

NEWS DIGEST

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U.N. to aid devastated Indonesia

JAKARTA, Indonesia (AP) — Under intense international pressure, Indonesia announced Sunday it would allow an international peacekeeping force to restore order to the devastated territory of East Timor.

It was unclear what type of force would be sent to the territory, and how soon it would arrive.

Until now, Jakarta — and particularly its hard-line military — had defiantly refused to permit outside forces into the former Portuguese colony, insisting as late as Saturday night that it could quell the violence itself.

That stance crumpled under pressure from governments around the world horrified by the slaughter sweeping East Timor.

In a national television address, President B.J. Habibie said he wanted to end the crisis that began Aug. 30, when East Timor voted to become independent from Indonesia. That kicked off rampages by pro-Indonesian militias and Indonesian troops that have killed hundreds, perhaps thousands, of East Timorese.

"Too many people have lost their lives since the beginning of the unrest — lost their homes and security. We can wait no longer. We have to stop the suffering and the mourning immediately," Habibie said.

Indonesia's troops had tried to stop the violence, but had been affected by psychological problems in dealing with a "very complex problem," he said.

Global leaders applauded the decision, which came a day after 50 U.N. ambassadors condemned Indonesia for letting East Timor slide into anarchy.

"This is a very positive development and represents a stepping back from the brink for Indonesia," said Sandy Berger, the U.S. national security adviser.

Indonesia has not made clear whether it wants an official U.N. peacekeeping force, or whether it would accept an international force sent to East Timor with the blessing of the U.N. Security Council.

Recruiting and deploying a U.N. peacekeeping force usually takes several months, but an international force could deploy as soon as the Security Council gives the authorization.

The force is expected to include soldiers from Australia, Malaysia, New Zealand, France, Thailand and the Philippines. In addition, Canada said Sunday it will send between 500 and 600 troops. The United States has offered mainly logistical support.

Habibie made his announcement Sunday after he talked by telephone with U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan. He said he would immediately dispatch Foreign Minister Ali Alatas to the United Nations to work out the details of the peacekeeping force. Alatas was to arrive today.

Indonesia invaded East Timor in 1975 as it was gaining independence from Portugal. Indonesia has

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B.J. HABIBIE
Indonesian president

been accused of human rights abuses in suppressing independence efforts since then.

Habibie agreed in May to allow a U.N.-supervised vote on independence in the territory.

However, the recent bloodshed started after 78.5 percent of East Timorese voted to break away from Indonesia in the ballot. Aid agencies estimate that between 600 and 7,000 people have been killed and as many as 300,000 have fled their homes.

A priority for the peacekeepers will be the disarmament of anti-independence militias and separatist guerrillas. It threatens to be difficult and dangerous work. Anti-independence leaders have accused the United Nations of rigging the independence vote and have threatened to shoot foreign troops.



■ Russia

Warlord denies involvement in apartment explosion

MOSCOW (AP) — A Chechen warlord denied Sunday that the Islamic militants he commands were responsible for an explosion that rocked a Moscow apartment building Thursday, killing scores of people.

Several officials have linked the blast to fighting in the southern Russian republic of Dagestan, where government troops are battling Islamic rebels who have occupied several villages.

"We had nothing to do with the explosion in Moscow. We will never kill civilians. This is not our style," Shamil Basayev, a former Chechen field commander, told The Associated Press.

■ Bahamas

Central Bahamas prepares for brush with hurricane

NASSAU, Bahamas (AP) — Storm-weary residents in the Bahamas braced for a brush with Hurricane Floyd as it swelled and powered up to a major storm packing 120 mph winds on Sunday.

Forecasters said the hurricane would approach the central Bahamas, the same area blasted by Hurricane Dennis in August.

Meteorologists said the storm was unlikely to hit land before Tuesday and posed no immediate threat to the mainland United States. Still, they recommended people along the southeast coast monitor the storm's course.

■ New Zealand

Asia, Pacific leaders ask when millennium will begin

AUCKLAND, New Zealand (AP) — Asian and Pacific heads of state began their first full session of meetings Sunday by tackling a profound philosophical question: when to celebrate the new millennium.

White House spokesman Joe Lockhart, briefing reporters afterward, said a lively discussion ensued over whether the celebration should come on Jan. 1, 2000 — or a year later.

Calendar purists contend that the 21st century does not begin until Jan. 1, 2001. But politicians are seldom known for embracing purism.

"After some discussion, I think the leaders came to the conclusion that since their public, to which they all like to be attuned, will be celebrating in 2000, they will start celebrating in 2000," Lockhart said.

■ Moscow

Explosion leaves at least five dead, dozens missing

MOSCOW (AP) — An explosion destroyed an apartment building early today in Moscow, killing at least five people and leaving dozens of residents missing and unaccounted for.

The pre-dawn blast wrecked an eight-story apartment building in the southern district of Moscow, just four days after an explosion shattered a similar building in the Russian capital. The blasts were in areas about four miles apart.

Police said at least five people, four adults and a child, were killed in the blast, which they suspected was caused by a bomb. The Interfax News Agency said eight bodies had been pulled from the wreckage.

Buchanan leaning toward third party

WASHINGTON (AP) — GOP presidential contender Pat Buchanan came closer Sunday to quitting the Republican race and campaign for the Reform Party's nomination.

"The door really is wide open," Buchanan said. "We are very close to making that decision."

The Reform Party's Jesse Ventura, Minnesota's governor, discounted suggestions the party should nominate Buchanan for president.

Ventura has said the party, founded by Ross Perot, is based on conservative economic principles, not Buchanan's social conservatism on abortion and other issues.

As recently as Friday, the Capitol Hill newspaper The Hill published an interview in which the governor ruled out "a retreat from another campaign or another party" as the Reform Party's candidate.

But Buchanan, appearing on NBC's "Meet the Press," said his sister and campaign adviser, Bay Buchanan, is "talking ... to people in the Reform Party" for him.

"We are taking a hard look at leaving the Republican nomination run and running for the Reform Party nomination," Buchanan said. "The decision has not been made yet ... but I tell you honestly we are leaning in

that direction right now."

A telephone call to the party chairman-elect, Jack Gargan of Cedar Key, Fla., went unanswered Sunday.

Buchanan said he is being swayed by the belief that "my party at the national level has become a Xerox copy, basically, of the Democratic Party. ... I think what we have is a one-party system in Washington that is masquerading as a two-party system, and I think what we need is a real opposition party."

The idea of a third-party candidacy by Buchanan is making the Republican front-runner, Texas Gov. George W. Bush, nervous. Time magazine reported in its issue on newsstands today.

It said a private poll conducted by Frank Luntz, a GOP consultant, found Buchanan would win 6 percent of the vote in a three-way contest with Bush and Vice President Al Gore, leader for the Democratic nomination. Two-thirds of the Buchanan vote, the poll indicated, would come from Bush supporters.

Last week, Bush aides discussed "how to make Buchanan feel wanted in the GOP," and a senior Bush adviser told Time: "We're surrounding him with love."

Probe into Waco siege broadens

■ GOP wants to find who is responsible and works for Reno's ouster.

WASHINGTON (AP) — GOP lawmakers angered by the Justice Department's failure to produce crucial documents, promised Sunday a broader investigation of the 1993 Waco siege.

Top Republicans continued to press for Attorney General Janet Reno's ouster while the administration pledged its support.

Meanwhile, former Sen. John Danforth, the Missouri Republican appointed by Reno to lead the independent investigation, said he would try to avoid a political inquiry.

The chairman of a House Government Affairs Committee, which will review the government's role in Waco, said Danforth will look for possible criminal activity while "we're going to be taking a broader look."

"We need to find out who's responsible," Rep. Dan Burton, R-Ind., said on "Fox News Sunday." "We don't want people in charge of things like Waco if they're not doing their job properly."

Danforth, appearing on five Sunday news programs, said his investigation would have a narrow focus and

seek to avoid politics.

Asked about lessons learned from Kenneth Starr's investigations of the Clintons, Danforth said "this cannot be absolutely open-ended where one issue sort of morphs into another issue."

He said he would work with Congress, but "what I would like to do is to wait until the very end to issue a report and not have a running commentary between now and then."

Last week, Reno asked Danforth to determine whether there was a cover-up and the government was involved in the killings.

The renewed criticism of the Justice Department and Reno was prompted by the news that an FBI report the department turned over to Congress years ago lacked one page that mentioned the use of military-style incendiary tear gas against the religious cult.

A department spokesman has said the key page was given to lawyers in criminal and civil cases involving Waco survivors, and the special counsel will have to look into why it never reached Congress.

Burton, in a letter to Reno made public Sunday, said the omission of the critical page "raises more questions about whether this committee was intentionally misled during the original Waco investigation."

Democratic Sen. Robert Torricelli of New Jersey, who has suggested Reno step down because of issues other than Waco, said someone must be held accountable for department missteps.

"There's so little confidence in the administration and Justice Department," he said.

But the White House remains confident Reno can do her job, said John Podesta, President Clinton's chief of staff.

Reno was asked Sunday by Burton to provide interviews this week with three Justice officials, including attorney James G. Touhey, Jr. Earlier this month, Touhey wrote a memo detailing his discovery that some copies of the 49-page FBI lab report, including the copy sent to Congress, did not include the last page, which mentioned the use of military rounds.

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Questions? Comments?
Ask for the appropriate section editor at (402) 472-2588
or e-mail dn@unl.edu.

Fax number: (402) 472-1761

World Wide Web: www.dailynebraskan.com

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