

Waldheim Denies New Charges Of Involvement In Atrocities

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proceedings."

The Chicago Tribune reported that Waldheim admitted in an interview with that paper that he knew of Nazi reprisals against Yugoslav partisans, but insists he was not involved in carrying them out.

"Orders to carry out reprisals existed," he told the Tribune, but "They came from the highest war office in Berlin. That was well known by everyone. Only I was not involved in it."

Waldheim said in the interview that he was a victim of "a defamation campaign against me by all kinds of circles" and added that he has no intentions of resigning as Austrian president, despite increasing pressure to do so.

But Waldheim again rejected charges that he participated in reprisals against civilians or deportation of Jews to concentration camps during

his term as an intelligence officer and interpreter in the Wehrmacht.

According to the report in Stern, Waldheim worked for a captain whose task included the coordination of fascist Croatian forces (Ustasha) and the German field police, as well as the installation of collection camps for prisoners of war.

According to spokesman for Waldheim, his tasks had only included "office work, the reporting of and dealing with supply goods." The official explanation of Waldheim's war role is as a "subordinate supply officer" who did not "take part in any combat, intelligence or counterintelligence operations, nor in the handling of POWs or civilians during that assignment."

Waldheim told the Chicago Tribune that his main task as a 23-year-old first lieutenant

was to compile a daily record of troop activities during the Wehrmacht campaign in the Balkans.

The new charges and admissions come as the Austrian-funded commission investigating Waldheim prepares to publish its conclusions, although additional information may push back publication of the findings to a later date.

Waldheim has reportedly said that although he himself convened the commission investigating him, he does not feel its verdict will be binding. He said, "A head of state could never submit himself to a private foreign tribunal." Waldheim said it is "up to me to decide on the consequences."

Meanwhile, a remark last week by Neil Sher of the U.S. Justice Department's Office of Special Investigations has triggered a diplomatic protest by the Austrian government.

Sher said that all the documents leading to the U.S. decision to put Waldheim on the "watch list" for unwanted aliens had been based on evidence of his

direct involvement in international investigatory commission, since they were part of an internal investigation.

The secretary of the Austrian Foreign Ministry, Thomas Klestil, summoned the U.S. temporary envoy in Vienna, Philip Habib, to express the Austrian government's displeasure over the remark. At the same time, the Austrian ambassador in Washington lodged a protest to the U.S. government.

The mounting reports about Waldheim appear for the first time to be having a negative effect

on the Austrian head of state's popularity.

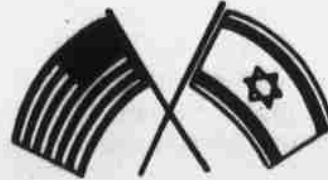
A poll published by an Austrian paper indicated that 50 percent of Austrians would favor Waldheim's resignation if the historians' commission found he knew about war crimes while in the army. A third of the persons asked were opposed.

The strongest criticism of Waldheim came from persons aged 30 to 49, of whom

60 percent favored a resignation, while older and younger Austrians remained under the 50 percent mark.

All previous polls have indicated that Waldheim would again be elected if he were a contender in a new election.

Meanwhile, Nazi-hunter Beate Klarsfeld was briefly detained by Austrian police in Vienna, where she was arrested for trying to paste anti-Waldheim posters on the former imperial palace. The posters recalled that 1988 will be the 50th anniversary of the Anschluss, Germany's annexation of Austria.



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