

Clinton Unveils 2016 Bid

Next Move Will Be To Head To Iowa

BY KEN THOMAS AND LISA LERER

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Hillary Rodham Clinton jumped back into presidential politics on Sunday, making a much-awaited announcement she will again seek the White House with a promise to serve as the “champion” of everyday Americans.

Clinton opened her bid for the 2016 Democratic nomination by positioning herself as the heir to the diverse coalition of voters who elected her immediate predecessor and former campaign rival, President Barack Obama, as well as an appeal to those in her party still

leery of her commitment to fighting income inequality.

And unlike eight years ago, when she ran as a candidate with a deep resume in Washington, Clinton and her personal history weren't the focus of the first message of her campaign. In the online video that kicked off her campaign, she made no mention of her time in the Senate and four years as secretary of state, or the prospect she could make history as the nation's first female president.

Instead, the video is collection of voters talking about their lives, their plans and aspirations for the future. Clinton doesn't appear until the very end.

“I'm getting ready to do something, too. I'm running for president,” Clinton said. “Americans have fought their way back from tough economic times, but the deck is still stacked in favor of those at the top.”

“Every day Americans need a champion, and I want to be that champion, so you can do more than just get by. You can get ahead and stay ahead.”

It's a message that also made an immediate play to win over the support of liberals in her party for whom economic inequality has become a defining issue. They remain skeptical of Clinton's close ties to Wall Street and the centrist economic policies of the administration of her husband, former President Bill Clinton.

Many had hoped Clinton would face a challenge from Massachusetts Sen. Elizabeth Warren, who has said she will not run.



Foreign Policy Breakthroughs Face Tough Sell

BY JIM KUHNHENN

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — After breakthroughs abroad, President Barack Obama is finding stern challenges at home to his foreign policy, facing hard sells to skeptics over U.S. shifts, first on Iran and now Cuba.

Obama returned to Washington early Sunday still basking in the attention from his historic meeting with Cuban President Raul Castro at a summit of Western Hemisphere leaders. But Obama is certain to find a less appreciative crowd in Congress than the one he left behind at the Summit of the Americas in Panama.

To complete a nuclear agreement with Iran, Obama must deal with resistance in Congress and the unpredictability of the Iranian leadership, which has a distinctly different interpretation of what the sides have settled on so far.

Cuba and Iran offer Obama, whose term ends in early 2017, the potential for legacy-crowning achievements. Iran may prove a greater challenge than Cuba, but together they are subjecting Obama's foreign policy to the kind of scrutiny that most international issues, short of war, rarely draw.

Obama made clear in a closing news conference late Saturday in Panama City that he believes he can handle the twin trials. The American public is on his side on Cuba, the president said, and he had tough words for Republicans defying him on Iran.

Both have their roots in decades of grievances. Both have had constituencies in the U.S. deeply mistrustful of the governments with which Obama is dealing. Pro-Israel Americans cannot fathom a deal with an Iran that will not recognize Israel's existence. And for long, Cuban-Americans who escaped Fidel Castro's revolution could not imagine a U.S. government not committed to ousting the Havana government.

On the flip side, Cuba is hardly the threat Iran could



Cuban leader Raul Castro, middle, waves during the family photo event at the 7th Summit of the Americas in Panama City, Panama, on Saturday.

be. Public opinion no longer demonizes Cuba. In the end, Obama's efforts to re-establish normal relations looks like the lesser burden.

When it comes to Cuba, “the American people don't need to be persuaded,” Obama said.

Still, there are reminders that the barriers have not all fallen.

Castro, in a lengthy speech at the summit, recited a litany of objections to past U.S. policies. And the room where Obama and Castro met displayed no flags, thus declaring the absence of diplomatic relations.

Obama's next step is removing Cuba from the United States' list of state sponsors of terrorism. Such a decision, recommended by the State Department, could come in days. Obama would have to notify Congress. Lawmakers do not have to ratify the decision, but they have 45 days to disapprove it.

Such a vote, if attempted, probably would not succeed. But the issue is percolating just as 2016 presidential candidates are jumping into the race.

Florida, once the center of anti-Castro activism, is a pivotal presidential state,

and some Republican candidates will try for a political upper hand by accusing Obama of weakening America's place in the world.

“President Obama's foreign policy has been one appeasement toward autocratic dictators, thugs, and adversaries after another,” Sen. Lindsey Graham, a South Carolina Republican toying with a presidential run, said amid news Obama was to sit down with Castro.

The White House hardly appears worried about the politics of Cuban diplomacy, given that support for ending more than 50 years of U.S. isolation of the island nation crosses party and geographic lines.

“Perhaps the most important difference is that while Iran is inherently a security issue, today Cuba is the opposite,” said Carl Meacham, a former senior Republican aide on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee who now is a director at the Center for Security and International Studies. “If he removes Cuba for the list of state sponsors of terror, President Obama will demonstrate that the United States can no longer reasonably look at Cuba as a threat to our own security.”

Obama perceives the Iran deal as far more fragile.

Iran and the world powers negotiating the deal have until the end of June to reach a final deal. Congress is angling to assert authority over the final agreement, and even some of Obama's Democratic allies support that.

But Obama reserves most of his frustrations for Republicans and he singled out Sen. John McCain of Arizona, his 2008 presidential rival, for specific scorn during Saturday's new conference.

McCain last week declared a major setback in the nuclear talks after Iran's supreme leader demanded that sanctions against Tehran had to be lifted immediately after a deal went into place.

Obama cast McCain's criticism as an assault on the credibility of Secretary of State John Kerry.

“Now we have a senator suggesting that our secretary of state is purposefully misinterpreting the deal and giving the supreme leader of Iran the benefit of the doubt in the interpretations,” Obama said. “That's not how we're supposed to run foreign policy, regardless of who is president or secretary of state.”

Fatal Shooting Drew Together Lives

NORTH CHARLESTON, S.C. (AP) — But for a series of split-second decisions that followed a traffic stop, Walter Scott might still be alive and police officer Michael Slager still patrolling the streets.

When the two men's lives intersected on April 4, Scott had just purchased a used car from a neighbor. Slager was starting a routine weekend shift on a warm spring day. In a matter of minutes, one man was dead. Within days, the other was charged with murder.

A third man on his way to work captured the encounter on cellphone video that shocked the world and added fuel to the national debate about race and aggressive police tactics that began in August with the shooting death of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri.

Family members say Scott was so fearful of returning to jail over late child-support payments that he tried to outrun the law. And the officer, amid the adrenaline of a short foot chase, fired a fatal volley of eight bullets at the back of a fleeing suspect who appeared to pose no immediate threat.

Turkey Recalls Vatican Ambassador

VATICAN CITY (AP) — Pope Francis on Sunday marked the 100th anniversary of the slaughter of Armenians by calling the massacre by Ottoman Turks “the first genocide of the 20th century” and urging the international community to recognize it as such. Turkey immediately responded by recalling its ambassador and accusing Francis of spreading hatred and “unfounded claims.”

Francis issued the pronouncement during a Mass in St. Peter's Basilica commemorating the centenary that was attended by Armenian church leaders and President Serge Sarkisian, who praised the pope for calling a spade a spade and “delivering a powerful message to the international community.”

“The words of the leader of a church with 1 billion followers cannot but have a strong impact,” he told The Associated Press.

Historians estimate that up to 1.5 million Armenians were killed by Ottoman Turks around the time of World War I, an event widely viewed by scholars as the first genocide of the 20th century.

Turkey, however, denies a genocide took place. It has insisted that the toll has been inflated and that those killed were victims of civil war and unrest.

ISIS Bombs Ancient City Of Nimrud

BAGHDAD (AP) — Islamic State militants hammered, bulldozed and ultimately blew up parts of the ancient Iraqi Assyrian city of Nimrud, destroying a site dating back to the 13th century B.C., an online militant video purportedly shows.

The destruction at Nimrud, located near the militant-held city of Mosul, came amid other attacks on antiquity carried out by the group now holding a third of Iraq and neighboring Syria in its self-declared caliphate. The attacks have horrified archaeologists and U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, who last month called the destruction at Nimrud “a war crime.”

The seven-minute video, posted late Saturday, shows bearded militants using sledgehammers, jackhammers and saws to take down huge alabaster reliefs depicting Assyrian kings and deities. A bulldozer brings down walls, while militants fill barrels with explosives and later destroy three separate areas of the site in massive explosions.

“God has honored us in the Islamic State to remove all of these idols and statues worshipped instead of Allah in the past days,” one militant says in the video. Another militant vows that “whenever we seize a piece of land, we will remove signs of idolatry and spread monotheism.”

The militants have been destroying ancient relics they say promote idolatry that violate their fundamentalist interpretation of Islamic law, including the ancient Iraqi city of Hatra, a UNESCO World Heritage site. Authorities also believe they've sold others on the black market to fund their atrocities.

Ex-Security Guards To Be Sentenced

WASHINGTON (AP) — A yearslong legal fight over a deadly shooting of civilians in an Iraq war zone reaches its reckoning point with the sentencing this week of four former Blackwater security guards.

Dustin Heard, Evan Liberty and Paul Slough face mandatory, decadeslong sentences because of firearms convictions. A fourth defendant, Nicholas Slatten, faces life in prison after being found guilty of first-degree murder.

At the hearing Monday in U.S. District Court, defense lawyers intend to appeal for mercy by arguing that their clients acted in self-defense during a chaotic firefight in Baghdad. They also plan to argue that sending the defendants to prison for decades would be an unfairly harsh outcome for men who have close family ties and proud military careers, and who were operating in stressful conditions in a war-torn country.

The men were charged in the deaths of 14 Iraqis at Nisoor Square, a crowded traffic circle in downtown Baghdad. The killings caused an international uproar and became a dark episode of contractor violence during the Iraq war. Defense lawyers argued that the contractors, who arrived there after a car bomb exploded, were targeted with gunfire from insurgents and Iraqi police, and shot back in self-defense. Prosecutors contended that there was no incoming fire and that the shooting was unprovoked.

Report: US Reporter Held In Iran Facing Charges

BY ALI AKBAR DAREINI

Associated Press

TEHRAN, Iran — A Washington Post journalist detained in Iran for over eight months is accused of “espionage” and “acting against national security,” the semiofficial Fars news agency reported Sunday.

The report did not elaborate on the source of the information, but the agency is regarded as close to Iran's hard-liners.

Iranian officials have previously said Jason Rezaian is facing “security” charges and that he will stand trial before the Revolutionary Court — which mainly hears sensitive cases involving national security.

Rezaian's lawyer, Leila Ahsan, declined to comment on the specific charges against her client, but told The Associated Press she had finished studying the text of the indictment and would brief Rezaian's family in the coming days.

Ahsan added that she visited Rezaian in prison last month.

“He appeared to be in good health and spirits. I can see him anytime. Jason asked me to provide a strong defense. I'm in constant touch with his wife and family. I've requested that the court hold the trial as soon as possible,” she said.

Rezaian, along with his wife, Yeganeh Salehi, and two photojournalists were detained on July 22 in Tehran. All were later released except Rezaian, who is a dual U.S.-Iranian citizen. Iran does not recognize dual nationality. The Post, U.S. officials and Rezaian's family have all called for his release. When contacted, Rezaian's brother Ali declined to comment.

Reacting to the Fars report that Rezaian will face espionage charges, Washington Post Executive Editor Martin Baron said, “Any charges of that sort would be absurd, the product of fertile and twisted imaginations.”

“We are left to repeat our call on the Iranian government to release Jason, and

in the meantime, we are counting on his lawyer to mount a vigorous defense,” Baron said in a statement.

The Fars report alleged that Rezaian had obtained economic and industrial information from Iran and sold it to unnamed Americans. It also linked him to Omid Memarian, an independent Iranian journalist based in the U.S.

“Selling Iran's economic and industrial information at a time of sanctions is exactly like selling food to the enemy at a time of war,” Fars claimed.

In an email to The Associated Press in New York, Memarian said he had been singled out in the Fars report because he has been outspoken about Rezaian's condition and his innocence since the journalist's arrest.

“Now that the Iranian intelligence has been incapable of presenting any proof that Jason did something wrong, they spread lies about him and his colleagues-friends to influence the upcoming court,” Memarian said.

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