



Mothers of nine British soldiers killed during the Gulf War when their vehicle was destroyed by missiles leave the Coroner's Court in Oxford, Monday. (AP Photo)

'Friendly fire' deaths under study

By SUE LEEMAN
Associated Press Writer

LONDON (AP) — The public prosecutor said today she will investigate the "friendly fire" deaths of nine British soldiers in the Gulf War, and a lawyer for relatives urged that the U.S. pilots involved be charged with manslaughter.

The prosecutor's announcement came a day after a coroner's jury ruled that the two American pilots unlawfully killed the British soldiers. The jury said the pilots were guilty of "clear errors and failure to observe recognized procedures."

But the prospect of a trial appeared remote.

Barbara Mills, director of public prosecutions, said English courts generally have no jurisdiction to prosecute foreign nationals for alleged offenses committed abroad.

She asked to see all the relevant papers from the inquest in Oxford. "I will consider all the circumstances of the case," she said.

Mark Stephens, a lawyer for the victims' relatives, urged a prosecution, saying the pilots

"must be brought to account."

"This was something worse than an accident," Stephens said. "This was American pilots taking pot shots at British troops."

In a statement issued in Washington on Monday, the Pentagon called the incident "a terrible accident" that occurred "in the fog of war." It said questions raised at the inquest might never be resolved.

The pilots, who were flying A-10 "Warthog" tank-killer jets and mistakenly fired on a British armored personnel carrier, submitted a written statement but refused to testify at the inquest. The U.S. government backed their decision.

Coroner Nicholas Gardiner said the pilots' statement "may be true, it may not. It may be partly true, it may be partly untrue. But what is clear beyond any doubt is that it is not the whole truth."

The families' attitude hardened over the case, which dominated newspaper front pages today.

Anne Leech, whose 20-year-old son was killed, said the American pilots "must be held responsible for their action ... it was total negligence."

On Monday, as the families toasted the verdict with champagne outside the Oxford court, Mrs. Leech had said she simply wanted to hear the pilots' version, not have them tried.

The pilots were not identified at the inquest.

An inquest to determine cause of death is required for all bodies returned to Britain. An inquest cannot impose criminal or civil charges, although these may follow. Other possible verdicts were accidental death or an "open" verdict, meaning the cause was unclear.

Stocks rise, dollar falls in Japan

TOKYO (AP) — Tokyo share prices advanced moderately today on growing expectations of a Japanese business recovery, while the dollar fell further against the Japanese yen.

The 225-issue Nikkei Stock Average rose 311.01 points, or 1.69 percent, closing at 18,754.11 points. It had gained 368.83 points, or 2.04 percent, on Monday.

The Tokyo Stock Price Index of all issues listed on the first section, which rose 21.92 points, or 1.63 percent, on Monday, added another 22.57 points, or 1.65 percent, to 1,393.31 points.

An estimated 320 million shares changed hands, up from Monday's 216 million. Advancing issues outnumbered declines 833 to 172, with 118 issues unchanged.

Stock dealers said strong buying interest spread particularly to high-technology issues, shipbuilding and large-capital issues.

Hirotugu Ishii, an analyst with Yamatane Securities, said investors now anticipate the earnings of many companies to turn upward.

Economists have said the nation's slowing economy will turn around in the middle of this year.

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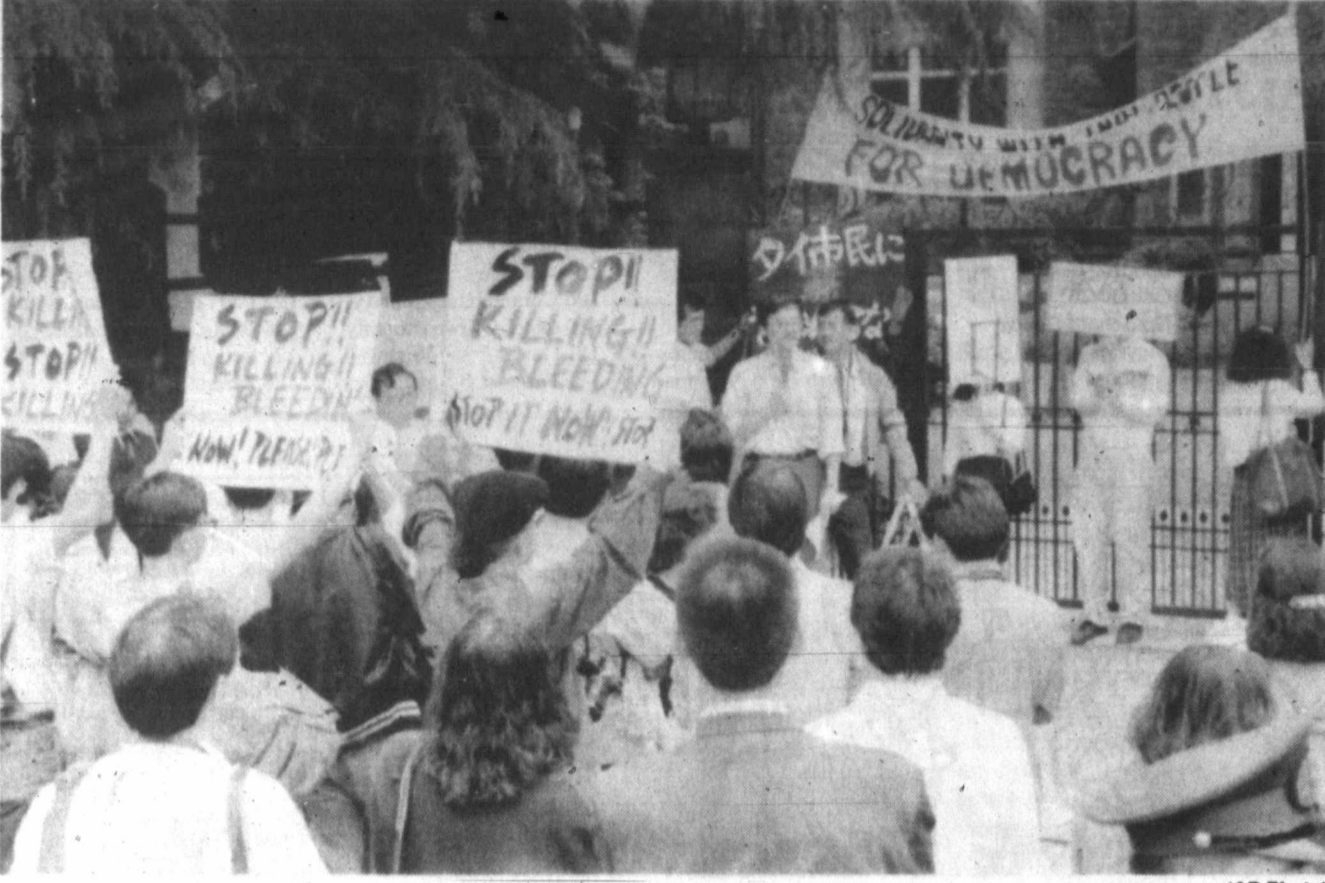
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(AP Photo)

Approximately 30 people rally in front of the Thailand's Embassy in downtown Tokyo today protesting firing by Thai soldiers on demonstrators in Bangkok. Concerned citizens and pacifists from 20 different groups and organizations staged an hour-long protest denouncing the violent crackdown on pro-democracy movements

Thai troops fire at protesters

By SHEILA McNULTY Associated Press Writer

Khon Kaen in the northeast and Hat Yai in the south.

BANGKOK, Thailand (AP) - Hundreds of protesters held out at a downtown bridge today against troops who have used bullets and baton blows to try to put down a popular uprising against the military's domination of Thai politics.

In Bangkok, a city of more than 10 million people, many shops and private companies - including major foreign corporations - closed for business today, fearful of more violence.

At least 21 demonstrators have been killed and thousands arrested.

Long queues formed at some gasoline stations and automatic teller machines. One shopping plaza checked all who entered for weapons as unsubstantiated rumors swept the city of roaming mobs and armed trouble-makers.

Nearly 200 marines and navy men cordoned off the protesters as rally leaders spoke to the demonstrators from atop a public bus. Other demonstrators rallied on adjacent streets.

Officials contacted at seven city hospitals said 16 people had died and 420 have been treated for injuries since the protests began. Other hospitals refused comment, evidently on orders of authorities.

The bridge, over the Chao Phraya River, is in the area of Bangkok that since Sunday night has been rocked by violent demonstrations demanding the resignation of Prime Minister Suchinda Kraprayoon, a former military chief.

Reporters saw at least five people dead and dozens more severely wounded.

In other parts of the capital, troops appeared to have at least temporarily quelled what amounted Thailand's most serious political uprising in 16 years.

Protests had escalated following Suchinda's appointment by a coalition of five pro-military parties formed after March elections.

The pro-democracy protesters range from students and academics to poor workers, community leaders and mobile telephone-toting businessmen.

Already angered by the military's intervention in politics, including a coup last year spearheaded by Suchinda, pro-democracy groups demanded the prime minister come from the ranks of elected lawmakers.

Thailand's economy has been among the world's fastest-growing and the increasingly educated and affluent middle class resents the military's habit of staging coups every time it considers its interests imperiled.

Tens of thousands gathered for a peaceful protest on Sunday, but it later turned violent. The unrest climaxed late Monday as gunfire erupted at barricades the military erected outside the Royal Hotel to prevent the crowd from heading toward government buildings.

Nevertheless, the pro-democracy forces seem ill-equipped to tackle head-on a military establishment that has wielded decisive power and enjoyed its benefits - often illicitly - since absolute monarchy was abolished in 1932.

Thousands of screaming demonstrators had been taunting the soldiers, charging up to the barricade with motorcycles and commandeered public buses.

Supreme Military Commander Kaset Rochananil said today that more arrest warrants would be issued. Pro-democracy leader Chamlong Srimuang, a charismatic politician revered for his incorruptibility, was among hundreds of protesters arrested Monday after Suchinda declared a state of emergency in the capital area.

Thousands of rounds burst from M-16 automatic rifles during a 15-minute period, and sporadic shots were heard hours later, into early today.

Chamlong's arrest appeared only to further polarize Thai society.

Several thousand defiant demonstrators who remained near the barricades were cleared at dawn when soldiers firing nonstop into the air made a final charge, sending many demonstrators fleeing into the hotel.

Newspapers today said the protests had spread to at least seven other areas of the country, including the city of Chiang Mai in the north,

Hundreds of soldiers kicked in doors in a room-by-room search of the four-story, 297-room hotel. They dragged about 2,000 male demonstrators out of the rooms on their hands and knees and kicked and

beat scores of them with rifle butts without any provocation.

The demonstrators, their hands tied behind their backs with their shirts, were herded into military trucks outside.

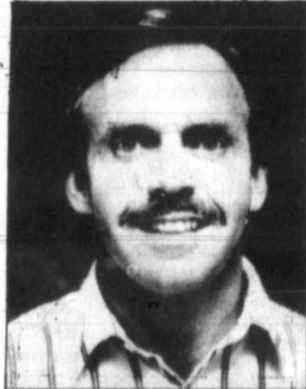
After the first bursts of shooting, volunteer medical workers brought some of the wounded into the hotel lobby and tried frantically to save lives.

Dr. Pradya Chotiya said at about midnight that medical workers had treated more than 100 people, 80 percent with gunshot wounds. After he spoke, more victims were brought in.

"Why did soldiers use so much force? They are crazy people. These people do not know how to get the message across. They only know how to kill," Police Maj. Gen. Uthai Asvavilai told reporters while inspecting the hotel later.



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Collaboration trials calmer, but relatives still desperate

KUWAIT (AP) - A knot of women gather just about every day outside the State Security Court to scan the list of accused collaborators coming up for trial, looking for the names of husbands, sons, brothers.

Although they say problems remain, lawyers and international human rights organizations say this new round of trials for some 100 defendants is fairer.

The women say more than 100 Palestinians, Iraqis, Jordanians and others arrested just after the emirate's February 1991 liberation have disappeared.

Forty defendants have appeared so far. In the two cases that have concluded, both defendants were found innocent.

Many of the men are believed dead, but the women desperately hope they will appear during the second round of trials that began April 11.

Judges spend hours grilling investigating officers and other witnesses in court and, unlike before, defendants can appeal their sentences.

The first trials were staged within weeks of the end of Iraq's seven-month occupation, and in the witch-hunt for collaborators there was widespread criticism that human rights were being trampled in the stampede for revenge.

The State Security Court also has a new president, Judge Salah al-Fahd, who has gained a reputation in 23 years on the bench as fair and tough. He was appointed last year.

A year later, the hysteria has gone. Kuwaitis seem to have lost interest. Newspaper reports of the trials are usually relegated to inside pages. State-run radio and television networks ignore them altogether.

Al-Fahd, whose family played a leading role in the resistance, told Kuwaiti newspapers to stop branding the defendants as collaborators in print until they are proven guilty.

acquired," he said in an interview.

Al-Fahd stressed that the court was independent, and has ordered an investigation of jail beatings. Defendants still accuse their Kuwaiti jailers of beating confessions out of them.

Some law enforcement officials appear to be using the trials to settle family scores.

In one of the new cases, lawyers say, a Kuwaiti police officer had his Jordanian wife arrested on collaboration charges in January after she demanded \$262,000 of her own money he was holding. Jordan backed Iraq during the crisis.

The lawyers want some form of retroactive appeal procedure for the cases tried last year under martial law, which ended June 30, 1991.

Some lawyers have yet to obtain written judgments.

In those trials, 29 people were sentenced to death, although the sentences were commuted to life imprisonment by Crown Prince Saad Abdullah al-Sabah, the martial law governor.

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