

# Curb Violence in Burma, Prepare for Transition

down. House and Senate leaders drafted resolutions yesterday condemning the military government, with little of the normal partisan bickering that often accompanies foreign policy debates on Capitol Hill.

The administration, meanwhile, announced sanctions this week aimed at squeezing the government's military leaders and their associates. On Thursday, the Treasury Department imposed new financial sanctions on 14 senior Burmese officials linked to egregious human rights abuses.

Yesterday, the State Department announced that three dozen Burmese military and government officials and their families will be barred from visiting the United States. The U.S. government is also doubling the amount of Burmese-language broadcasts beamed into a country where the authorities have been trying to cut off Internet and other forms of communication with the outside world, an official said.

President Bush has stepped up his rhetoric, calling on other countries

to press Burma, which is also known as Myanmar. He has been joined by first lady Laura Bush, who has adopted the pro-democracy cause in Burma in a rare foray into foreign policy and has issued repeated public statements criticizing the government. Both Bushes have been heavily influenced by private meetings with Burmese dissidents and other activists, current and former administration officials say.

"President Bush calls on all nations, especially those nations closest to Burma that have the most influence with the regime, to support the aspirations of the Burmese people, and to join in condemning the junta's use of violence . . ." the first lady said in a statement last night. "The United States stands with the people of Burma. . . We cannot — and will not — turn our attention from courageous people who stand up for democracy and justice."

Bush met with Chinese Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi in the Oval Office on Thursday for an unscheduled meeting on Burma after the diplomat came to the White House to see

national security adviser Stephen J. Hadley. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice raised the subject of Burma in her own meeting with the foreign minister earlier in the week, and the United States' top diplomat on Asia, Christopher R. Hill, has also discussed the issue in Beijing, where he is attending talks on North Korea's nuclear weapons program, a senior official said.

U.S. officials have limited knowledge about events inside Burma — including the death toll, so far — and depend, in large measure, on news reports and information from refugees, exiles and others in neighboring countries. The United States does have a mission in Burma, but the ability of diplomats there to report has been limited in recent days, officials said.

Still, one senior official said the accounts he is seeing suggest "a regime under severe stress." He said the U.S. government is receiving unconfirmed reports that division-level military commanders in Burma are refusing orders to participate in the crackdown. Another official said

that it is impossible to predict what will happen but that there is "overwhelming dislike" of the government among civilians.

U.S. officials were cautious in their assessment of the diplomatic road ahead. One acknowledged that there have been only "pretty tepid" statements from China and India, but officials were encouraged by a condemnation this week from neighboring members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. State Department officials quietly raised the possibility of introducing another U.N. Security Council resolution on Burma if they do not see stronger action from China and India.

Rep. Tom Lantos (D-Calif.), the chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, said he agrees with the administration that China is key to resolving the situation. "There is no doubt in my mind that if the Chinese authorities decided to put pressure on Burma, things will change instantaneously," he said.

*Staff writer Robin Wright contributed to this report.*

## Communications

to the news agency's Web site.

The new Japanese prime minister, Yasuo Fukuda, said in Tokyo that his government expected a full explanation from the ruling junta on what led to the killing of a Japanese cameraman who was among those acknowledged shot during clashes Thursday. Kenji Nagai, 50, who was shooting for the APFN News video agency, was recorded by another cameraman being taken away by soldiers before being shot.

Southeast Asian diplomats were called in by Burmese authorities Friday. The envoys told news agency reporters in Rangoon that they were informed the military felt it had neutralized the monks' anti-government network with arrests. The junta's security forces planned to turn their attention next to lay political activists and pro-democracy politicians in the National League for Democracy, the party headed by Nobel Peace laureate Aung San Suu Kyi, they said.

Some of her followers have been arrested, exile sources reported. Suu Kyi, 62, has been under house arrest for most of the past 18 years because of her demands for political change.

Sympathizers with the struggle underway in Burma staged rallies Friday across Asia, as well as in Washington and New York, con-



BY SARAH L. VOISIN — THE WASHINGTON POST

demning the junta's crackdown and demanding stronger international action against a military leadership known for brutality. The science association showed evidence of village destruction, forced relocations and a growing military presence at 25 sites across eastern Burma.

On the diplomatic level, a special U.N. envoy, Ibrahim Gambari, flew to Singapore to pick up a visa and was expected to confer with Burma's military leaders this weekend. Foreign ministers of countries belonging to the Association of South-

east Asian Nations, meeting Thursday at the United Nations, condemned the junta's tactics and said they placed great stock in Gambari's mission.

But Kraisake Choonhavan, a former Thai senator and member of an ASEAN parliamentary caucus on Burma, noted that Gambari has already been to Burma and obtained only what turned out to be vain promises of reconciliation and liberalization. "Gambari has been given assurances before," he said at a news conference in Bangkok.

Singapore's ambassador to the United States, Heng Chee Chan, expressed hope but also caution regarding the U.N. envoy's mission.

"Once Gambari is in, maybe the crackdown will not be as severe," she said, "but it is not going to end. Where this dialogue between Gambari and the leadership will lead to is anybody's guess."

*Correspondent Nora Boustany and staff researcher Robert E. Thomason, both in Washington, contributed to this report.*

## Protest Echoes A World Away

Monks from the International Buddhist Center in suburban Washington lead a march protesting military rule in Burma from the Burmese Embassy to the Chinese Embassy.