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Athens Vows Not to Yield To Blockade by Farmers

Reuters

ATHENS — Greece's Socialist government appeared Wednesday to shrug off a rash of strikes and an extended road blockade by farmers protesting its tough 1997 budget and austerity program.

A strike by seamen, which entered its second day, has left ships docked at ports in Greece. Doctors, tax, customs and Finance Ministry employees were also on strike Wednesday.

In addition, civil aviation unions, except air traffic controllers, have announced a 24-

hour strike for Friday that is certain to disrupt flight schedules.

Farmers, who have blockaded Greece's main highways for 21 days, vowed to march on Athens on Thursday, but there were signs that the number of barricades was dwindling as a blockade on a key road to Athens was lifted.

"As far as the government is concerned, our position is very clear," said Yannis Papandoniου, the national economy minister. "We shall not give in. There is no room for further concessions to farmers."