

COMMANDING OFFICER SLAIN

Mutiny by Sikhs in Indian army

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NEW DELHI, India (UPI) — Sikh soldiers in the Indian army rebelled in three places yesterday and killed their commanding officer in one instance, officials said.

At least three people were killed in the widely scattered mutinies sparked by an army assault last week on the holiest shrine of the Sikh religion, the Golden Temple in the Punjab city of Amritsar. More than 500 people were killed in the attack ordered by Prime Minister Indira Gandhi.

Troops of the Sikh regimental centre at Ramgarh camp in Bihar state, 804 km (about 500 miles) east of New Delhi, murdered their commander, Brig. Gen. R.S. Puri, a defence ministry spokesman said.

Two other senior officers and a number of soldiers were seriously wounded in heavy shooting at the camp that began before noon and continued until 4 p.m.

Police said the soldiers joined other angry Sikhs in hijacking private buses and trucks at gunpoint. They set out in at least 35 seized vehicles toward New Delhi before reinforcements from the 24th moun-

tain regiment arrived to stop them.

Sikh soldiers remaining behind at the camp raised a white flag of surrender when the reinforcements arrived.

Soldiers, believed to be Sikhs, also rebelled near Pune, 1,448 km (about 900 miles) southwest of New Delhi, the Press Trust of India reported.

Police said soldiers travelling in three military vehicles fired at passing cars and trucks, killing at least one person and injuring another.

The newspaper, *Indian Express*, carried details of a third mutiny that had been categorically denied by an official government spokesman.

It quoted eyewitnesses saying Sikh mutineers in Sri Ganganagar district, 643 km (400 miles) west of New Delhi, seized nine jeeps and four trucks on Friday. The troops killed one policeman and wounded another on their way toward the border with Punjab about 30 miles away.

Sikh soldiers make up about 10% of the Indian army and hold many of the top ranks.