

Russia: Last stronghold seized

GEKHI, Russia (AP) - Federal troops have seized the last rebel stronghold in Grozny, acting President Vladimir Putin said Sunday, pronouncing an end to Russia's months-long drive to take the Chechen capital.

Russian forces, meanwhile, tried to stop rebels heading to their mountain strongholds, shelling villages where rebels had taken shelter. Russian planes and helicopter gunships blasted militant positions in the Vedeno and Argun gorges, key rebel routes toward the mountains.

Federal troops took control of the western Zavodskoi district of the capital and raised the Russian flag over an administration building there, Putin said.

"A short while ago, the terrorists' last bastion of resistance was seized," Putin said in an interview with state-controlled ORT television. "So, we can say the operation to liberate

Grozny is over." The claim could not be independently confirmed, and Russian forces have previously claimed to control parts of the Chechen capital, only to be pushed back by rebel ambushes.

It was unclear how many rebels remained in Grozny, where they have taken refuge in the shattered remains of buildings and moved freely through underground pipes. About 3,000 broke out of the capital last week, rebels said, and the military reported that small groups were still showing stiff resistance to Russian troops all week, including Sunday.

The situation was stable enough to begin deploying regular police in the city, said Col. Gen. Ivan Golubev, a deputy interior minister. Several dozen officers have already arrived to prepare offices and patrol parts of the capital, he said.

Russian leaders have put a huge emphasis on the operation to take

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Grozny, the key political prize in the war in the breakaway republic. But the militants have stressed their intention to carry on a long-term, guerrilla war, and the fall of their capital would not spell the end of the conflict.

Rebels who broke out of Grozny last week were regrouping in villages southwest of Grozny on Sunday for the journey south to the mountains, where thousands of other militants are believed to be based.

About 2,000 rebels arrived

overnight in the villages of Valerik, Zakan-Yurt and Gekhi-Chu - all about 15 to 18 miles from Grozny, local residents said. They were met by other militants who came from the mountains to lead them back to rebel strongholds in the southern Argun and Vedeno gorges.

After the rebels left Valerik for the mountains, Russian forces moved Sunday into conduct mopping-up operations. They also shelled the nearby village of Katy-Yurt, which the rebels had also left, residents said.

Protests mar start of new government

VIENNA, Austria (AP) - Right-wing populist Joerg Haider said Sunday the new Austrian government in which his party shares power will take appropriate measures to compensate Holocaust victims.

In a televised interview, Haider also promised to moderate his tough talk and refrain from meddling in the coalition Cabinet. He will not hold a Cabinet post.

Haider's comments came two days after the new government - made up of his far-right Freedom Party and the center-right Austrian People's Party - was sworn in by a stone-faced President Thomas Klestil.

The coalition came together despite a wave of protests and moves by the European Union and other nations to isolate Austria diplomatically.

Haider's remarks Sunday were relatively conciliatory compared to the verbal salvos he has fired recently against foreign leaders.

He told his interviewers that the previous government led by Austria's Social Democrats had not really dealt

with the Nazi past, including issues like the compensation of forced laborers. He said the new government would seek to redress their grievances and those of Holocaust victims.

"Where we have inflicted great injustice on our Jewish fellow citizens or wiped out their families, we must take pertinent measures," he said.

Haider won international notoriety for statements praising Adolf Hitler's "orderly employment" policies and praising veterans of the Waffen SS as "decent people of good character" - comments for which he has since apologized.

The rise to power of his party has polarized a society with dark memories of defeats in two world wars.

Referring to his past vitriolic attacks on other Austrian leaders, Haider said his party would refrain from "oppositional reflexes and unnecessary sharpness ... and prove that, factually, we can reason very well."

Sunday, Israeli Interior Minister Natan Sharansky announced that Haider is banned from entering



Photo By FDB/NewsMakers

WHILE AUSTRIAN President Thomas Klestil is swearing in the new government in Vienna, Austria, on Friday, several thousand people demonstrate against ÖVP (People's Party) leader Wolfgang Schüssel's coalition with rightist Joerg Haider's FPÖ (Austrian Freedom Party).

Israel. The ban is the latest formal Israeli protest against the Freedom Party's inclusion in government. Israel recalled its ambassador from Vienna as soon as the Austrian coalition was approved.

Sharansky said Haider has expressed an interest in visiting Israel, and that his party tried unsuccessfully to hire a local public rela-

tions firm to spruce up his image there.

On Sunday, about 300 demonstrators gathered outside the Austrian embassy in Paris, shouting "Haider, fascist, collaborator."

And on Saturday night, anti-Haider demonstrators scuffled with police in downtown Vienna for a second night, despite appeals for calm from Klestil.

First lady launches campaign for Senate

PURCHASE, N.Y. (AP) - With the president beside her and 2,000 supporters chanting her name, Hillary Rodham Clinton formally launched her campaign Sunday to be U.S. senator from New York, a state she has lived in only a month.

The race for the seat being vacated by fellow Democrat Daniel Patrick Moynihan is likely to pit Clinton against New York Mayor Rudolph Giuliani in what could be one of the most flamboyant political campaigns in memory.

No other first lady has ever run for public office.

"I am honored today to announce my candidacy for the U.S. Senate from New York," Clinton said as shouts of "Hillary! Hillary!" rang through a university gymnasium close to her new home in the suburbs north of New York City.

"I may be new to the neighborhood, but I'm not new to your concerns," she said, while President Clinton, her mother and daughter Chelsea sat beaming behind her.

The president is said to be one of

his wife's top advisers.

"I often return to one thing I said back then, that politics is the art of making possible what appears to be impossible. I still believe that today. We can do what seems impossible if we have the vision, the passion and the will to do it together," Clinton said, recalling a speech she made at her college commencement at Wellesley in 1969.

Clinton described her commitment to better schools, better health care and better gun control. But she also took pains to describe herself as a "new Democrat."

"I don't believe that government is the source of all our problems - or the solutions to them," she said. Recent polls have shown Giuliani with a slight lead over Clinton and tied with her among women voters.

Giuliani has not made a formal campaign announcement, but he came close on ABC's "This Week," one of the five TV talk shows he appeared on Sunday.

When asked if he planned to run, he said: "Looks that way."

World and Nation Datelines

■ Nevada

Alaska Airlines jet returns to airport after motor problem

RENO, Nev. (AP) - An Alaska Airlines MD-80 jet returned to Reno's airport shortly after takeoff on Saturday night after its pilot reported problems similar to those under investigation in last Monday's crash off the California coast, officials said.

The Seattle-bound flight left Reno/Tahoe International Airport at about 7 p.m. and returned about eight minutes later when the pilot reported motors controlling the plane's horizontal stabilizer were operating improperly, said Jack Evans, an Alaska Airlines spokesman.

The Saturday night flight made a rough landing, but none of the 140 people aboard were injured, airport officials said.

On Tuesday, an American Airlines MD-83 reported trouble with its horizontal stabilizer after takeoff and safely returned to Phoenix.

■ Germany

Express train derailed

near Cologne, nine killed

BRUEHL, Germany (AP) - An overnight express train derailed at a switch south of Cologne early Sunday, killing at least nine passengers and injuring more than 100, authorities said.

Police said the train may have been speeding.

The sleeper train carrying about 300 passengers had been traveling from Amsterdam, the Netherlands, to Basel, Switzerland, when it hurtled off the tracks in the small town of Bruehl, German railways spokesman Manfred Ziegerath said.

One car flipped onto its side, and another was crushed against a steel post.

■ Russia

Passenger airliner hijacked

MOSCOW (AP) - A passenger airliner hijacked from Afghanistan and sent on a tense, meandering trip across Central Asia and Europe landed Sunday night at Moscow's Sheremetyevo airport complex, officials said.

The plane, carrying at least 140 people, including an estimated 20 hijackers, landed about 9:20 p.m. as trucks and buses loaded with Russian commandos, police and rescue workers converged on the airports.

Sniper teams moved into the Sheremetyevo-1 terminal, and security was heavy in the area.

Russian news reports said the plane intended to land in Moscow only to refuel, but that could not be immediately confirmed.

The hijackers' identities remain unknown, and their demands and final destination was unclear.

■ Washington

Clinton prepares final budget of his eight-year term

WASHINGTON (AP) - As President Bill Clinton prepared to reveal a \$1.84 trillion farewell budget full of politically popular programs from health care to education, the administration warned Sunday that Republican efforts to pass big tax cuts would face another presidential veto.

Clinton's final budget coming out today covers the 2001 fiscal year that begins Oct. 1. It promises a replay of last year's battle with the GOP-controlled Congress over what to do with the \$3 trillion or more in surpluses the booming economy is projected to provide over the next decade.

WEATHER

TODAY

TOMORROW

Partly cloudy
high 38, low 21

Fair
high 57, low 37

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Ask for the appropriate section editor at
(402) 472-2588
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