

Yugoslav military set to split

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Key Slovene commander sacked as army threatens to launch massive attack

From Tony Barber in Belgrade, Marcus Tanner in Ljubljana and Michael Wise in Vienna

new model in which the interests of all will be protected."

The Yugoslav army warned that the ceasefire in Slovenia could collapse at any moment and said it had gone on to maximum combat readiness. It warned of a "massive and rigorous" attack unless Slovenes lifted a blockade of trapped armoured units.

Janez Jansa, the Slovene Defence Minister, said federal air force helicopters shot at civilian targets near the army base at Vrhnika, wounding one person. He also said the Yugoslav army was transporting munitions into Slovenia and had mobilised 200,000 reservists, mainly in Serbia, for action against Slovenia.

The army issued a statement accusing Slovenia of firing on soldiers with dum-dum bullets and taking hostages among the families of army personnel stationed there. Slovenian officials said 63 people including 13 civilians had been killed and 142 injured.

Slovenia's President, Milan

Kucan, said he did not trust the army to return to its barracks — a central element of the three-point truce brokered at the weekend by the EC. "There is a war. It is not a remote war but one that is being waged in the very heart of Europe," he said.

In Croatia fierce fighting erupted between Croatian policemen and armed Serbian civilians in Borovo Selo, a Serbian enclave where 15 people were killed in ethnic clashes last May. Witnesses reported deafening explosions and bursts of automatic gunfire. The police chief of the eastern Cro-

atian town of Osijek was shot dead as he was travelling to negotiate with representatives of the Serb inhabitants of a nearby village.

Leaders of the 600,000 strong Serbian community in Croatia expressed disgust at Mr Mesic's appointment as Yugoslav president, saying it was a setback for everyone who wanted to preserve the country's unity.

The Serbs, about 12 per cent of Croatia's population, have declared themselves independent and formed heavily armed militias. The official Serbian media indicated that the Yugoslav army

and Serbia's Communist leadership were angry at the international pressure to stop the military crushing Slovenia into submission.

Mr Mesic was appointed president after three EC foreign ministers flew to Yugoslavia on Sunday on their second mission inside 48 hours and requested Serbia to lift a six-week veto in exchange for the suspension of last Tuesday's declarations of independence by Slovenia and Croatia. The deal offered only a slim chance of a lasting settlement, however, as the presidency is an eight-member body that mirrors the divisions among Yugoslavia's six republics and two provinces. Moreover, Slovenia is adamant that it has conceded no ground on the principle of independence.

The German Foreign Minister, Hans-Dietrich Genscher, flew to Belgrade yesterday to investigate the possibility of sending foreign observers to monitor the ceasefire. Slovenia would like UN peacekeeping forces. Mr Gen-

scher was representing the 35 nation Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE) which met in Vienna yesterday to try to ensure the Yugoslav ceasefire would hold.

At yesterday's session the Austrian Ambassador, Martin Vukovich, called for an explanation of Yugoslav military moves, and urged an immediate ceasefire and the return of all armed forces to their barracks, together with the sending of military experts from CSCE states to monitor the end of hostilities.

In Bonn Volker Rühle, a key aide to Chancellor Helmut Kohl, launched a blistering attack on German foreign policy and urged Mr Kohl to push the EC towards recognising the breakaway republics. "We won our unity through the right to self-determination," Mr Rühle, the secretary-general of the Christian Democratic party, said. "If we Germans think everything else in Europe can stay just as it was, if we follow a status quo



policy and do not recognise the right to self-determination in Slovenia and Croatia, then we have no moral or political credibility."

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