

# Armenian Forces Strike Azerbaijan

### ■ Republics: At least 200 civilians and 200 soldiers were reported killed in the battle for Agdam.

By SONNI EFRON  
TIMES STAFF WRITER

MOSCOW—In the worst defeat for Azerbaijan in five years of war, Armenian forces have struck deep into Azerbaijan and were poised Saturday to seize a southern swath of the country.

The capture Friday of the Azerbaijani city of Agdam was followed Saturday by a fierce Armenian attack on the strategic southern city of Fizuli.

Both cities had been used by Azerbaijan to fire long-range shells at Nagorno-Karabakh, said Manuel Sarkisyan, a spokesman for the Armenian-populated enclave. "We will do anything to save our small people from extinction," he said.

The Azerbaijani Defense Ministry said at least 200 civilians and 200 soldiers were killed in the battle for Agdam. Thousands have fled, and by Saturday most of the city of 60,000 had burned to the ground or been razed by Armenian tanks and artillery, the ministry said.

The heavy losses are particularly humiliating for Azerbaijan's new leadership. A month ago, the country's first democratically elected president, Abulfaz Elchibey, accused of bungling the war with Armenia, was forced to flee after a military coup.

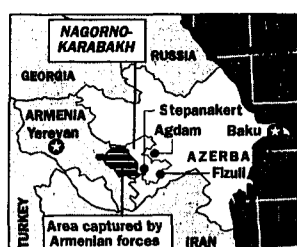
The new government, an uneasy coalition between industrialist-turned-warlord Suret Huseinov and former Soviet Politburo member Geidar Aliyev, had promised to regain all territories lost to the Armenians.

Instead, the Armenians have continued to score victories.

They now control all of Nagorno-Karabakh, a mountainous land within Azerbaijan that is populated almost exclusively by ethnic Armenians, as well as all of Kelbadzhar, an Azerbaijani region that lies between Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia.

In a broad offensive that began June 12, Armenian forces began striking deep inside Azerbaijan proper.

Fizuli is strategically key because it lies inside a narrow strip of Azerbaijani land between Nagor-



VICTOR KOTOWITZ / Los Angeles Times

no-Karabakh and Iran. If Fizuli is captured, Armenian forces could slice off the strip from Azerbaijan.

The Armenians are advancing toward Fizuli from three sides, said Lt. Khafiz Gaibov, spokesman for the Azerbaijan Defense Ministry, in a telephone interview from Baku.

If Fizuli falls, "Armenians will cut off and virtually surround a great chunk of our territory consisting of three districts where about 300,000 people now live," Gaibov said.

Sarkisyan, the spokesman for Nagorno-Karabakh, said Armenians can no longer worry about world condemnation if they attack outside their borders.

"We appealed to the world community and the leadership of Azerbaijan many times to stop the continuous shelling of Karabakh territory"—including ceaseless bombardment of the capital of Stepanakert, Sarkisyan said. "We had to stop that or die."

Armenians and Azerbaijanis have long accused each other of targeting civilians, and those charges are growing louder as the military stakes rise.

Azerbaijan claimed Saturday that Armenians had shelled the villages of Geitepe, Shirvanly and Garadagly, Interfax reported.

In retaliation, Azerbaijan MIG-21 and Sukhoi-25 fighter planes have reportedly been bombing villages inside Armenia, killing 13 and injuring 27 in the last two days, according to the Armenians.

The latest casualty figures for both sides could not be confirmed. However, at least 8,500 people have been killed and hundreds of thousands made homeless since the conflict began in 1988.

Sergal Lolkko, a Times Moscow Bureau reporter, contributed to this report.

# U.S. Loosens Strings on Aid to Cambodia

### ■ Asia: Washington won't rule out assistance if Khmer Rouge guerrillas are included in an interim government.

By ART PINE  
TIMES STAFF WRITER

SINGAPORE—The Clinton Administration said Saturday that the United States will not necessarily refuse to provide aid to Cambodia if the interim government now being put together in Phnom Penh ends up including the Marxist-inspired Khmer Rouge guerrillas.

A U.S. official traveling with Secretary of State Warren Christopher said the Administration is hoping to "clarify" the U.S. position at a meeting here this weekend of the six-country Assn. of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

U.S. officials have been warning for weeks that Washington would not provide aid to a government that includes the Khmer Rouge if the guerrillas have not renounced their violence. Some reports have suggested that the Administration was seeking to bar the Khmer Rouge under any circumstances.

The perception that Washington was adopting a hard-line stance already has had an impact. Last week, Prince Norodom Sihanouk,

the Cambodian leader who is conducting negotiations to form an interim government, canceled talks with the Khmer Rouge, citing "incessant" U.S. pressure.

But the senior U.S. official contended Saturday that the Administration's position has been "oversimplified" and insisted that Washington does not intend to rule out the possibility of substantial U.S. aid to a government that includes the Khmer Rouge, provided it plays a positive role.

"We want to make sure that that nuance comes across," both to the public and to Asian leaders, the official told reporters who were traveling with Christopher. "We don't want to block reconciliation."

Christopher arrived here Saturday night reiterating President Clinton's earlier promise to maintain a strong U.S. security presence in Southeast Asia—a matter that has been of some concern to many ASEAN governments in the face of sharp U.S. troop cutbacks in Europe and the Philippines.

"I will make it clear that the Clinton Administration has a determination to remain fully engaged on all issues in Southeast Asia," Christopher told a news conference on his arrival. "We are not reducing our forces in this region. In fact, we are making them more effective."

Christopher will participate in a series of meetings early this week between the ASEAN countries and foreign ministers of the organiza-

tion's seven "dialogue partners"—the United States, Japan, the European Community, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Korea.

On Saturday, the six Asian members of ASEAN—Singapore, Thailand, Malaysia, Brunei, Indonesia and the Philippines—completed a two-day session in which they laid the groundwork for a new regional security forum designed to handle border disputes and other problems.

All but Malaysia said they would accept Clinton's invitation to attend a summit of Asian leaders in Seattle this November to discuss regional economic issues under the aegis of the Asian-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum. Malaysia has said it fears the United States would dominate such a session.

Besides the Cambodia issue, the meeting's agenda is expected to include the integration of China and Russia into the organization. Christopher is scheduled to meet with the Chinese and Russian foreign ministers today.

The progress of the Cambodian reconciliation process has been a thorny issue for the Administration for months.

The United States and several other nations pledged in June to provide about \$880 million in aid to Cambodia once the results of the May elections were implemented.

The Khmer Rouge, which had boycotted the elections and sought initially to disrupt efforts to form a new government, recently has



Christopher arrives in Southeast Asia to attend ASEAN talks.

made some conciliatory gestures.

The U.S. official who spoke Saturday made clear that the Administration still has not altered its opinion of the Khmer Rouge, blamed for 1 million deaths during its 1975-1979 reign. Given the guerrillas' record, he said, "it would be extremely difficult... to see [them] as part of a government unless and until it were abiding by the Paris peace accords," signed in 1991 by Cambodia's four warring factions.

However, he said, "having come this far... it would be very shortsighted indeed not to try to carry through on our commitment" to provide financial support to any interim Cambodian government.

# Nearly Half of Bangladesh Flooded; South Asia Toll 2,100

From Associated Press

DHAKA, Bangladesh—Nearly half of Bangladesh was under water Saturday after six days of relentless rain, and the death toll in four weeks of flooding throughout South Asia jumped to 2,100 people.

A total of 316 people were dead and another 6 million homeless or stranded in Bangladesh. The number of victims found or presumed dead in the Himalayan kingdom of Nepal passed 1,100. And in India, the number of dead climbed above 700.

At least 30 of Bangladesh's 64 districts were flooded. The government has not given an estimate of how many people are homeless or how many have died. But local newspapers said 20 million people, or almost one-fifth of Bangladesh's 111 million population, have been affected.

They include the 6 million who are homeless or marooned and 14

million who have lost relatives, livestock, crops or businesses, according to two newspapers, Banglar Bani and Khabar.

Thousands of troops, relief workers and doctors have fanned out across the flooded areas of Bangladesh.

Residents and emergency workers dumped sandbags and rocks to build up embankments near the northeastern towns of Habiganj and Moulvibazar after the Khowai River passed the danger mark, local officials said.

Flooding is an annual problem for Bangladesh, one of the poorest countries in the world.

In Nepal, rescuers have recovered 564 bodies of people killed in floods and landslides during the last four weeks. Another 539 people are missing and presumed dead and 250,000 are homeless.

Rescuers have not been able to reach most of the devastated areas



Bangladeshi woman cooks on raft steadied by son at flooded home.

of Nepal because of impassable mountain roads.

In the worst-hit Sarlahi district of south Nepal, more than 500 people were feared dead after the Bagmati River flooded hundreds of

villages and washed away thatched huts belonging to farmers.

The death toll in 10 states in neighboring India is more than 700, including 200 deaths from the eastern state in the last three days.

# Colombian Air Official Killed in Plane Crash

BOGOTA, Colombia—A month after being appointed to improve Colombia's poor air-safety record, the nation's top aviation regulator was killed Saturday with 13 others Saturday in a plane crash, the government and news reports said.

The twin-engine Cessna Titan slammed into a Bogota neighborhood minutes after taking off from Bogota's El Dorado airport, the RCN radio network said.

All seven people aboard were killed, including Fernando Corrales, the head of Colombia's civil aeronautics board, and his deputy, Javier Vallejo, said the board's operations director, Col. Luis German Paez.

Those killed on the ground included four children, RCN reported. It said at least 15 people on the ground were injured.

Aviation officials said the plane reported problems with its left engine within two minutes after takeoff.

—Associated Press

# Yet Another Truce Called in Embattled Bosnia

From Associated Press

SARAJEVO, Bosnia-Herzegovina—Bosnia's warring parties agreed Saturday to stop fighting to allow peace talks to proceed. But the rebel Serb leader said the government must accept partition or battle to the end.

Gen. Francis Briquemont, the new Belgian commander of U.N. forces in Bosnia, secured the cease-fire agreement after meetings with Gen. Ratko Mladic, commander of Bosnian Serb forces, and Bosnia's president, Alija Izetbegovic.

Bosnia's 16-month-old war is littered with broken truces, and Izetbegovic requested that peace talks be delayed to see if Bosnian

Serbs held their fire and if Bosnian Croats allowed aid convoys through their territory.

Briquemont said Izetbegovic had agreed to attend the talks in Geneva, delayed until Tuesday, if the accord is honored.

The truce was to take effect at 10 a.m. today to give commanders time to get word to their troops in the field. The truce applied to the Muslim-led government's troops, the Bosnian Serb army and the Bosnian Croat militia.

Hours after the plan was announced, intense shelling slammed the hills just north and southwest of the city center. Before dawn, Sarajevans were jolted by heavy artillery and small-arms fire.

Sarajevo has been subjected re-

cently to intensive bombardment and infantry attacks on its outskirts as rebel Serbs try to pressure the government into accepting a Serb-Croat plan to partition Bosnia into three ethnic states. The government, and especially Izetbegovic, wants Bosnia to remain a federal, multiethnic country.

Radovan Karadzic, the Bosnian Serb leader, accused Izetbegovic of delaying talks to avoid negotiating the reality on the ground. Bosnian Serbs hold 70% of Bosnia's territory and Croats most of the rest.

Karadzic said he would go to Geneva on Tuesday with the demand that Izetbegovic sign a truce and agree to a confederation of ethnically defined, sovereign states.

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