murder trial is to begin Jan. 23 in Tel Aviv.

### Woman on death row given life

SPRINGFIELD, Ill. — An abused wife who had demanded she be put to death for killing her husband was spared Tuesday by Gov. Jim Edgar hours before she was to become the second woman executed in the United States in at least 20 years.

Guinevere Garcia apparently had had a change of heart: "Thank God that this has happened," her lawyer quoted her as saying after Edgar commuted her death sentence to life in prison with no chance of parole.

Garcia, 37, was to have been executed shortly after midnight for shooting her husband during an argument that grew from a botched robbery.

Death-penalty opponents, including Bianca Jagger, had campaigned for clemency over Garcia's objections, arguing that she had a harrowing life that included alcoholism and sexual abuse in childhood and prostitution as a teen-ager.

### Burns skips 100th birthday party

LOS ANGELES — George Burns, a lifelong believer in the adage that the show must go on, was forced Tuesday to skip a 100th birthday celebration because of the flu.

Tuesday's dinner at the Four Seasons Hotel coincided with Burns' undisclosed donation to Cedars-Sinai Medical Center for the George Burns and Gracie Allen Research Institute.

The 300 guests invited to the dinner were those who had donated \$100,000 or more to the medical center.

Burns, whose actual birthday is Saturday, said in a statement: "As this big day came closer and closer, people kept asking me what I would like for my 100th birthday. What do you give a man who's been so blessed? Another 100 years? A night with Sharon Stone?"

"This whole birthday thing is backwards; I should be the one who's giving. I've had the good fortune to be pretty healthy, but I've also benefited from medical research. Without a triple heart bypass 20 years ago, I wouldn't have made it this far," he said.

### China detains U.S. colonel

WASHINGTON — In a new setback to U.S.-Chinese relations, an American Air Force colonel has been arrested in China and interrogated continuously without food for 19 hours.

The incident bewildered — and angered — U.S. officials.

Col. Bradley Gerdes was detained last week while on a mission approved by Chinese authorities to Saixi in southern China, officials said Tuesday. They said his Chinese interrogators accused him of infiltrating into a military installation, which Gerdes adamantly denied.

Chinese-American relations have been under strain for most of the past year. Alleged human rights violations in China have been a particular irritant and are expected to cause additional friction in coming weeks.

## Jurors say Fuhrman was key to verdict

LOS ANGELES — From the moment the forewoman of the O.J. Simpson jury saw Mark Fuhrman, she thought he was a "snake."

And after hearing from him, she didn't believe a word he said.

"My first feeling when I saw him, he sort of looked like a Ku Klux Klan or a skinhead with hair," Armanda Cooley writes in the book "Madam Foreman," which comes out this week.

Jurors Carrie Bess and Marsha Rubin-Jackson collaborated with Cooley on the book, which highlights the importance the former detective played in the outcome of the trial.

"Fuhrman was the trial," Bess wrote. "Fuhrman found the hat. Fuhrman found the glove. Fuhrman found the blood. Fuhrman went over the gate. Fuhrman did everything. When you throw it out, what case do you have? You've got reasonable doubt right before you even get to the criminalists."

Fuhrman, the first detective to arrive at the murder scene, was portrayed by the defense as a racist who tried to frame Simpson. The mostly black jury was played an excerpt from a tape of Fuhrman uttering a racial slur.

But in "Madam Foreman," the three black jurors denied race played a role in their thinking and contended their speedy not-guilty verdict was shaped mostly by their lack of confidence in the police and the evidence they handed.

Two of the three jurors also told "Dateline NBC" that had they been sitting in a civil trial, where decisions

*"Fuhrman was the trial.*

*Fuhrman found the hat.*

*Fuhrman found the glove. Fuhrman did everything."*

**CARRIE BESS**

**Juror in Simpson trial**

are based on the lesser standard of a "preponderance of evidence," they would have found Simpson guilty.

"Given that standard and based on the amount of evidence that was presented, ... then yes, you would have to say that yes, he is guilty," said Cooley in an interview for broadcast Tuesday night.

"I'm standing by my verdict," Rubin-Jackson added. "But based on what I've heard since I've been out, I would have to vote guilty" in a civil trial.

In the book, the women say they saw prosecutor Christopher Darden as a token black placed at the counsel table by the district attorney's office.

And they downplayed the importance of the courtroom demonstration in which Simpson seemingly struggled to pull on the gloves.

Cooley said although she didn't like Fuhrman at first, his initial testimony "did not look good for O.J." But as Fuhrman underwent cross-examination by defense attorney F. Lee Bailey, his demeanor changed, said Cooley.

## Lawyer denies sharing Whitewater documents

WASHINGTON — A former White House lawyer today told senators that he intended to share confidential Whitewater investigative documents with one of President Clinton's closest advisers but never got to do so.

Under sharp questioning, former associate White House counsel Neil Eggleston told the Senate Whitewater Committee how he got a stack of investigative documents from regulators as the Whitewater affair heated up in November 1993.

The documents outlined the Small Business Administration's criminal investigation of Arkansas judge David Hale.

At the time, Hale had alleged that Clinton had pressured him in the mid-1980s to make an improper federally backed loan to the Clintons'

Whitewater business partners.

"I know I did not show the documents" to presidential adviser Bruce Lindsey, who at the time was handling press inquiries about the Whitewater affair, Eggleston testified.

The committee's Republican counsel, Michael Chertoff, produced a Nov. 16, 1993 telephone message marked "important" that Eggleston had left for Lindsey stating he wanted to share "Whitewater documents" that he had picked up from the SBA that day.

Eggleston said scheduling conflicts prevented the meeting from taking place.

He said his only intention was to provide Lindsey enough information to answer any press inquiries that might have arisen on the Hale probe.

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