

Truce call as Yugoslav bloodshed continues

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DAILY TELEGRAPH

By Michael Montgomery

In Belgrade

YUGOSLAVIA's state presidency made an urgent call for a ceasefire yesterday after seven more people were killed in a new round of ethnic bloodshed that threatens the Balkan country with civil war.

Serb guerrillas killed a Croatian policeman in an ambush near the Adriatic coast and three policemen died when a Yugoslav army tank smashed into their patrol car near Kostajnica in central Croatia and crushed them, police said.

A German journalist and two other policemen were shot dead in villages near Kostajnica, 50 miles south-east of the capital, Zagreb, and a fierce battle raged for several hours in nearby Glina.

Croatian authorities said Serb rebels had launched an offensive against Glina.

More than 80 mortar shells fired from surrounding Serb-populated villages pumelled the police station, one of the few buildings still in Croat hands in the mainly Serb town, said Mr Milan Brezak, Croatia's Deputy Interior Minister.

At least 57 people have died in fighting between Croats and Serbs in Croatia since last Friday.

Nearly 45,000 people, most of them Serbs, have fled their homes in troubled regions in eastern and central Croatia, Yugoslav Red Cross officials said.

Croatia announced security measures to defend against "impending war".

Officials said they had set up dozens of "crisis centres" to organise security forces in case of attack by the federal army and "Serb terrorist squads".

City officials in Sisak placed the district's civil defence network on full alert, a move which is likely to be repeated across Croatia.

In a separate effort to bring together the warring factions, the heads of state of the Pentagonal Initiative — Italy, Yugoslavia, Hungary, Austria and Czechoslovakia — opened talks in Dubrovnik, on Croatia's coast.

Meanwhile, the German Defence Ministry rejected Serbian claims that 35 German military instructors were killed last Monday when Yugoslav air force jets attacked a depot in Croatia.