

Moscow sells banned missile tech to Rio

WASHINGTON, June 8: Russia sold advanced missile technology to Brazil in apparent violation of Moscow's promises to respect a global accord barring the proliferation of ballistic missiles but President Bill Clinton has decided not to impose sanctions, the Washington Post reported on today, reports Rueter.

The recent sale makes Russia and Brazil subject to US economic sanctions under a 1990 law devised to punish countries involved in missile proliferation, but Clinton decided to waive sanctions as long as both countries promised not to repeat their actions, the paper said.

The Post, quoting unnamed US officials, said Clinton's decision was conveyed to Congress in a classified memorandum.

An administration official said sanctions were being waived against Russia because Moscow 'promised to stop' its sales which began in 1992, the

Post said.

It quoted a Russian Embassy spokesman as confirming Russia and Brazil were cooperating but said the nature of the deal could not be disclosed because it was commercial.

The spokesman said the Clinton administration was 'satisfied with our explanation' that the deal did not violate the so-called missile technology control regime.

The newspaper also quoted a Brazilian Embassy spokesman as saying the matter was on the way to being resolved.

The Russians sold Brazil carbon fiber technology, which is used for strong but light materials in rocket motor cases.

Brazil has said it wants the technology for its civilian space programme.

But Brazilian officials concede that a rocket being built by Brazil would have the capability to carry sophisticated military warheads and even nuclear and chemical arms.

US won't send troops to Italy for Bosnia mission

BRUSSELS, June 8: The United States has cancelled plans to send 3,500 troops to Italy to protect any withdrawal of UN peacekeepers from Bosnia, diplomatic sources said here today, reports AFP.

US General George Joulwan, the supreme commander of allied forces in Europe, earlier Thursday informed the Italian authorities of Washington's plans, according to the Italian news agency ANSA.

The news was relayed to the Italian Defence Minister Domenico Corcione, who is currently attending a NATO meeting in Brussels, ANSA said.

Joulwan attributed the move to 'false information' spread by the world media. The US initiative had been interpreted as speeding up preparations for a possible UN withdrawal from Bosnia.

The Pentagon on Monday announced that 3,500 US troops and 100 helicopters were about to be prepositioned in Italy for emergency situa-

tions in Bosnia, but a day later the whole operation was described as a simple military exercise.

Pentagon spokesman Kenneth Bacon then refused to provide details of the proposed troop movement, saying that the 'plan now is being re-evaluated, given some of the commitments made, at the Paris meeting.'

Members of the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) agreed Saturday in the French capital to create a 10,000-strong Rapid Reaction Force (RRF) for Bosnia, which is now pending authorisation from the UN Security Council.

The administration of President Bill Clinton is under pressure from Congress to clarify the conditions for sending US ground forces to Bosnia, but the White House is not forthcoming.

AP adds: The Pentagon has again sharply reduced the size of an Army force being sent to Italy to train for a possible

evacuation of UN troops in Bosnia, in part to save money, Defence Secretary William Perry said Thursday.

Only 200 US soldiers will move from Germany to Italy to train for the potential evacuation mission, Perry said. He confirmed that US Army generals in Europe originally had planned to send about 3,500 troops to Italy for the exercise.

Perry also said no 'significant' numbers of American ground forces would be moved into the Balkans region until 'some weeks' after all NATO governments have approved a contingency plan for a total UN withdrawal from Bosnia.

He said he expected NATO approval 'in a week or two, not a month or two.'

Speaking to reporters en route from Washington for two days of NATO meetings in the Belgian capital, Perry said Gen George Joulwan, the Supreme Allied Commander and commander of all US forces in Europe, had told him Friday of

his decision to greatly reduce the size and scope of the exercise in Italy.

Perry made his remarks just moments before receiving news that the American fighter pilot shot down last Friday over Bosnia had been rescued by an American team.

Before learning of the rescue, Perry told reporters aboard his plane that Gen Ronald Fogleman, the Air Force chief of staff, had been wrong to publicly disclose earlier this week that electronic signals had been received from that appeared to be the pilot's emergency locator beacon.

'General Fogleman made a mistake,' Perry said.

The Pentagon had intended to keep quiet about the signals it was receiving until after it had determined where they were coming from and whether the pilot was issuing them.

On Thursday, army officials in Europe had said 1,500 troops were being sent to Italy, along with about 50 helicopters.

Off the Record



A large ceramic teapot created by Zheng Yukuni, a designer from Shandong Huang ceramic company is displayed at a Beijing gallery on Thursday. The giant teapot stands at two metres high and is 1.2 metres wide. — AFP/UNB photo

'The dog must have known'

WASHINGTON: 'The dog must have known' she was delivering a letter from the Internal Revenue Service, mail carrier Angela Brewer joked, looking down at the tooth marks on her leg, reports AP.

It was April 15 when the Fairfax, Virginia, carrier had her encounter with a large, protective dog. She missed three days work after a trip to the hospital.

Brewer, expecting a baby in August, was among a half-dozen 'mangled' mail carriers who gathered Wednesday to help kick off a publicity campaign with the theme, 'Don't let your dog bite the hand that serves you.'

Poster-pup Duncan, a golden retriever owned by a postal worker, circulated happily through the gathering at the National Postal Museum, wagging the word that mail carriers and dogs can coexist.

Indeed, the Postal Service's chief operating officer, William J. Henderson, stressed that the post office isn't anti-dog. It just wants owners to be responsible for their pets, to train and socialize them so that letter carriers aren't in danger on their rounds.

Last year, carriers suffered 2,782 bites, costing pain and thousands of dollars of lost time. The post office will stop delivery to homes and even neighbourhoods where carriers are endangered, Henderson said, and will file lawsuits when its workers are injured.

Matthew Neal of New Castle, Delaware, told of making a delivery to a home with a quiet dog resting on the porch. Then, as he walked away, the chihuahua suddenly began chomping on his ankle.

'The Enforcers'

SAN SEBASTIAN, Spain: A 36-year old man accused of several attempted rapes near this Spanish Basque region was captured by a group of women and dragged through the streets of Olosa to the court-house steps, reports AP.

The incident, reported Wednesday on the front page of the Daily El Mundo, was denounced by the presiding judge at the provincial court as well as local authorities in Ibarra where the alleged offences were committed.

The women, who call themselves 'the enforcers', decided to take the law into their own hands and took the man from the building site where he worked and marched him through the streets with a banner designating him as a rapist.

The man was arraigned in court on rape-related charges while police said another suspect wrongfully detained was freed.

India deploys 80,000 extra troops in Kashmir: Ali

ISLAMABAD, June 8: India has poured an additional 80,000 troops into the disputed Kashmir region which is a matter of 'serious' concern for Pakistan, Foreign Minister Asef Ahmed Ali said in remarks published today, reports AP.

The troops were inducted recently under the 'excuse' of organising elections in Indian-controlled Kashmir, but they have not been withdrawn despite the postponement of the polls by New Delhi, Ali said.

Ali, who was quoted by the official Associated Press of Pakistan (APP), said India had brought its troop strength in Kashmir to the 'maximum' level.

'That is a very serious matter,' he said, adding that Pakistan would take up the issue at the 'proper' level.

According to officials here, some 600,000 Indian troops and security forces were in Kashmir before the arrival of the reinforcements.

Earlier this month India extended federal rule in the strife-torn state for six months beyond July 18, deferring planned elections because of the security situation.

Ali said the postponement of elections was a 'great victory' for the people of Kashmir.

Kashmir, the only Muslim-majority state in Hindu-dominated India, has been under New Delhi's direct rule since 1990, a year after Muslim militants stepped up a separatist drive which has left nearly 12,000 people dead so far.

New Delhi accuses Islamabad of arming and training the rebels, a charge denied by Pakistan; the neighbours have fought two of their three wars over the Himalayan province.

Taliban-Hezb tie puzzles Afghan situation

ISLAMABAD, June 8: The emerging alliance between Afghan Taliban and its former rival Hezb-i-Islami (Hekmatyar group) complicated Afghan situation which had been relatively calm for two months, reports Xinhua.

At the beginning of June, Taliban launched an offensive against Afghan government troops loyal to President Burhanuddin Rabbani in south and southwest of Kabul.

Afghan sources said that Gulbuddin Hekmatyar committed at least 2,000 soldiers to fight alongside Taliban in the two battle zones.

Ironically, Taliban termed all Mujahideens as 'criminals' when it scored a string of military victories over Afghan fac-

tions including Hekmatyar's party earlier this year.

However, Taliban's firm stance became loose after it was defeated by government forces many times since March.

Talking to newsmen in Afghan eastern city of Jalalabad recently, Hekmatyar said that his party and the four-party anti-governmental alliance were ready to join hands with Taliban against Rabbani's government.

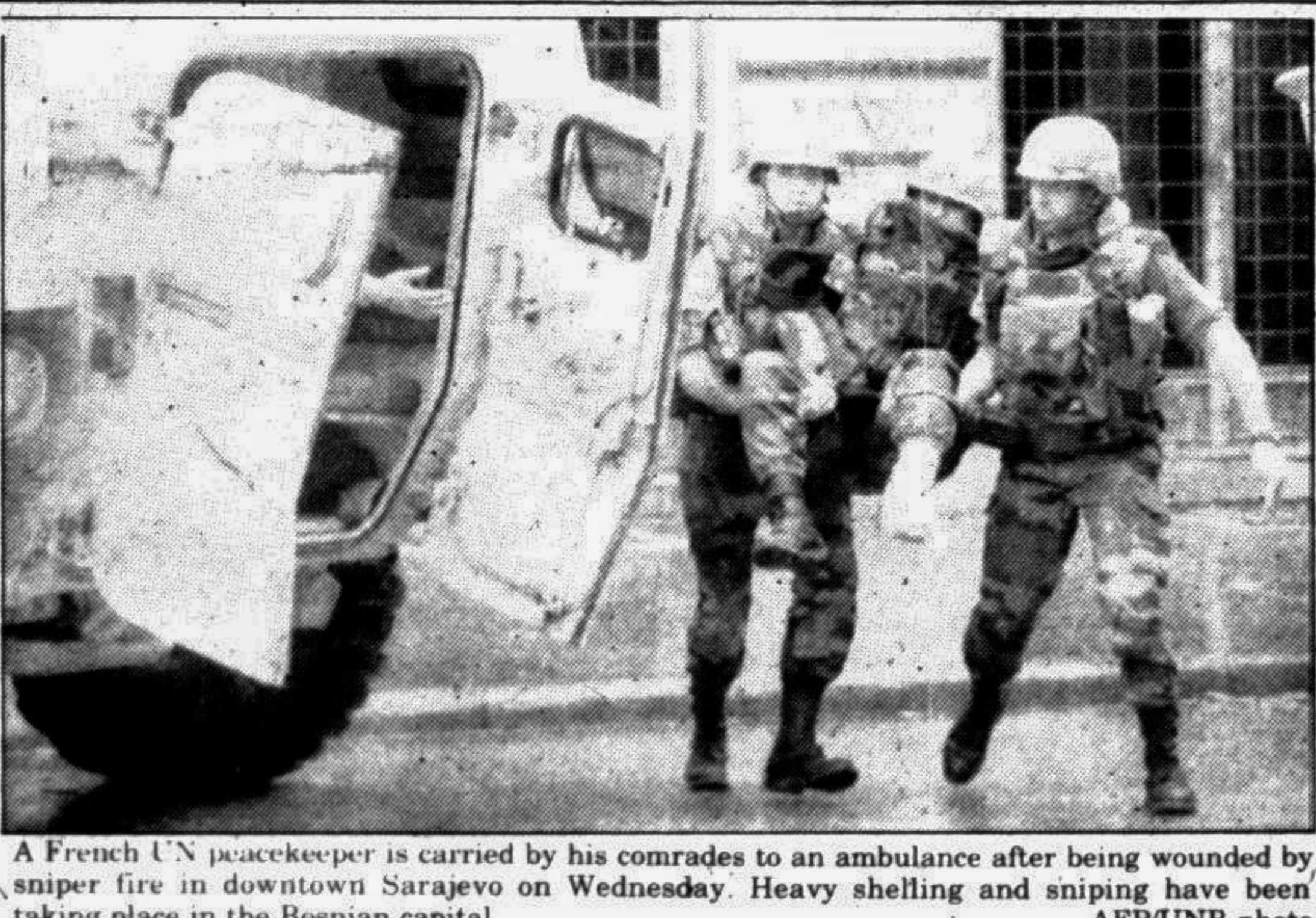
The four-party alliance includes Hezb-i-Islami (Hekmatyar group), Junbush-i-Melli led by Rasheed Dostum, Nejat-i-Melli led by Mojaddedi, and Hezb-i-Wahdat.

Rabbani's spokesman Abdul Mirad said in Kabul last Satur-

day that three key rivals of Rabbani, known as Hekmatyar, Dostum and Taliban, were planning to forge an alliance. Without naming any country, he claimed that some 'foreign forces' were behind the proposed alliance.

Analysts said that Rabbani and his three major opponents have much more powerful troops than other Afghan factions, and that if three came together against one, Rabbani would be under higher pressure.

It was worth mentioning that representatives of Rabbani and Dostum held talks in Uzbek capital of Tashkent at the end of May, causing much guesswork among analysts.



A French UN peacekeeper is carried by his comrades to an ambulance after being wounded by sniper fire in downtown Sarajevo on Wednesday. Heavy shelling and sniping have been taking place in the Bosnian capital. — AFP/UNB photo

Hamas may be transformed into a political party

JERUSALEM, June 8: The Muslim militant group Hamas may transform itself into a political party ahead of Palestinian elections, a leader of the group, said Thursday, reports AP.

It was not clear whether all of Hamas would support such a move and whether Hamas would stop its violent attacks on Israelis.

Hamas is a leading opponent of the Israel-PLO autonomy accord and has waged a deadly bombing campaign to derail the agreement.

'We are discussing the formation of a new Islamic party and we will declare it at the appropriate time,' Sheikh Ahmed Bahar, a Hamas leader, told The Associated Press.

Asked whether Hamas' armed wing, Izzedine al-Qas-

sam, would be dismantled, Bahar was evasive, saying the gunmen operated independently of Hamas' political leadership.

'We have no relations with the military wing,' Bahar said.

However, he said an Islamic party would not condone violence. 'We oppose the Oslo agreement (on Palestinian autonomy),' Bahar said. 'But we express our opposition peacefully, not violently.'

Earlier this week, Muslim fundamentalist sources in Beirut told the Arabic-language newspaper Al Hayat that Hamas would soon make an announcement from its Gaza Strip base that it was transforming itself into a political party.

The sources told the newspaper, published in London,

that Hamas would also dissolve its military wing as a step toward renouncing violence.

The sources said these steps were the results of directives issued by Hamas' spiritual leader, Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, who is serving a lengthy prison term in Israel.

In a related development, Bahar confirmed that Hamas was holding talks regularly with PLO chief Yasser Arafat's mainstream Fatah movement.

Hisham Abdel Razeq, a Fatah leader in Gaza who has participated in such talks, said he was certain Hamas would like the plunge and compete in elections.

Abdel Razeq said Arafat respected Hamas as a political opponent. 'They can express their opinions peacefully, but they have no right to impose them by force.'

Benazir willing to talk with MQM leaders

ISLAMABAD, June 8: Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto said on Wednesday her government was willing to talk with political figures of violence-rocked Karachi's ethnic Mohajir National Movement, reports Rueter.

'There can be give and take,' she told reporters.

'We want peace in Karachi, we believe in talks,' Bhutto said in an apparent reply to opposition's criticism of the government, which blames the Mohajir Qumi Movement or MQM for most of the southern port city's bloodshed.

'If there can be a political dialogue in the Middle East, and in Northern Ireland, why can there not be a political dialogue in our country, she said.'

The new governor of Sindh province, which Karachi is the capital, Kamal Azfar, said on Wednesday that the city was in the grip of a mini-insurgency.

Tutsi-led army drive out Hutus from Bujumbura

BUJUMBURA, June 8: Burundi's Tutsi-led army seized control of Hutu-dominated neighbourhoods in northern suburbs of the capital on Wednesday, ending a week of fighting and driving out rebel Hutu militia, reports AP.

Tutsi soldiers met little resistance in the Hutu-dominated districts of Kamenge and Kinama, which they found virtually deserted, when they moved into flush out Hutu gunmen who have been fighting the army for over a week.

Soldiers conducted house to house searches, but most of the troops in the rebel Forces for the Defence of Democracy (FDD) were believed to have fled to the neighbouring suburb of Gasenyi to continue fighting.

US committed to keep 1 lakh troops in Europe

WASHINGTON, June 8: A half century after the end of World War II, the United States remains committed to keeping about 100,000 troops in a Europe, according to a report published by the Pentagon on Wednesday, says Rueter.

Issued on the eve of a NATO meeting in Brussels to discuss what to do about the crisis in Bosnia and expanding the organisation to include former Soviet bloc members, the report sought to underline US solidarity with Europe.

'America's military presence in the region, which has been reduced by over 200,000 since 1989 and should remain at approximately 100,000 US troops, remains vital to enduring US interests in Europe and beyond,' the Pentagon said.

BRIEFLY

Myanmar leader detained again:

Myanmar's military junta has detained a pro-democracy leader just two months after releasing him from jail, sources in Yangon said Thursday, AP reports from Yangon.

U Kyi Maung, former Chairman of the National League for Democracy, was detained on June 1 for allegedly violating the terms of his release. He spent almost five years in jail, and was released on condition that he will not engage in any political activities.

Christopher to begin ME tour:

Secretary of State Warren Christopher, beginning his 13th Middle East mission, said the United States is working to accelerate the pace of negotiations, Rueter reports from Shannon Airport, Ireland.

Christopher told reporters aboard his US Air Force jet en route to Jerusalem on Wednesday night that Israel, Syria and the Palestinians are in a new crucial period of the peace process.

Mexican peace talks resume:

Peace talks between the government and the rebel Zapatista National Liberation Army began Wednesday night with few expectations of a quick settlement to the revolt in southern Mexico, AP reports from San Andres Larrainzar.

Nine Zapatista leaders sat opposite government negotiators inside a makeshift building on an outdoor basketball court. Also present were mediators from the Roman Catholic Church. More than 2,000 military police and civilians took up positions Wednesday to provide security for the talks.

China develops new rocket:

China has developed two new types of rocket with larger payloads than previous ones, ready for commercial use in carrying satellites, an official from the China Carrier Rocket Technology Research Institute said yesterday, Xinhua reports from Beijing.

The payload of the new rockets — Long-March III B and the Long-March III C — has been increased to 5 and 3.7 tons respectively, from the 2.6 tons of Long-March III A, he said. The new rockets consist of a Long-March III A, he said.

10 pc Congo soldiers HIV infected:

At least 10 per cent of the soldiers in the Congo's military are infected with the HIV virus, the head of the Congo's National Anti AIDS Campaign Programme said Wednesday, AFP reports from Brazzaville.

Soldiers are in a high risk group because they are very active sexually said Pierre Pele in Brazzaville.

7 die in Indian chopper crash:

Seven crew members of the Indian Air Force helicopter (Mi-17), including the pilot, were killed when their chopper crashed near Belo village in Yomcha sub-division of West Siang district of Arunachal Pradesh on Tuesday, officials in Itanagar said, PTI reports from Itanagar.

Among those killed were flight lieutenant A Mitra (pilot), Yog Nav and Venugopal (both sergeants), major D Thappa, captain Rajesh Khare, DK Mazumder and Onkar Singh (both constables), officials said.

Chinese teams in Pyongyang:

Two Chinese delegations led by senior Communist Party and government officials have arrived in Pyongyang, the state-run Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) said on Thursday, Rueter reports from Tokyo.

KCNA, monitored in Tokyo, said a delegation of officials of the Chinese Communist Party led by Xu Qino, deputy secretary of the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection, arrived in Pyongyang on Wednesday.

Cholera breaks out in Mexico:

A cholera epidemic is spreading across southern Mexico, and confirmed cases have doubled in a year in Chiapas, the state health chief said Wednesday, AP reports from San Cristobal De Las Casas, Mexico.

Most rivers in Chiapas contain the bacteria, and all 53 rivers in the Soconusco region bordering Guatemala on the Pacific Coast carry the disease, health director Valdemar Rojas said.

Uzbek militia jet shutdown:

Afghan President Burhanuddin Rabbani's forces shutdown an Uzbek militia jet in the western Shindand region of the country, Radio Kabul reported, AFP says from Islamabad.

The plane, belonging to the militia led by former communist General Abdul Rashid Dostum, had reportedly been on a bombing raid to strike Shindand Airbase, the broadcast monitored in Islamabad said.

Taiwan president begins US visit

ITHACA, New York, June 8: Taiwan president Lee Teng-hui began a ground breaking visit to the United States on Wednesday with his American hosts scrambling to ensure the lowest possible diplomatic profile for a trip that has already infuriated China, reports Rueter.

Lee, the first president of Taiwan ever to visit the United States, arrived in Los Angeles on Wednesday morning and was due to fly to his alma mater, Cornell University in Ithaca, New York today.

Asia-Pacific defence spending high compared with global rise

SYDNEY, June 8: Billions of dollars are being spent on modernising Asia-Pacific defence forces but there is no evidence of a regional arms race according to a report by the Australian Defence Studies Centre, reports Rueter.

There has been a general region-wide decline in the ratio of military spending to GNP (Gross National Product) through the 1980s and where this ratio has increased, upward movements are neither large nor strong,' said the report on regional arms spending and manufacturing, received by Reuters on Thursday.

'The pattern to these

indices falls some way short of what a fully developed regional arms race would manifest, it said.

The Australian Defence Studies Centre is part of the Australian Defence Force Academy.

Regional military spending rose 47.9 per cent between 1979 and 1988, compared with a 19.9 per cent global rise, and in 1990, spending excluding China, was more than US 60.57 billion dollar compared with 42.54 billion dollar in 1980, the report said.

However, China's spending as a per cent of GNP was estimated at 3.9 per cent in 1988,

compared with 10.8 per cent in 1979.

The report said that coupled with China's economic growth, this decline in spending 'suggests an official perception of a more benign regional environment over the medium term.'

Authors Graeme Cheeseman and Richard Leaver said they examined regional military spending since the end of the cold war and despite some impressive military acquisitions, the aggregate value of arms imports was declining in the 1990s.

The value of arms imported into the region in 1989 was

6.1 billion dollar compared with 9.2 billion dollar in 1979, with Vietnam Japan and Taiwan accounting for more than half of them.

The region's major arms importer between 1979-89 was Vietnam purchasing 24.7 billion dollar accounting for 30 per cent of imports. Japan was second with 10.3 billion dollar 12.6 per cent and China ranked seventh at 3.9 billion dollar or 4.7 per cent.

This decline is partly explained by a rise in regional arms manufacturing and a shift towards hi-tech weaponry, according to the report, which divides Asia into three tiers.

The northeast Asian nations of China, Taiwan, North and South Korea are the largest weapons producers in the region.

Second tier countries of Australia, Thailand, Singapore, Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines, have more limited defence industries confined to small arms, aircraft and ships.

The third tier produces small arms and ammunition.

The report dismisses the theory that in a post Cold War world middle powers will vie for regional influence, which could spark a regional arms race.

It said the Asian cold war

ROK unhappy with US-DPRK N-deal

SEOUL, June 8: Despite Washington's appeal for compromise, South Korean officials on Thursday openly voiced discontent with US moves to strike an 'unsatisfactory' nuclear deal with North Korea, reports AP.

Amid reports that US-North Korea nuclear talks in Kuala Lumpur were making significant headway, South Korean officials said they were not prepared to make any additional concessions.

A senior official at ROK's ministry was more blunt, saying: 'It's obviously not the type of an agreement we are looking for.'