

WORLD NEWS

Pullout from Beirut

US ships bombard mountains

BEIRUT, Sunday (Reuter). — US naval guns were reported to have opened fire on Syrian-controlled areas in the mountains above Beirut last night, as US Marines were in the last stages of pulling out of Lebanon to ships offshore.

Correspondents in central Beirut heard the salvos, and Lebanese Army officials said an American ship or ships was bombarding the upper mountain area east of Beirut.

It was not clear why the naval guns opened fire just hours after a new ceasefire took hold and as the marines were about to complete the politically sensitive withdrawal from their base at Beirut airport.

Although the fighting was not intense, sporadic gunbattles and artillery fire yesterday evening marred the ceasefire. There were also some of the first signs of progress toward a political settlement.

Moslem sources said the Syrian and Lebanese Governments had agreed to the outlines of a peace plan involving the cancellation of last May's treaty between Lebanon and Israel and the resumption of all-party talks on political reforms.

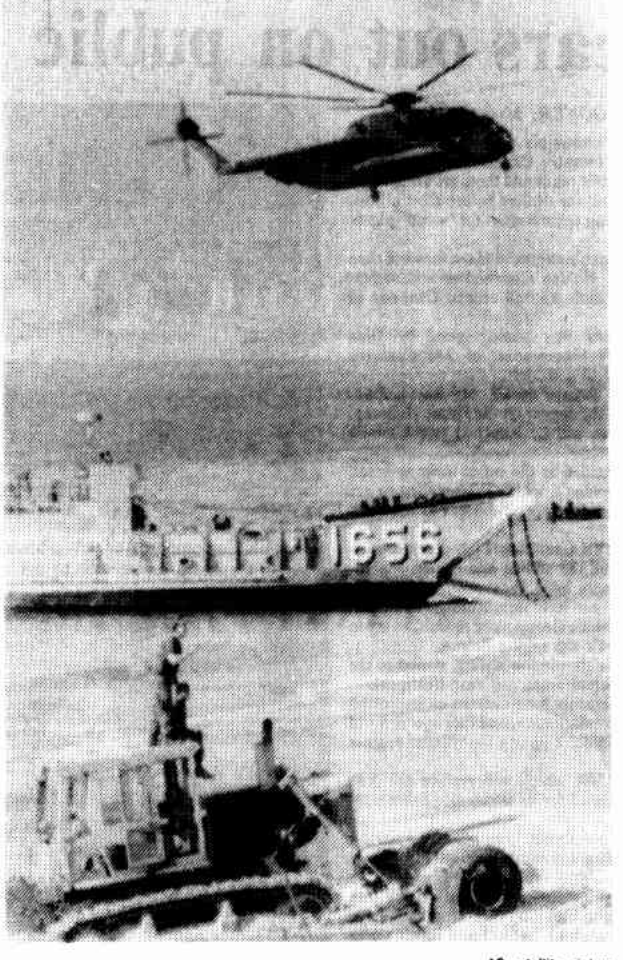
BAHRAIN, Sunday (Reuter). — Iraq and Iran are locked in some of the heaviest fighting of the 41-month-old Gulf war, with each side saying it has inflicted thousands of casualties on the other along the southern battlefield.

Iraqi television screened last night what it said were the corpses of thousands of Iranian soldiers in marshlands north-east of the Iraqi port of Basra. An Iraqi military communique said almost 7,000 Iranians had been killed during the previous 24 hours.

Iran said its forces had killed 6,500 Iraqis since the beginning of its latest offensive on the southern front last Wednesday.

BUDAPEST, Hungary, Sunday (AP). — The United Nations Secretary-General, Dr Perez de Cuellar, said yesterday he was planning to set up a special UN mission to mediate in the Iran-Iraq war.

Addressing reporters before his departure for Sofia, Bulgaria, he said that the United Nations had contingency plans for a UN peacekeeping force to be stationed in the Beirut area "if the Security Council so decides".



AP satellite picture
In the air, on the sea and on land the US Navy continues its withdrawal of Marines and equipment from positions on Green Beach, Beirut.

BRAZIL
River oil fire kills villagers

CUBATAO, Brazil, Sunday (Reuter). — A shantytown of hundreds of wood and cardboard shacks, built on stilts over a river, was engulfed in a huge fireball early today after leaking diesel fuel which had accumulated under the shacks suddenly exploded, killing 69 people and injuring at least 31.

"It was an inferno," said a shocked and dazed woman whose mother-in-law and cousin died in the oil-fuelled flames which quickly spread through hundreds of huts.

A policeman said, "It was as if someone had laid a trail of gunpowder and set a match to it. It was terrible. People were screaming and all was confusion."

Many of the victims were small children and old people who were unable to escape the spreading flames.

The fire, which erupted about midnight, raged for more than seven hours and destroyed about half the 1,000 stilted shacks which straddled the narrow river for a mile or more.

Rescuers continued to search through the smouldering rubble into the night and it was feared the death toll could rise.

The devastation was so great that authorities estimated earlier that 100 people had died and 150 had been injured.

A policeman on duty at the time said the fire had started about one hour after the discovery of an oil pipeline leak which had caused diesel fuel to flow into the river.

The pipeline carries oil from the nearby port of Santos to a refinery owned by the State oil company, Petrobras.

In the centre of Cubatao, a town infamous for the pollution caused by refineries and chemical plants, hundreds of survivors huddled together in a sports hall where they were to receive food and temporary shelter.

Local-government officials estimated that about 2,500 people were homeless.

Five die in Brussels fire

BRUSSELS, Sunday (Reuter). — Five people died and two were seriously injured when fire swept through a central Brussels cinema complex packed with more than 500 people on Friday night, a police spokesman said yesterday.

A seven-year-old boy, at first reported by police to be among the dead, was said this morning to be in a critical condition in a military hospital. He survived 90 minutes in the inferno.

Lifelines managed to evacuate 520 patrons without panic, and although firemen were on the scene within four minutes, it took them more than an hour to fight their way through the flames to the first-floor theatre where they found three men, two women and the boy.

PACIFIC OCEAN
NZ ships warning

SINGAPORE, Sunday (Reuter). — The arrival of a second Soviet aircraft carrier in the Pacific had increased the possibility of disruption to the region, the New Zealand Defence Minister, Mr Thomson, said today.

Countries in the Asia-Pacific region should match the growing Soviet military strength in the area through individual and collective efforts, he said.

A Kiev-class carrier, the Novorossiysk, and four warships passed through the Malacca Straits last week to join another Soviet carrier, the Minsk.

The Novorossiysk's deployment would not affect New Zealand's defence strategy, Mr Thomson said.

CALABRIA
Crime 'don' caught

REGGIO CALABRIA, Italy, Sunday (AFP). — The unchallenged head of the N'drangheta, the Mafia's sister organisation in Calabria, had been arrested after nine years in hiding, a reliable source said yesterday.

Mr Giuseppe Piromalli, better known as Don Peppino, reportedly congratulated the police captain who burst into a hideout in the suburb of Gioia Tauro with his men.

Don Peppino is suspected of ordering at least 30 murders, in particular of wiping out the heads of all other N'drangheta families.

ARGENTINA
Zoo animals eaten by custodian

CORRIENTES, Argentina, Sunday (AFP). — The custodian of a small zoo near Corrientes has been arrested for eating seven rare animals from the zoo.

They were cabiais, the world's largest rodents, a species in danger of becoming extinct. They weigh up to 70 kilograms.

Police said the custodian's family and friends helped him eat the barbecued animals.

The cabiai lives in rivers and eats aquatic vegetation.

IN BRIEF

Bomb defused
BELFAST, Sunday (PA). — An army bomb disposal expert finally defused on Friday the huge bomb which had kept 600 people out of their homes in Cookstown, County Tyrone, for 24 hours, but then a second suspect device was discovered in the area.

East German exodus
GIESSEN, West Germany, Sunday (Reuter). — Hundreds of East Germans, unexpectedly allowed to emigrate by the communist authorities, are flooding into West Germany in the biggest exodus in more than a decade, officials said, with about 100 immigrants a day arriving since last weekend.

Bubble boy
CONROE, Texas, Sunday (AP). — The funeral of the child known as the Bubble Boy was held yesterday. He had lived all his 12 years in a sterile plastic bubble to protect him from disease, because he had no natural defences.

Assassinations
BOGOTA, Sunday (AFP). Four conservative politicians were assassinated in an ambush after an election meeting near the town of Abrego, Bogota police said yesterday.

Mountain losses
CHAMROUSSE, France, Sunday (AP). — An avalanche in the French Alps killed four cross-country skiers and rescue teams freed a fifth buried under the snow. They were members of a party of 17 from the Grenoble Nuclear Energy Centre.

Carnival crash
BRASILIA, Sunday (Reuter). — At least 23 people were killed and 45 injured yesterday when a bus crashed into carnival revellers dancing in the streets in the north-eastern city of Natal, police said.

EUROPE

Defence suggestions
NEW YORK, Sunday (Reuter). — A former US Secretary of State, Dr Kissinger, is proposing that the United States withdraw up to half its ground forces from Western Europe if Europe does not assume greater responsibility for its own ground defence.

Pictures 'fakes'
LONDON, Sunday (Reuter). — Prince Andrew's new girlfriend, Miss Katie Rabelt, has denounced nude photos published by the News of the World as fakes, saying she "had never posed in the nude either professionally or for friends".

Youth degeneracy
MOSCOW, Sunday (AFP). — Some Soviet teenagers are lazy, aimless and drawn to "gambling and hooliganism", according to a government report published in Moscow yesterday by the Parliamentary Commission for Youth Affairs.

USSR Chernenko's new title
MOSCOW, Sunday (AFP). — The Secretary-General of the Soviet Communist Party, Mr Chernenko, has been named chairman of the Defence Council, succeeding the late Mr Andropov, it was announced yesterday — Soviet Army Day.

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Table with event details for National Press Club Luncheon, including dates (Thursday 1 March, Tuesday 6 March, Thursday 8 March, Saturday 10 March, Thursday 15 March, Friday 16 March) and times (12.30pm).

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AUSTRALIAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION
WARNING TO DOCTORS
Members of the medical profession are advised not to sign any document (including any letter), relating to the exercise of their individual rights of private practice in public hospitals without prior advice from the Australian Medical Association.
A resolution in the above terms was carried unanimously at a representative meeting of the profession in Sydney on February 22, 1984.
The meeting was called by the A.M.A. to consider the powers of the Commonwealth Minister for Health under Section 17 of the Health Insurance Act and the guidelines which the Minister proposes to promulgate under this Section effective from March 1, controlling private practice rights.
The meeting unanimously resolved that it did not accept the proposed guidelines and resolved to request the Minister, in view of the strong opposition of the profession, not to publish them.
Present or represented at the meeting were the six State Branches and two Territory Groups of the A.M.A., six industrial organisations of salaried doctors and ten specialist bodies.
I urge you to follow the advice of the meeting and sign nothing relating to private practice rights in public hospitals pending further advice.
Advice on action to be taken is being prepared and will be conveyed through A.M.A. State Branches and Groups. I suggest that you make arrangements with your colleagues to maintain contact with the appropriate Branch or Group of the A.M.A.
H. LINDSAY THOMPSON
President

USSR
Chernenko's new title
MOSCOW, Sunday (AFP). — The Secretary-General of the Soviet Communist Party, Mr Chernenko, has been named chairman of the Defence Council, succeeding the late Mr Andropov, it was announced yesterday — Soviet Army Day.
The defence council chairmanship, which is mainly an honorary position in peacetime, had been held by Mr Chernenko's two predecessors, Mr Andropov and Mr Brezhnev.
It is not known whether Mr Chernenko has been given a military rank. Mr Brezhnev had the rank of marshal and Mr Andropov that of general.
The reports in the World News pages are contributed by the following agencies (abbreviations in brackets): Australian Associated Press (AAP), Associated Press (AP), Agence France Press (AFP), The New York Times News Service (NYTNS), the Press Association (PA), Chicago Sun-Times (CST) and Reuter.

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National Press Club Luncheon..... 12.30pm
John ELLIOTT — Elders (X) Ltd
Carlton & United Breweries
MEMBERS and GUESTS
TUESDAY 6 MARCH
National Press Club Luncheon..... 12.30pm
Elles FREIJ
Mayor of Bethlehem
MEMBERS and GUESTS
THURSDAY 8 MARCH
National Press Club Luncheon..... 12.30pm
Famous opera singer
MEMBERS and GUESTS
SATURDAY 10 MARCH
6th National Press Club — Philip Morris Tennis Tournament
Entry forms available at reception
7pm Tennis Dinner — MEMBERS and GUESTS
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Leader National Party —
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