

International Intelligence

Mexico won't send troops to Mideast

Mexico will not send troops to the Persian Gulf under any circumstances, said President Carlos Salinas del Gortari in his New Year's message to the Armed Forces.

Salinas was forced to give in to intense pressure from all factions, including from his own political party, for Mexico not to join Argentina's President Carlos Menem in sending troops, in exchange for a better economic deal from the United States. The Mexican Congress approved a resolution backing Salinas and exhorting the world's parliaments to strive to preserve peace.

U.S. Ambassador John Negroponte was miffed with the decision, saying that Iraq was a threat to "the entire international community," not just the United States.

Syria runs drugs, and the U.S. knows it

George Bush knows all about the Syrian role in Mideastern drug trafficking, but made Syrian President Hafez al-Assad his ally against Iraq anyway, charged the German Catholic newspaper *Deutsche Tagespost* on Dec. 27. Bush's meeting with Assad in Geneva on Nov. 23 occurred although "the Americans know that the Syrian regime has turned into one of the biggest sponsors and operators of the so-called narco-terrorism," the article said. All the information is in the hands of the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), but "Washington is keeping its knowledge a top-secret issue" and "is treating the Syrians gracefully for political reasons."

Among the facts covered up, the *Tagespost* reports, is that the head of the Syrian anti-drug bureau, Col. Ali Al Darbuli, met with Mike Hurley, the head of the DEA's Mideast bureau in Nicosia (Cyprus), in March 1989. They agreed on increased U.S.-Syrian cooperation, but it is known that the Syrian military in Lebanon is pro-

tecting the growing of narcotics there, which is supplying markets in the United States.

The real estate in the 24 villages in Syrian-occupied northern Lebanon that are involved in production of hashish, and, more recently, heroin, is mostly owned by Syrians like Firass al-Assad (the nephew of the Syrian President), Lebanese puppet President Elias Hrawi, and Assem Kanso, the chairman of the Lebanese wing of the Syrian Ba'ath Party. From 1985 on, the Syrian regime has received an annual U.N. grant of \$95 million and destroyed some dope fields every year—after the harvest, naturally.

The only politician to ever seriously interfere with the Syrian operation was Gen. Michel Aoun, the *Tagespost* wrote. He imposed a several-months blockade upon northern Lebanon and shelled the Beirut international airport, causing considerable damage to the Syrian dope pushers. He was finally defeated by the Syrians and their Lebanese flunkies in October 1990.

Philippine defense chief sees coup threat

Philippines Defense Secretary Fidel Ramos has warned that the outbreak of a Mideast war could trigger a right-wing military coup and a communist uprising in his country. He told business leaders early in January that rebel officers would take advantage of the economic chaos and social unrest that would follow a dramatic rise in oil prices caused by a Gulf war. He also said that communist hit squads had deployed into Manila just before Christmas, in anticipation of a fresh Army putsch against the Aquino government.

The government of President Corazon Aquino has asked Parliament for emergency powers for six months in order to deal with the anticipated unrest and economic chaos.

In a related development, Philippines Senate Majority Floor Leader Teofisto Guingona, called on Third World countries to file a resolution with the International Court of

Justice in The Hague, Netherlands, concerning Iraq's invasion of Kuwait. Senator Guingona urged President Bush to immediately recall his troops from the Gulf, while the case is being tried by the International Court.

Was Saudi oil refinery fire a case of sabotage?

The French magazine *Le Canard Enchaîné* reports in its first issue of the new year that a fire at a giant Saudi oil refinery in December may well have been sabotage, and that at least one American military officer has been assassinated. The article links these developments to growing disaffection within Saudi military circles against the American military presence.

According to the report:

"In Saudi Arabia, the permanent maintenance of an important American contingent is posing too many cultural and religious problems, according to U.S. diplomats and military men.

"There is evidence for this. Young Saudi officers, recently questioned by French journalists, have put forward, in close paraphrase, these words: 'We are not favorable to Saddam Hussein, but we are not hostile to the Iraqi people. It is an Arab people. And the Western presence in our country—400,000 troops today—is crushing—especially for our small army, and this can justify the partisans of a pure and uncompromising Islam.'

"Incidents have already broken out: a small anti-American demonstration which the local authorities tolerated, the sabotage of a part of the largest refinery in the world, Ras Tanura, and aggression, verbal or otherwise, against U.S. troops.

"The Palestinian daily *Al Quds* ('Jerusalem') even cites the case of a Lt. Col. John Cook (according to the translation from the Arabic), found dead from a bullet in the head, and affirms that it was an assassination and not, as the American Army let it be understood, a suicide."

The refinery had the capacity of refining

450,000 barrels a day, making it one of the world's largest. According to a Norwegian shipping industry report, "The Saudi refinery probably suffered more damage than originally anticipated, in view of the secrecy surrounding the fire."

Shevardnadze describes threat of 'dictatorship'

Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze, who announced his resignation on Dec. 20, warning that a "police state" is returning to the U.S.S.R., further outlined the threat in an interview published in Italy's *La Repubblica* newspaper and the *Moscow News* on Jan. 3. "If the destabilization goes on and the democratization process stops," he said, "it would become impossible to continue on the foreign policy line followed so far."

Shevardnadze, who is still serving as foreign minister for an interim period, warned the possibility of a violent crack-down, "the repetition of what already occurred in Tbilisi or Baku. . . . I think that if we do not succeed in getting the country out of the crisis, dictatorship will be inevitable. . . . Now everybody speaks about the necessity for discipline and order. This is truly necessary, and in a vital way. But unfortunately, in the minds of many, discipline and order are associated with the use of strength."

Referring to the decision by the Congress of People's Deputies in December to strengthen the powers of the presidency, Shevardnadze added, "I am not certain at all that direct presidential leadership and any other punitive sanction, whatever its aim, could really become instruments for solving the current problems."

Shevardnadze lamented that there are too much talk in the Soviet Union, too many congresses, and too little work: "We approve laws which nobody enacts."

Shevardnadze also called for rationing food, since food does exist, but is not properly distributed: "It is known that in our country the food has not diminished, but

it does not reach the population. If people continuously speak of sabotage and speculation, then this means that we shall take the route of rationing. . . . I think that people must unite . . . in the name of conservation of democracy," the foreign minister said.

Shevardnadze announced that he will create an association to study the problems of foreign policy.

Starvation and disease hit Cambodian refugees

About 150,000 Cambodians have been driven from their homes in the past year due to the civil war, and 20-30,000 of them have arrived at refugee camps just inside the Thai border, according to a report in the British newspaper the *Guardian* on Jan. 2. Due to starvation and disease, they "are just one step better" than victims of the World War II concentration camps, one Western aid official said.

There are now about 300,000 Cambodians in six overcrowded camps on the Thai border, which are controlled by the guerrilla groups fighting the Phnom Penh government. There may be many thousands of more refugees in the months to come: Fighting will worsen as the dry season begins, and there will be severe food shortages this year. Many rice fields could not be planted last year due to the war, floods, and drought. There are at least 130,000 displaced people still inside Cambodia.

Phnom Penh, under a total aid ban from the West, has been resisting the Khmer Rouge guerrillas alone since Vietnamese troops withdrew from Cambodia. David Colvin, the British envoy to the Dec. 22 failed Paris peace talks, said that if the Cambodian government failed to approve the draft U.N. peace plan, it could no longer count on help from the international community. French Foreign Minister Roland Dumas delivered a similar message to the members of the Cambodian Supreme National Council, saying that the world had other issues to deal with besides Cambodia.

Briefly

● **IN BOLOGNA**, three members of the Carabinieri, Italy's paramilitary police force, were killed by unknown persons the night of Jan. 4, for reasons also unknown. Analysts speculate that the assassinations are the beginning of a new "strategy of tension" which the Anglo-American forces are planning to keep Italy in line in their Gulf policy.

● **SOVIET TV** on Jan. 5 accused U.S. and U.K. intelligence services of interfering in Soviet internal affairs, echoing recent statements by KGB chief Vladimir Kryuchkov. The broadcast charged that the intelligence services have been funneling money and agents into the Baltic republics, to fan the flames of separatism and unrest there, and that in Armenia and Azerbaïdzhân, operations fanning the unrest have their "roots in 70 years of British ethnic manipulation."

● **WAR IN THE BALKANS** is imminent, according to an article in the *Jerusalem Post* on Dec. 28. Among the possibilities cited by author Gwynne Dyer are a conflict in Yugoslavia between the Serbians on the one side, and the Bosnians, Croats, and Slovenes on the other; a war between Albania and Yugoslavia over the Kosovo region; and a Bulgarian grab at the Macedonian republic of Yugoslavia, with possible involvement by Greece.

● **THE RUSSIAN** Orthodox Christmas midnight mass was broadcast on Soviet television Jan. 6-7 for the first time, in a milestone in the recreation of "Holy Russia." Russian Federation President Boris Yeltsin was the guest of honor, alongside various high-ranking political, scientific, and military personalities.

● **EL SALVADOR'S** military would be reduced by 70%, according to a plan put forward by Alvaro de Soto, a top aide to U.N. Secretary General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar.