

X/13 EURO - AUSTRIAN ARMY CALLED FOR STAND-BY EXERCISE

VIENNA, SEP 7 (RFE SPECIAL/KOSTRBA) - A STATE OF READINESS HAS BEEN DECLARED FOR THE AUSTRIAN ARMY'S FIRST AND THIRD REGIONAL COMMANDS, INCLUDING THE PROVINCES OF LOWER AUSTRIA, BURGENLAND, UPPER AUSTRIA, SALZBURG AND TIROL, THE AUSTRIAN DEFENCE MINISTRY ANNOUNCED ON SATURDAY.

ACCORDING TO THE MINISTRY, THE EXERCISE REPRESENTS A CONTINUATION OF THE OVERALL STATE OF ALERT WHICH BEGAN FOR THE AUSTRIAN ARMY SHORTLY AFTER THE FIRST NEWS ABOUT THE MILITARY INVASION OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA REACHED VIENNA IN THE EARLY HOURS OF AUGUST 21.

ALTHOUGH UNITS OF THE AUSTRIAN ARMY, DEPLOYED ALONG THE AUSTRO-CZECHOSLOVAK BORDER SINCE AUGUST 21 WERE WITHDRAWN LAST MONDAY AT 1800 HOURS FROM THEIR FIELD POSITIONS NORTH OF THE DANUBE AND ORDERED BACK TO THEIR GARRISONS, THE OVERALL STATE OF ALERT WAS NOT CALLED OFF, THE MINISTRY SAID.

ACCORDING TO THE MINISTRY, MOST OF THE UNITS AT READINESS NOW WERE DEPLOYED ALONG THE BORDER SINCE AUGUST 21. AND THIS WEEK-END EXERCISE IS MEANT TO TEST THEIR ENDURANCE.

QUESTIONED ABOUT THE PRESENT MILITARY SITUATION, AUSTRIAN DEFENCE MINISTER DR GEORG PRADER SAID OVER AUSTRIA RADIO ON SATURDAY NIGHT THAT "THE OVERALL MILITARY SITUATION AND ALL THAT IS GOING ON AROUND AUSTRIA DEMANDS INCREASED PREPAREDNESS".

"MILITARY MEASURES ARE BEING INTRODUCED EVERYWHERE AND AT THE MOMENT THEY ARE NOT QUITE COMPREHENSIBLE. WE HOPE THAT THESE MEASURES ARE NOT GOING TO CAUSE NEW DIFFICULTIES. BUT ALL THAT IS HAPPENING AROUND US DEMANDS INCREASED READINESS", PRADER SAID.