

TURKEY

# Republic Day bash is tense

People incensed  
over border attack

By HEATHER HADDON  
Herald News

ISTANBUL - As in years past, Turks celebrated Republic Day with parades and songs Monday. But as tensions between the army and Kurdish separatists have grown in recent weeks, the holiday has taken on a more martial tenor this year.

A week ago, Kurdish rebels killed 12 Turkish soldiers in one of the bloodiest single acts in recent Turkish history, an attack that has pushed the country to the brink of war.

Istanbul residents turned out in droves Monday wearing red - their nation's color - in honor of the founding of the Turkish republic 84 years ago. Children

Please see TURKEY, A4

# Turkey: Residents on edge as border clashes continue

Large crowds gathered Monday morning to celebrate Republic Day in Istanbul, Turkey. Residents throughout the country celebrated the day by lighting fireworks. *AP Wirephoto*

WEATHER HADRON Herald News

“Our ancestors suffered to threaten to their homeland and make this republic,” said Eytip Ba’a, a welder from Istanbul who spoke in Turkish through a translator at a Monday morning rally. “We are all born soldiers, regardless if we are at war or not.”

Different civilizations have fought over Turkey for more than 2,000 years.

Even after the republic was founded on Oct. 29, 1923, the

Turkish people endured decades of political instability, military coups and conflicts with foreign nations.

The turmoil has led to a widespread fear about any security threat, according to Narli, the sociology professor.

"People are really traumatized about the possible loss of the republic," said Narli, who often lectures about Turkish politics in the U.S. "It makes for an ultra-

nationalistic fever."

Up until the 1990s, the government banned the language and cultural expression of its minority ethnic groups — including the millions of Turkish Kurds.

Humanitarian organizations condemned the repression and the forced displacement of entire Kurdish villages.

A militant organization known as the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) became the Kur-

The Turkish military squashed the PKK in 1999, but the grassroots group began resuming attacks after the U.S. invasion of Iraq began four years ago. Many political analysts expect that ongoing unrest could lead Iraqi Kurds to form their own state — a possibility that incensed many Turks, and provides little support for the U.S. position.

"Not only are Kurds spread out all over the country, but a Kurdish state would have too many potential aggressors," said Umar Faris, editor of a prominent Kurdish cultural magazine, during an interview Monday in Istanbul.

The Turkish anger came to a boil 10 days ago, when PKK militants ambushed a military convoy.

**"If it wasn't for the PKK, everyone would just be smiling. But now, they come with different emotions."**

METIN ARSLAN, 28  
on the destabilization of Turkey

vov in southeast Turkey.

National newspapers featured the 12 killed soldiers on their covers calling them "martyrs."

Their images hung from the ceilings of the vast Grand Bazaar, an ancient, sprawling covered market of more than 4,000 shops. The patriotic frenzy has driven more flag sales in the last five days than in the previous six months, according to news accounts.

"Everyone living in the Turkish republic is buying a flag," said Metin Arslan, 28, as people snapped up the red fabric for his sidewalk blanket. "Even foreigners are buying them."

Next week, international leaders will gather in Turkey to discuss affairs in Iraq.

will also address whether Turkish soldiers should be mobilized into northern Iraq something American politicians could further destabilize the country.

Arslan, the flag vendor, says the conflict has increased his sales, but Republic Day struck him as bittersweet.

"If it wasn't for the PK everyone would just be smiling sad Arslan, in Turkish. "E now, they come with different emotions."

*Bench. Heather Haddon at 973*