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EC Withdraws Diplomats From Belgrade in Protest

Eds: Leads with 9 grafs to UPDATE with Croat-Muslim friction; picks up 8th graf pvs, 'More than ...

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SARAJEVO, Bosnia-Herzegovina (AP) Twelve European countries recalled their ambassadors from Serb-dominated Yugoslavia on Monday as Serb forces battled their Muslim and Croat enemies in Bosnia.

The European Community announcement protested Serbian involvement in Bosnia-Herzegovina's ethnic war. The EC harshly criticized Serbia and threatened to further isolate the republic, which has assumed the mantle of the former Yugoslav federation.

Fierce overnight battles in Sarajevo killed at least four people. The fighting snuffed out the eternal flame of a downtown monument honoring Muslim Slav, Serb and Croat unity against Nazi Germany.

The three groups have lived in harmony for centuries in the city of 600,000, which was host of the 1984 Olympics.

Fighting was particularly heavy around Marshal Tito barracks in central Sarajevo.

Federal soldiers were due to withdraw from the barracks under U.N. escort. But Serb militiamen advanced within about a half-mile in an apparent attempt to prevent the departure of the troops, whom ethnic Serbs see as their protectors.

Bosnian forces control the streets around the barracks.

Meanwhile, the first reported clash of Croat and Muslim fighters occurred Sunday in Busovaca, 30 miles northwest of Sarajevo, Bosnian media said Monday.

Some Croats in western Bosnia have refused to accept orders from commanders in Sarajevo, causing friction between the Croat militia and the state's fledgling Muslim-Croat army.

More than 1,300 people have been killed in Bosnia since its Muslims and ethnic Croats voted for independence Feb. 29. Ethnic Serbs who make up one-third of Bosnia's 4.3 million residents oppose independence and have been backed by the Serb-led federal army.

Serbia has received broad international criticism for its role in the Bosnian civil war despite a cease-fire call by Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic and his pledge to relinquish control over federal troops in Bosnia.

Serbia and its ally Montenegro declared a new, smaller Yugoslavia last month.

In Brussels, Belgium, the 12-nation EC announced the withdrawal of its ambassadors from Belgrade, the Serbian and Yugoslav capital. EC officials also said they would seek to suspend Yugoslavia from the 52-nation Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe and consider an economic embargo.

"The role of the federal army is predominant where the fighting flares up, where violence escalates and where innocent victims die," said the Dutch foreign Minister, Hans van den Broek.

In a statement, EC foreign ministers said Belgrade's role in Bosnia's civil war deserved "universal condemnation."

Foreign Minister Willy Claes of Belgium said EC ambassadors will stay away from Belgrade "until we see the situation improve."

Also Monday, the Organization of Islamic Conference in Jiddah, Saudi Arabia, condemned Serbian forces for "aggression" on Bosnia

nationalist parties got power in 1990 elections.

``As soon as you have the concept of three parties being exclusive representatives of ethnic groups, you have a recipe for disaster,`` he said.

Mate Boban, leader of Bosnia's Croats, reportedly cut a deal last week with Karadzic to divide Bosnia ethnically.

According to independent journalist Zdravko Grebo, that means ``a Muslim reservation`` in Bosnia.

And the capital's residents see another bad omen looming.

Gen. Ratko Mladic was appointed to federal army command of Bosnia in Milosevic's purge of the military last week. An aggressive commander in Knin, heart of Serb rebellion in Croatia, Mladic terrifies Sarajevans.

``The battle for Sarajevo will last three hours and kill 300,000,`` predicted Mrs. Kalaba.