

Facebook Says It'll Spend \$1B For Instagram

NEW YORK (AP) — Facebook is spending \$1 billion to buy the photo-sharing company Instagram in the social network's largest acquisition ever.

Instagram lets people apply filters to photos they snap with their mobile devices and share them with friends and strangers. Some of the filters make the photos look as if they've been taken in the 1970s or on Polaroid cameras.

"This is an important milestone for Facebook because it's the first time we've ever acquired a product and company with so many users," CEO Mark Zuckerberg wrote on his Facebook page. "We don't plan on doing many more of these, if any at all."

Facebook said it plans to keep Instagram running independently. That's a departure from its tendency to buy small startups and integrate the technology — or shut them down altogether just so it can hire talented engineers and developers.

"We think the fact that Instagram is connected to other services beyond Facebook is an important part of the experience," Zuckerberg wrote. "We plan on keeping features like the ability to post to other social networks, the ability to not share your Instagrams on Facebook if you want, and the ability to have followers and follow people separately from your friends on Facebook."

Syrian Troops Fire Over Borders With Lebanon

BEIRUT (AP) — Syrian forces opened fire across two tense borders Monday, killing a TV journalist in Lebanon and wounding at least six people in a refugee camp in Turkey on the eve of a deadline for a cease-fire plan that seems all but certain to fail.

A witness at the Turkish camp said he saw two refugees killed, although that account could not be independently confirmed.

Across Syria, activists reported particularly heavy violence with more than 125 people killed in the past two days.

The Obama administration expressed outrage at the violence spilling over the frontiers, saying the Syrian government appeared to have little commitment to the peace plan that was negotiated by former U.N. chief Kofi Annan.

The latest bloodshed was a sign of how easily Syria's neighbors could be drawn into a regional conflagration as President Bashar Assad's crackdown on a year-old uprising becomes increasingly militarized, despite desperate diplomatic efforts.

Iran Seeks Concession As Nuke Talks Begin

TEHRAN, Iran (AP) — Iran is signaling a possible compromise offer heading into critical talks with world powers deeply suspicious of its nuclear program: offering to scale back uranium enrichment but not abandon the ability to make nuclear fuel.

The proposal — floated by the country's nuclear chief as part of the early parrying in various capitals before negotiations get under way Friday — suggested that sanctions-battered Iran is ready to bargain.

But this gambit, at least, appeared to fall short of Western demands that Iran hand over its most potent nuclear material and ease a stand-off that has rattled nerves and spooked markets with seesaw oil prices and threats of Israeli military strikes.

"It is important for Iran to understand that the window is closing and that these talks are an opportunity," White House press secretary Jay Carney said Monday. "The decision rests with Iran."

Stocks Drop In Response To Weak Jobs Data

NEW YORK (AP) — Investors had a three-day weekend to brood over disappointing job growth in March. When they got back to work Monday and delivered their verdict, it wasn't good.

Stocks closed sharply lower, sending the Dow Jones industrial average and the Standard & Poor's 500 index to only their second four-day losing streak this year.

The Dow finished down 130.55 points at 12,929.59, its first close below 13,000 since March 12. The S&P ended the day off 15.88 points at 1,382.20. The Nasdaq composite closed down 33.42 at 3,047.08.

The Dow and S&P had four consecutive trading days of declines at the end of January, but the losses then were smaller. The Dow lost 124 points over that stretch. It has lost about 330 this time.

Stocks had their best first quarter since 1998 but have stumbled in April. Last week, the Federal Reserve suggested that it is disinclined to take further steps to help the economy, and the European debt crisis flared in Spain.

Scientists Predict Payoff On Autism Research

ATLANTA (AP) — More than \$1 billion has been spent over the past decade researching autism. In some ways, the search for its causes looks like a long-running fishing expedition, with a focus on everything from genetics to the age of the father, the weight of the mother, and how close a child lives to a freeway.

That perception may soon change. Some in the field say they are seeing the beginning of a wave of scientific reports that should strengthen some theories, jettison others and perhaps even herald new drugs.

"I do think over the next three to five years we'll be able to paint a much clearer picture of how genes and environmental factors combine" to cause autism, said Geraldine Dawson, a psychologist who is chief science officer for the advocacy group Autism Speaks.

The effort has been infused with new urgency by a recent federal report that found autism disorders are far more common than was previously understood, affecting 1 in 88 U.S. children. Better diagnosis is largely responsible for the new estimate, but health officials said there may actually be more cases of autism, too.

If autism's causes remain a mystery, "you're not going to be able to stop this increase," said Irva Hertz-Picciotto, a researcher at the University of California, Davis who is leading a closely watched study into what sparks autism disorders.

SKorea: North Preps For Nuke Test

BY HYUNG-JIN KIM
Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea — Recent satellite images show North Korea is digging a new underground tunnel in what appears to be preparation for a third nuclear test, according to South Korean intelligence officials.

The excavation at North Korea's northeast Punggye-ri site, where nuclear tests were conducted in 2006 and 2009, is in its final stages, according to a report by intelligence officials that was shared Monday with The Associated Press.

Its release comes as North Korea prepares to launch a long-range rocket that Washington and others say is a cover for testing missile technology that could be used to fire on the United States.

The Obama administration said Monday it would consider both a rocket launch and an underground nuclear test as highly provocative and leave Pyongyang more isolated.

"In each case this would be an indication of North Korea's decision at the leadership level not to take the steps that are necessary to allow North Korea to end its isolation, to rejoin the community of nations and to do something about the extreme poverty and depravation that its people suffer," White House spokesman Jay Carney told a news briefing in Washington.

Susan Rice, the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations and current Security Council president, told CNN on Monday that "either or both developments would be a blatant violation of North Korea's international obligations under Security Council resolutions."

"In the Security Council in New York, I anticipate that the council

would convene to discuss this and to respond in a credible fashion, both to the missile launch and to any potential additional subsequent actions," she said.

Observers fear a repeat of 2009, when international criticism of the North's last long-range rocket launch prompted Pyongyang to walk away from nuclear disarmament negotiations and, weeks later, conduct its second nuclear test. A year later, 50 South Korean were killed in at-

tacks blamed on the North.


"North Korea is covertly preparing for a third nuclear test, which would be another grave provocation," said the intelligence report, which cited U.S. commercial satellite photos taken April 1. "North Korea is digging up a new underground tunnel at the Punggye-ri nuclear test site, in addition to its existing two underground tunnels, and it has been confirmed that the excavation works are in the final stages."


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Florida Teen Death

Case Won't Go To Grand Jury

BY MIKE SCHNEIDER
Associated Press

ORLANDO, Fla. — A grand jury will not look into the Trayvon Martin case, a special prosecutor said Monday, leaving the decision of whether to charge the teen's shooter in her hands alone and eliminating the possibility of a first-degree murder charge.

That prosecutor, Angela Corey, said her decision had no bearing on whether she would file charges against George Zimmerman, the neighborhood watch volunteer who has said he shot the unarmed black teen in self-defense. Corey could still decide to charge him with a serious felony such as manslaughter, which can carry a lengthy prison sentence if he is convicted.

A grand jury had been set to meet Tuesday in Sanford, about 20 miles northeast of Orlando.

Corey has long had a reputation for not using grand juries if it wasn't necessary. In Florida, only first-degree murder cases require the use of grand juries.

Corey's decision means she doesn't have to rely on potentially unpredictable jurors, said David Hill, an Orlando criminal defense attorney.

"Let's give her the benefit of the doubt. Maybe she knows there isn't enough for first-degree murder but she wants to maintain control and charge him with something else," Hill said. "What does she need a grand jury for? She cuts out the unpredictability of the grand jury. She goes where she feels she has more evidence."

Corey took over the case last month after the prosecutor who normally handles cases out of Sanford recused himself. That prosecutor, Norm Wolfinger, had originally called for the case to be presented before a grand jury.

"From the moment she was assigned, Ms. Corey noted she may not need a grand jury," said a statement from Corey's office.

Prosecutors sometimes use grand juries to avoid the political fallout from controversial cases. But Corey was elected by voters more than 100 miles away in the Jacksonville area, so political problems are less of an issue for Corey, Hill said.

Martin was killed Feb. 26 during a confrontation with Zimmerman in a gated community in Sanford.

Zimmerman has claimed self-defense, and Florida's self-defense law gives wide leeway



RED HUBER/ORLANDO SENTINEL/MCT
Dream Defenders block the entrance to Sanford Police Department Monday in protest against the handling of the Trayvon Martin case by police.

to use deadly force and eliminates a person's duty to retreat in the face of danger.

Zimmerman's attorney, Craig Sonner, said he didn't want to comment on Corey's decision.

An attorney for Martin's parents said in a statement that he is not surprised by the decision to avoid the grand jury and hopes a decision is reached soon.

"The family has been patient throughout this process and asks that those who support them do the same during this very important investigation," said attorney Benjamin Crump.

The case has led to protests across the nation and spurred a debate about race and the laws of self-defense. Martin was black; Zimmerman's father is white and his mother is Hispanic.

In Georgia, a civil rights activist is challenging that state's so-called stand your ground law. The Rev. Markel Hutchins said he sued Monday in Atlanta in response to Martin's death. The lawsuit claims the law leads to the unnecessary use of lethal force.

On Monday, one protest led to the temporary closing of the Sanford Police Department

offices to the public for most of the day as about a half dozen student activists blocked the building entrance.

Police officers took no action to remove the protesters, who were part of a group of students who marched from Daytona Beach to Sanford over the weekend.

Citizens wanting to do business with the police department were directed to City Hall. Calling themselves "the Dream Defenders," the protesters demanded Zimmerman's arrest; a special investigation into the Sanford Police Department; a community meeting; and the firing of the city manager and the police chief who temporarily stepped down after Martin's death, Bill Lee. Darren Scott, a 23-year veteran of the Sanford Police Department, was named acting chief. Lee is still employed with the department and receiving his salary.

After meeting with six of the protesters, city officials agreed only to a community forum next week.

"The city certainly is committed to justice for Trayvon Martin," said City Manager Norton Bonaparte Jr.

Decision 2012

Romney Begins Tough Transition In Race

BY THOMAS BEAUMONT
Associated Press

DES MOINES, Iowa — Mitt Romney faces a daunting to-do list as he transitions into the role of likely Republican presidential nominee.

Among the tasks: Raise as much money as possible for the general election campaign against President Barack Obama. Hire more people and send them to the most critical states in the fall race. Hone his message to appeal to voters across the political spectrum.

And do it all quickly while fending off challenges from GOP rivals who refuse to quit the primary race.

Obama, with the advantages of an incumbent, is well ahead of Romney on fundraising, organization and broad pitches to voters. So Romney can be expected to spend part of his time over the next three weeks trying to catch up. There's a break in the primaries lasting until April 24, when several Northeastern states vote.



Romney

pare to put his imprint on the Republican National Committee and figure out how to achieve unity with a conservative base that has resisted his candidacy. In the general election, party loyalists will be counted on to raise money and get out the vote.

"I do think the Romney team is thinking about how they put in place their fall campaign," said Terry Nelson, a former top aide to President George W. Bush. "But they clearly have some contests to get through, so they won't be able to turn their eyes entirely to that."

There's little question that

Romney will clinch the nomination in June, if not earlier. He has a wide lead in the race for the 1,144 delegates required to secure the GOP nomination. But chief rival Rick Santorum says he'll press on at least through the end of the month. Pennsylvania, which he represented in the House and Senate, votes April 24, along with Connecticut, Delaware, New York and Rhode Island.

In hopes of convincing Republicans it's time to rally behind Romney, leading Republicans such as Sen. Marco Rubio of Florida and Rep. Paul Ryan of Wisconsin have endorsed him recently; both are viewed as potential running mates. Former Rhode Island Gov. Don Carcieri has said he would back Romney and Iowa Gov. Terry Branstad may announce his support soon.

Romney is sounding more like a general election candidate each day. "It isn't about one person or about even one party," he said last week. "We're Republicans and De-

mocrats in this campaign, but we're all connected with one destiny for America."

After a break for the Easter holiday, Romney is expected to plunge back into fundraising in New York and South Florida. That's none too soon for Republicans, given Obama's fundraising advantage.

"Ultimately, the thing we have to focus on is getting the general election money raised," said Brian Ballard, of Florida, one of Romney's top fundraisers.

Obama, without a Democratic challenger, has been free to raise money strictly for the general election. He's so far raised more than \$300 million for his re-election campaign and the Democratic National Committee. Romney can't raise cash for the Republicans until he clinches the nomination, but he's brought in more than \$75 million for his campaign.

Romney aides said solicitations for general election donations were starting to go out.

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