

NATION/WORLD

Ivory Coast Under Heavy Arms Fire

ABIDJAN, Ivory Coast (AP) — Heavy arms fire rang out Wednesday near the home of the country's strongman who remained holed up in a subterranean bunker, as forces backing his rival assaulted the residence to try to force him out, diplomats and witnesses said.

Forces protecting Laurent Gbagbo appeared to rally Wednesday night, pushing back the armed group fighting to install democratically elected president Alassane Ouattara.

A spokesman for Ouattara's fighters, Yves Doumbia, said their forces breached the gates of the ruler's compound, only to be repelled by heavy arms fire.

Gbagbo has suffered debilitating losses in the past two days. United Nations Mi-24 helicopters attacked and destroyed his arms depots on Monday.

Saudi Chief Says Iran Exploiting Unrest

RIYADH, Saudi Arabia (AP) — Defense Secretary Robert Gates tried to smooth the worst rift in years with Arab ally and oil producer Saudi Arabia on Wednesday, reassuring the Saudi king that the U.S. remains a steady friend despite support for pro-democracy revolutions in the Middle East.

The Saudi king, looking thin after months of medical treatment in the United States and elsewhere, welcomed Gates for what the Pentagon chief later said was a cordial and warm visit.

The hospitality masked deep unease among Saudi Arabia's aged leadership about what the political upheaval in the Middle East means for its hold on power, its role as the chief counterweight to a rising Iran, and its changed relationship with the United States.

In a sign of the depth of the Obama administration's concern about the political earthquake that has shaken the region, including the island of Bahrain off Saudi Arabia's Persian Gulf coast, this was Gates' third trip to the area in the past month. He has echoed Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton's cautioning of authoritarian Arab governments on the risks of moving too slowly in response to peaceful protests for political freedom.

Saudi Arabia views the threat of a nuclear strike from Iran as a far larger issue than the drive for political freedoms in Egypt and elsewhere.

Fox News To End Relationship Beck

NEW YORK (AP) — Glenn Beck later this year will end his Fox News Channel talk show, which has sunk in the ratings and has suffered from an advertiser boycott.

Fox and Beck's company, Mercury Radio Arts, said Wednesday they will stay in business creating other projects for Fox television and digital, starting with some documentaries Beck is preparing.

Beck was a quick burn on Fox News Channel. Almost immediately after joining the network in January 2009, he doubled the ratings at his afternoon time slot. Fans found his conservative populism entertaining, while Comedy Central's Stephen Colbert described Beck's "crank up the crazy and rip off the knob" moments.

He was popular with Tea Party activists and drew thousands of people to the National Mall in Washington last August for a "restoring honor" rally.

Yet some of his statements were getting him in trouble, and critics appealed to advertisers to boycott his show last summer after Beck said President Barack Obama had "a deep-seated hatred for white people."

Gadhafi, In Letter, Asks Obama To End Strikes

BY MATTHEW LEE
Associated Press

Libyan leader Moammar Gadhafi has appealed directly to President Barack Obama to halt what the Libyan leader called "an unjust war," and wished Obama good luck in his bid for re-election next year.

In a rambling, three-page letter to Obama obtained Wednesday by The Associated Press, Gadhafi implored Obama to stop the NATO-led air campaign, which the Libyan leader called an "unjust war against a small people of a developing country."

"You are a man who has enough courage to annul a wrong and mistaken action," Gadhafi wrote in the letter that was sent to the State Department and forwarded immediately to the White House, according to a U.S. official who has seen the letter. "I am sure that you are able to shoulder the responsibility for that."

"To serving world peace ... Friendship between our peoples

... and for the sake of economic, and security cooperation against terror, you are in a position to keep Nato (NATO) off the Libyan affair for good," Gadhafi wrote.

White House press secretary Jay Carney confirmed that the White House received a letter from Gadhafi.

As for Gadhafi's call for a ceasefire, Carney appeared to dismiss it for now.

"The conditions the president laid out are clear," Carney told reporters traveling with Obama to New York Wednesday afternoon.

In the letter, received earlier Wednesday, Gadhafi says his country had been hurt more morally than physically by the NATO campaign and that a democratic society could not be built through missiles and aircraft. He also repeated his claim that his foes are members of the al-Qaida terrorist network.

The letter, composed in formal but stilted English, includes numerous spelling and grammatical errors.



AKIRA SUWA/PHILADELPHIA INQUIRER/MCT
President Barack Obama speaks at a town hall meeting in Fairless Hills, Pennsylvania, Wednesday. He did not acknowledge the letter received from Libyan leader Moammar Gadhafi calling for Obama to call off NATO air strikes on Libya.

"Our dear son, Excellency, Baraka Hussein Abu oumama, your intervention is the name of the U.S.A. is a must, so that Nato

(NATO) would withdraw finally from the Libyan affair," Gadhafi wrote. "Libya should be left to Libyans within the African union

frame."

Gadhafi said his country had already been unfairly subjected to "a direct military armed aggression" ordered by then-President Ronald Reagan, who famously called the leader the "Mad Dog of the Middle East," in 1986, as well as earlier rounds of U.S. and international sanctions.

Although he listed a litany of complaints, Gadhafi said he bears no ill will toward Obama.

"We have been hurt more morally (than) physically because of what had happened against us in both deeds and words by you," he wrote. "Despite all this you will always remain our son whatever happened. We still pray that you continue to be president of the U.S.A. We Endeavour and hope that you will gain victory in the new election campaign."

The letter, dated April 5, 2011 in Tripoli is signed by "Mu'ammer Qaddafi, Leader of the Revolution."

Wis. Voters Send Gov. Angry Message

MADISON, Wis. (AP) — Wisconsin voters sent Republican Gov. Scott Walker a clear message about their unhappiness with his muscling through a law restricting union rights by sending a once runaway state Supreme Court race toward a near-certain recount and filling the governor's former post with a Democrat.

While Walker downplayed the significance of Tuesday's elections on Wednesday, saying they were skewed by exceptional turnout in the liberal cities of Madison and Milwaukee, Democrats warned they were only a sign of what's to come. Recall efforts have been launched against 16 state senators from both parties for their support or opposition to the bill eliminating most public employees' collective bargaining rights.

collective bargaining rights.

In the most closely watched race, a little-known assistant state attorney harnessed union supporters' anger to come from behind and possibly unseat a Wisconsin Supreme Court justice often associated with Walker.

Justice David Prosser won a nonpartisan, four-way primary with 55 percent of the vote. The general election was expected to be a runaway after second-place finisher JoAnne Kloppenburg got half as many votes.

But Wednesday, unofficial returns showed Kloppenburg with a slim 204-vote lead over Prosser. His campaign has said a recount is expected.

In another significant race, Democrat Chris Abele bested

Republican state Rep. Jeff Stone to become the next Milwaukee County executive.

Walker discounted Abele's win, saying Milwaukee County is historically Democratic. He also chalked up the close Supreme Court race to heavy voting in Milwaukee and Madison. Turnout in the state capital, which was rocked by three weeks of protests that drew as many as 85,000 people to one rally, was 54 percent — twice the level usually seen in an April election.

"You have two very different worlds in this state," the governor said. "You have a world driven by Madison and a world driven by everybody else out across the state of Wisconsin."

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MONDAY-FRIDAY

Thursday
7:40 Greg Hill
8:15 Carla Addy/Susan Schavee
8:45 Noreen Gibson

Friday
7:40 SD Magazine
8:15 Barb Clayton
8:45 Bruce Schield