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Martial Law Declared After Kabul Violence

Street Killings Reported

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Washington Post Foreign Service

Afghanistan's Soviet-installed government declared martial law in the capital, Kabul, yesterday amid the eruption of large anti-Soviet demonstrations and recurrent shooting, according to reports from the Afghan city.

Three civilians were reported killed in shooting on Kabul's streets, but there were no other details of their deaths.

Accounts of the latest developments in Afghanistan were generally sketchy, but a compilation of diplomatic and news service reports from Kabul, Washington, Moscow, New Delhi and Islamabad, Pakistan, painted a picture of mounting popular resistance in the capital to the Soviet military occupation and the Moscow-backed Afghan government. The demonstrations were believed to have been the first major public protests since Afghan communists first took power in April 1978.

In announcing martial law, the eight-week-old Afghan government of President Babrak Karmal ordered all residents of Kabul to turn in unauthorized weapons within

24 hours, prohibited gatherings of more than four persons and clamped a stricter overnight curfew on the city.

Soviet troops and armored personnel carriers were reportedly sent into the capital and stationed around key government buildings. Soviet helicopters and jet fighter planes flew low over the city, according to reports from foreign residents there.

"The situation is very, very volatile," State Department spokesman Thomas Reston said. The department had received reports of "considerable firing" in Kabul yesterday as what he described as a nationwide general strike entered its second day.

In Moscow, the Soviet news agency Tass said Afghanistan's secret police yesterday arrested a large group of persons, including an American and 16 Pakistanis, on charges of working to subvert the government under orders from foreign intelligence services.

Tass identified the American only as "Robert Lee" and said he was

A State Department spokesman said there was a Robert Lee who was a private American citizen looking for a teaching job in Kabul. He termed the charge that Lee was a CIA agent "ridiculous." The spokesman said the department had no confirmation of Lee's arrest, but had no reason to doubt it.

About 60 private Americans are known to be living in Afghanistan in addition to about 20 U.S. staffers at the American Embassy in Kabul.

The spokesman said there had been no reported difficulties among the American residents in Afghanistan, but he said they were advised to stay at home.

The State Department said that Soviet reinforcements sent to help maintain control of Kabul had "at least" fired near or over demonstrating Afghan crowds. A department official said the disturbances had not yet been brought under control and that shooting and the chanting of anti-Soviet slogans continued after nightfall yesterday.

In a statement broadcast by Kabul radio and reported by Tass, the Afghan Interior Ministry said British, American, Pakistani and Chinese "mercenaries" had "resorted to open instigatory and subversive actions in Kabul, trying to disrupt tranquility of the city."

The statement said that the Afghan government was "striving to prevent these incendiary actions" and "preserve democratic norms" but that the mercenaries openly engaged in "plunder and arson."

In Kabul, there were indications that the communist authorities fear the possible spread of civil disobedience to government employees. According to the State Department, the official Kabul radio in its martial law announcement ordered civil servants to

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