

Israel to pull troops from Lebanon

JERUSALEM (AP) — Israel's Cabinet voted unanimously Sunday to withdraw troops from southern Lebanon by July, a pullback that would end an 18-year occupation.

A Cabinet statement said the government would "act to ensure" that the pullout come within the framework of a peace deal with Syria, the main power in Lebanon.

Prime Minister Ehud Barak, who has been trying to revive stalled peace talks with Syria, has said he prefers a withdrawal based on an agreement. But he has been suggesting for some time that Israel might withdraw unilaterally.

The Cabinet statement did not explicitly state that in the absence of a peace deal, there would be a unilateral withdrawal.

However, it seemed to imply as much by saying that "in case the conditions for a deployment by agreement are not met, the Cabinet will discuss at the appropriate time how to implement the decision" to withdraw.

Barak's spokesman, Gadi Baltiansky, said that whatever the scenario, "the troops will be with-

drawn by July."

Baltiansky told The Associated Press that the best option would be a peace agreement with Syria. But, he said, if in a few months Israel sees there is no chance of a deal, it will look at other options for withdrawing.

"There are other options than an agreement with Syria or a unilateral withdrawal," he said. Officials have suggested Israel might attempt to pull out under a set of international guarantees over such issues as a final border and the safety of Israeli-allied militiamen.

The breakdown in peace talks with Syria in mid-January was followed within days by an escalation in guerrilla attacks on Israeli troops. Seven Israeli soldiers died within three weeks, stepping up public pressure on Barak to bring the troops home.

In the most recent Israeli casualty, a soldier was wounded by mortar fire on Saturday. He was in intensive care in a hospital in the northern city of Haifa.

Earlier Sunday, Israeli warplanes

blasted suspected guerrilla hideouts in southern Lebanon in retaliation for the attack, and there were unconfirmed reports that two Hezbollah guerrillas were killed in clashes with Israeli-allied militiamen.

"The Israel Defense Forces will deploy on the border with Lebanon by July 2000 and from there will secure the safety of the northern towns and villages," Sunday's Cabinet statement said.

"The government will act to ensure that this deployment will be carried out in the framework of an agreement," it said.

Barak won elections last year on a campaign of reviving long-moribund peace talks with the Syrians and withdrawing from Lebanon within a year.

The talks resumed last December after a nearly four-year break but a month later were postponed indefinitely. Syria wanted assurances that Israel would withdraw from the entire Golan Heights, but Israel first wanted to know the extent of peace and security arrangements Syria was prepared to offer.

"There are other options than an agreement with Syria or a unilateral withdrawal."

Gadi Baltiansky
spokesman for Prime Minister Ehud Barak

A unilateral withdrawal would leave Israel's northern border vulnerable to attacks by Iranian-backed Hezbollah guerrillas.

But it would also deprive the Syrians of leverage in their efforts to recapture all of the Golan Heights, a strategic plateau captured by Israel in the 1967 Mideast war.

Syrian Foreign Minister Farouk al-Sharaa warned last week that Israel would "bear the consequences" of a unilateral withdrawal.

Flood victims warned not to return

■ With the threat of more rain, Mozambicans are encouraged to stay away from low-lying areas.

MAPUTO, Mozambique (AP) — With fears of heavy rain again looming, authorities warned thousands of displaced Mozambicans on Sunday against returning to low-lying areas to search for what remains of their homes and belongings.

As the swollen Limpopo and Save rivers receded, rescue workers and aid officials said the risk of drowning had diminished. What now faced flood survivors was the scramble for food and clean water.

"The rescue phase is coming to a close," said Ross Mountain, a U.N. special envoy who spent two days flying over still submerged areas of the south-east African nation.

Relief efforts focused instead on distributing aid to desperate survivors, many of whom were still only accessible by air, said Brenda Barton, a

spokeswoman for the U.N. World Food Program.

Fights broke out in camps as survivors, ravenous and thirsty after being stranded in trees and on rooftops for up to a week, clambered for food.

A total of 37 helicopters and 15 planes delivered aid on Sunday, mostly in the Limpopo River valley, 125 miles northeast of the capital, Maputo, Barton said.

Another two helicopters were ferrying stranded people to locations where relief groups were attempting to distribute the emergency supplies, she said.

In neighboring South Africa, 32 airmen from McGuire Air Force Base in New Jersey and Dover Air Force Base in Delaware arrived at Hoedspruit air base on Sunday to set up aid operations for up to 600 American troops.

Mountain said many survivors were ignoring the pleas of aid workers and government officials and returning to flood-battered areas, raising the possibility they may need to be rescued again if heavy rains and flooding resume.

"It does take time to get helicopters from Europe. We need to be realistic."

Ross Mountain
U.N. special envoy

The remnants of Cyclone Gloria, which together with a steady, two-week downpour caused the deluge, has been downgraded to a tropical storm. The storm hovered over the Indian Ocean off the coast of Mozambique on Sunday and was expected to bring more rain. Mozambican weather forecasters said.

Although the relief effort was gaining pace, President Joachim Chissano said the international community had been slow to respond to the catastrophe, an allegation the U.N. envoy denied.

"It does take time to get helicopters from Europe. We need to be realistic," Mountain said.

More than \$40 million had already been pledged for emergency relief and reconstruction, he said.

Chissano said people affected by

the floods would need to be fed for at least 10 months, until they could grow new crops. He also said a minimum of \$250 million would be needed for reconstruction and pleaded with Mozambique's creditors to forgive the country's foreign debt.

Aid workers said they expected the death toll from the disaster to soar into the thousands as water levels dropped and revealed the mud-covered remains of the dead.

Still, hunger was the most pressing concern on Sunday. An estimated 250,000 people were crowded into 64 ill-equipped camps, mostly in southern and central Mozambique. Aid workers reported they were running out of clean water, increasing the risk of cholera outbreaks. Instances of malaria were said to have tripled.

Pinochet's release gets mixed reaction

SANTIAGO, Chile (AP) — Gen. Augusto Pinochet's return home last week spurred Chile into an uproar: Pollsters quizzed residents about whether they thought he will face trial here, pundits speculated on the lawsuits awaiting him and locals argued incessantly over his legal troubles.

But for Elisa Sepulveda Lazo, the burning question isn't the fate of the 84-year-old former dictator. She just wants to find out what happened to Luis, her husband, who vanished at the hands of the Pinochet secret police one afternoon in December 1976.

"The only thing I want to know is, where did they kill Luis?" asks Lazo, 67.

Pinochet's return after more than 15 months of detention in London has divided Chile along ideological fault as severe as the geographical rifts of this quake-prone South American country.

But for many kin of some 3,200 people the government listed as detained and disappeared during the 1973-1990 right-wing dictatorship, the

issue is more than one of politics. Their overriding question is embodied in a Spanish phrase plastered on photographs of the victims that have been carried for years at anti-Pinochet rallies: "Donde estan?"

Translation: "Where are they?" One of the missing is Luis Lazo, a labor leader who was dismissed from Chile's electric company after the coup that brought Pinochet to power.

"To this day we don't know what happened. He just disappeared," said his wife, who carries his picture in a worn plastic sleeve.

Isabel Allende lost her father, elected Marxist president Salvador Allende, in the chaos of the September 1973 military coup.

"The wounds haven't healed, and they won't heal, because we still have not obtained justice or truth," Allende said.

"Our lives will never be the same," declared Isabel Gallardo, who lost several family members during Pinochet's rule.

WEATHER	
TODAY	TOMORROW
Mostly sunny high 68, low 50	Partly cloudy high 74, low 45

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World and Nation Datelines

■ Belgium NATO troops arrest Bosnian Serb for alleged war crimes

BRUSSELS, Belgium (AP) — NATO peacekeeping troops arrested a Bosnian Serb on Sunday wanted for war crimes committed in 1992 in the notorious Omarska prison camp, the alliance said.

The arrest of Dragoljub Prcać was "another step in NATO's drive" to arrest the remaining war crimes suspects, NATO Secretary-General Lord Robertson said in a statement.

NATO gave no immediate details of when or where the arrest took place, saying only that Prcać, 63, had been detained and was being "processed for transfer" to the tribunal in The Hague.

■ Colorado Columbine parents, officials urge investigators to release final report

LITTLETON, Colo. (AP) — Parents of the victims of the Columbine High School massacre and officials with a state review panel are urging sheriff's investigators to release their final report before the first anniversary of the rampage.

The report on the April 20, 1999, attack, in which 12 students, a teacher and the two teen-age gunmen died, initially was to be released last November.

■ Michigan Study shows high conviction rate for students involved in NCAA tournament riot

EAST LANSING, Mich. (AP) — People arrested during riots at Michigan State University last year after the school's loss in the NCAA basketball tournament were jailed at a rate higher than that of convicted rapists and robbers nationally, The Detroit News reported Sunday.

More than 130 people, the majority of them college students with no criminal records, were arrested after the March 27-28 riots. They ranged from troubled teen-agers with alcohol problems to bookish straight-arrow students.

The 113 people convicted paid more than \$300,000 in restitution and served a total of eight years behind bars, the newspaper said.

Out of those convicted, 94 went to jail. That 83 percent incarceration rate is higher than the 70 percent of first-time offender rapists and 55 percent of first-time offender robbers put behind bars nationally, according to statistics from the Justice Department's Bureau of Justice.

■ India Activists riot after socialist party is removed from power

PATNA, India (AP) — Mobs angry about losing political power rioted and clashed with police Sunday in India's most lawless state, leaving two people dead and thousands in jail.

Angry that the National Democratic Alliance, or NDA, had dislodged their party from power in Bihar State, political activists also nearly caused two train accidents.

Socialist leader Laloo Prasad Yadav was among the thousands of members of his Rashtriya Janata Dal party, or RJD, detained for rioting and defying a government order prohibiting public gatherings on Sunday in Bihar, officials said.

An RJD member and a postman died when police fired during a mob rampage.