

Violence flares across India as Sikh leader dies in battle

NEW DELHI (AP) — Government soldiers today found the bullet-riddled body of Sikh leader Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale in a bunker in Amritsar's Golden Temple.

The discovery came as special army units mopped up the last pockets of resistance at the end of a two-day assault on the heavily fortified shrine in which at least 250 Sikhs and 59 soldiers died.

More than 450 Sikh extremists were captured during the battle as Indian army troops, backed by tank and rocket fire, stormed the 12-block area compound.

Angry Sikhs demanded Bhindranwale's body be turned over to them and rioting and arson flared in New Delhi and other cities as Sikhs protested the seizure of the temple, the holiest in the Sikh religion.

Police fired tear gas to disperse 400 Sikhs in New Delhi, 400 kilometres (250 miles) south of Amritsar.

The bodies of Bhindranwale, a 37-year-old fundamentalist preacher who has led a two-year terrorist campaign for greater Sikh rights, and two aides were recovered from the fortified basement of the Akal Takht. As the throne room of Sikh gurus, it is considered the "seat of immortal power."

He and followers armed with machineguns had held out against the government forces after the army took control of the rest of the sprawling 17th century temple yesterday.

It was not immediately known how Bhindranwale died, but he had vowed to kill himself rather than surrender or be captured.

The head of the youth wing of the Sikh political party, the Akali Dal, claimed Bhindranwale was murdered.

"There were 72 rounds in Bhindranwale's body and they (soldiers) shook his body to see if he was still alive," Kuldip Singh told reporters in the capital. He did not

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Bhindranwale

TORONTO STAR, THURSDAY, JUNE 7, 1984 ★★

250 Sikhs, 59 soldiers killed in battle for Golden Temple

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say how he obtained the information.

Punjab state was sealed off by authorities last Saturday. Roads were barricaded, telephone lines were cut, a round-the-clock curfew was imposed and Western journalists were ordered out.

Aides found dead

Singh said Sikh youths would march to Amritsar tomorrow to demand the return of Bhindranwale's body and the others for cremation. The Sikh religion requires cremation within 24 hours of death.

"If one Bhindranwale dies, a thousand are born," he said.

Soldiers also were reported to have found the bodies of Amrik Singh, Bhindranwale's nephew and president of the outlawed Sikh Students Union, and a retired major-general said to be the mastermind of the Golden Temple defence in the last few days.

Major Indian newspapers gave guarded approval today to the military raid on the temple, calling it a courageous and inevitable move to stamp out sectarian extremism.

"All right-thinking people will heave a sigh of cautious relief . . . The centre (government) was left with no other alternative but to take firm action," the Hindustan Times said in an editorial.

New protests

An Indian Express editorial said the attack was traumatic and emotionally searing for all Indians, particularly Sikhs, but added: "Forcing entry into the hallowed precincts of the Golden Temple complex has exorcised an evil . . . There is no defeat or victory in this dreadful encounter. India has suffered."

In London, The Guardian said: "The bloody climax of the siege of Amritsar could easily drive moderate Sikhs to new levels of protest at home and abroad . . ."

"The Indian army's inevitable triumph at the Golden Temple could easily become both a pyrrhic victory and the harbinger of further trouble. Mrs. (Indira) Gandhi, having sown the breeze,

has not yet finished reaping the whirlwind."

Bhindranwale was responsible for the wave of Sikh violence in Punjab that has claimed about 400 lives — mostly Hindu — in the last four months, not counting the 300 deaths in the final battle for the Golden Temple.

The Sikhs have demanded a number of political and religious concessions from the central government, ranging from a greater share of interstate waters for Punjab to classification as a separate religion instead of a branch of Hinduism.

Lt.-Gen. R. S. Dayal said troops had seized control of the complex early this morning, including the copper-domed temple itself.

Troops also arrested several hundred people in raids on 37 other religious shrines, including 31 Sikh temples, Dayal said. The United News of India news agency said 20 people died in fighting at one of them.

News of the military action spread quickly through India's

Sikh community, setting off violence in several areas:

□ Twelve people, apparently Hindus, were killed by a Sikh mob in Kathunangal village in Amritsar, the United News of India said;

□ In the northern city of Jammu, Sikh protesters killed one policeman and attacked government offices and Hindu-owned shops, police said;

□ At the biggest Sikh temple in New Delhi, Sikhs burned four city buses and hurled rocks and bricks at police, who responded by firing tear gas shells into the compound;

□ More than 11,000 people fleeing the violence in neighboring Punjab state have streamed into this small town of Ambala, turning it almost overnight into a refugee camp.

Doctors and nurses work round the clock in makeshift tents treating the sick, mostly victims of heat exhaustion. But the sanitation facilities are inadequate and medical authorities fear the outbreak of epidemics.

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□ Rebel's last interview/A14