Conflict Update
Countries of Focus for the Institute’s Dedicatory Conference
July 6, 2001
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Choice of countries for updates: The countries for the conflict updates are the countries that have been chosen as areas of focus at the Institute’s dedicatory conference, “Peacemaking with Justice: Policy for the 21st Century,” December 5-7, 2001.

Source information: Information presented in this update is condensed from wire and newspaper reports from Lexis/Nexis and from electronic sites on the World Wide Web. Complete biographical information is unavailable from these services, but every attempt has been made to properly cite information and give credit to source materials. This update is intended for use by IPJ staff and associates for informational purposes only. As the material in this update is condensed, and does not directly quote the primary source, information from the update should not be quoted.

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UPDATE SUMMARY

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO
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GUATEMALA
Human rights organization asks court to investigate disappearances; President Portillo addresses human rights prior to meeting with President Bush

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Cease-fire signed; Peace talks resume

NEPAL
Maoist rebels kill five in protest of King Gyanendra’s address to parliament

UPDATE SOURCE ABBREVIATIONS

AP  =  Associated Press
BBC =  British Broadcasting Corporation
CNN =  Cable News Network
EFE =  Agencia EFE (Spanish New Agency)
IRIN =  Integrated Regional Information Network (UN Dept. of Humanitarian Affairs Information Network: www.unog.ch)
DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO (DRC)

Amnesty International Condemns Use of Torture: Amnesty International (AI) issued a report on June 26 condemning the widespread use of torture as a weapon of war in the DRC. AI charged the armed forces of Uganda, Rwanda, and the DRC, and the armed groups allied with them, with widespread human rights abuses. The report detailed the arrest and torture of civilians in areas controlled by the various armed groups, the extensive use of rape against female populations, as well as the kidnapping and execution of political opponents. AI urged foreign governments and international non-governmental organizations to take action in the investigation of human rights abuses, and to provide the resources and expertise necessary to end torture in the DRC. Since the outbreak of hostilities in 1998, the armed forces of Uganda, Rwanda, and Burundi, and the rebel forces they support, have fought with the pro-government forces of the DRC, Zimbabwe, Angola, and Namibia, effectively carving up the country and creating opposing regions of influence. (Amnesty International, June 26; IRIN, June 27; New Vision, June 29, 2001)

Kabila calls for solidarity and reconciliation: DRC President Joseph Kabila, in a June 30 speech commemorating his country’s 41st anniversary of independence, called for solidarity with the people of eastern Congo and national reconciliation. He attacked the “aggression” of Uganda, Rwanda, and Burundi in the war that began in August 1998 as an attempt to “recolonize” the DRC and praised those who had died in the effort to defend his government. Kabila stated that the restoration of peace, the democratization of the country, and national reconstruction were the three challenges his presidency must address. “We have to shake hands with the enemy as long as he understands that dialogue is noble and war dehumanizing.” Joseph Kabila came to power after his father, Laurent Kabila, was assassinated on January 16. His rule is widely viewed as providing a window of opportunity for peace in the troubled region. (IRIN, July 2, 2001)

Presidents of Uganda and DRC meet in Tanzania: Kabila and Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni met on July 4 in Tanzania to discuss implementation of the 1999 Lusaka peace accords. The two hour meeting, chaired by Tanzanian President Benjamin Mkapa, was the first time Kabila and Museveni had met. In a statement issued after the meeting, Mkapa described the summit as a success, saying there was a productive exchange of views between the participants and the speedy implementation of the accords was their highest priority. The Lusaka Accords, signed in May 1999 by parties to the conflict in the DRC, have been stalled on the issues of disarmament and demobilization. (IRIN, July 4; New Vision, July 5, 2001)

GUATEMALA

Human rights organization asks court to investigate disappearances: The Guatemalan National Human Rights Coordinating entity (CONADEHGUA) asked the Guatemalan Supreme Court on June 29 to investigate the whereabouts of 5,000 people kidnapped during the nation’s 36-year civil war. Orlando Blanco, leader of CONADEHGUA, said the “cases were carefully selected, taking into account evidence that could lead not only
to learn the whereabouts of the disappeared but also to established the identity of those responsible.” The petition was to contribute to the fulfillment of the recommendations made by the Truth Commission, which is responsible for investigating the violence that took place during the 1960-1996 war. (EFE, June 30, 2001)

President Portillo addresses human rights prior to meeting with President Bush: Guatemalan President Portillo announced, in a July 3 speech to the Organization of American States, that Guatemala is making progress on human rights issues. Portillo said the government of Guatemala promotes respect for individual rights and that there have been improvements in the country’s court system since the civil war. President Bush and Portillo are scheduled to meet July 5 to discuss issues such as immigration, trade, drug control, and the Bush administration’s support of the Guatemalan peace process. The US was one of the members of the Group of Friends, whose support was decisive in the success of negotiations between the government and the guerrillas. (AP, July 3; EFE, June 29, 2001)

MACEDONIA

Cease-fire signed: The Macedonian government and the Albanian National Liberation Army (NLA) signed separate North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)-brokered cease-fire agreements that took effect midnight July 5. The cease-fire followed clashes between Macedonian troops and the NLA. Though a dozen cease-fires had been previously declared in the past four months of fighting, this most recent agreement is the “first signed cease-fire we have seen,” according to a NATO spokesperson. A holding cease-fire and a stable political environment were the two conditions NATO insisted must be met before they would deploy 3,000 troops to oversee disarmament of NLA forces. The conflict has caused more than 100,000 people to flee Macedonia since the insurgency began in February 2001. However, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) reported July 3 a significant reduction in the number of people fleeing the region. The UNHCR credited the reduction in refugees to the renewed peace talks and reports of demobilization efforts. (BBC July 5; CNN, July 3, 5, 2001)

Peace talks resume: European Union special envoy Francois Leotard and United States State Department special adviser James Pardew, newly appointed US peace envoy to the Balkans, met July 3 with Macedonian President Boris Trajkovski and leaders of Macedonia’s main Slav and Albanian political parties. Trajkovski reported that talks between the four main political parties reached an important stage in the peace process July 4 when they broached discussion of a new constitution. Drafted by French constitutional expert Robert Badinter, the constitution would guarantee greater rights for ethnic Albanians. Though the NLA rebels claimed they were fighting for increased rights, Macedonian officials expressed concern that the rebels wanted to annex part of Macedonia to Kosovo or Albania. (BBC, July 3, 5, 2001)
NEPAL

Maoist rebels kill five in protest of King Gyanendra’s address to parliament: On June 29, hours after King Gyanendra addressed the government, approximately 200 rebels attacked the police station in Tekre Village, 110 miles west of the capital Kathmandu. Five policemen were killed and 25 others sent to nearby hospitals. This was the king’s first address to parliament after ascending the throne earlier this month in the wake of the massacre of nine members of the royal family. Gyanendra alluded to the Maoist insurgency and said security forces would be strengthened to control violence and terrorism. He also pledged to initiate development programs and start efforts to persuade the rebels to give up violence and participate in peaceful politics. Rebels blamed Gyanendra for the royal massacre and called him a puppet in the hands of external powers such as India, urging the army to abandon their loyalty to the palace to join them. More than 1,600 people have been killed since the rebels began the violent campaign in 1996 to convert the Himalayan country’s constitutional monarchy into a republic. The rebels, who model themselves after Peru’s Shining Path guerillas, are also demanding the dismantling of the feudal structure that remains in parts of Nepal. (BBC, June 29; CNN, July 1; The Kathmandu Post, July 1; The New York Times, July 1, 2001)