

Bush Prepares To Tap Super PAC

DES MOINES, Iowa (AP) — The traditional presidential campaign may be getting a dramatic makeover in Jeb Bush's bid for the White House as he prepares to turn some of a campaign's central functions over to a separate political organization that can raise unlimited amounts of money.

The concept, in development for months as the former Florida governor has raised tens of millions of dollars for his Right to Rise super PAC, would endow that organization not just with advertising on Bush's behalf, but with many of the duties typically conducted by a campaign.

Should Bush move ahead as his team intends, it is possible that for the first time a super PAC created to support a single candidate would spend more than the candidate's campaign itself — at least through the primaries. Some of Bush's donors believe that to be more than likely.

Architects of the plan believe the super PAC's ability to raise unlimited amounts of money legally outweighs its primary disadvantage, that it cannot legally coordinate its actions with Bush or his would-be campaign staff.

"Nothing like this has been done before," said David Keating, president of the Center for Competitive Politics, which opposes limits on campaign finance donations.

AG Nominee Nears Confirmation Vote

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Barack Obama's long-stalled nominee for attorney general, federal prosecutor Loretta Lynch, is on her way to a confirmation vote after senators extricated themselves Tuesday from a partisan dispute over abortion that had stood in her way.

An agreement announced by Senate leaders allowed both Republicans and Democrats to save face on a once-uncontroversial bill to help sex-trafficking victims that had turned into a litmus test on abortion.

Although that issue was not connected to Lynch, Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell had been holding off her nomination vote until the trafficking issue was resolved.

The long delay since Lynch was nominated last fall has provoked increasingly agitated protests from Democrats and Obama, who last week called the situation "embarrassing," even though Democrats had controlled the Senate for part of that time and had failed to bring her up for a vote.

DEA Chief Retiring In Wake Of Scandal

WASHINGTON (AP) — The head of the Drug Enforcement Administration, Michele Leonhart, announced her retirement Tuesday afternoon, Attorney General Eric Holder said in a statement.

Leonhart had faced mounting pressure to resign from members of Congress who questioned her competence in the wake of a scathing government watchdog report detailing allegations that agents attended sex parties with prostitutes.

Holder said Leonhart, a career drug agent who has led the agency since 2007 and is the second woman to hold the job, will leave the agency in mid-May.

"Michele has led this distinguished agency with honor, and I have been proud to call her my partner in the work of safeguarding our national security and protecting our citizens from crime, exploitation and abuse," Holder said, crediting her with helping dismantle violent drug trafficking organizations.

Leonhart had been widely criticized for her response to the critical report on her agency, and a group of lawmakers said in a statement that she was "woefully unable to change" the agency's culture.

Jury Sees Photo Of A Defiant Tsarnaev

BOSTON (AP) — First, the jury was shown large, vibrant pictures of the four people killed in the Boston Marathon bombing and its aftermath. Then prosecutors pulled out the photo they saved for last: Dzhokhar Tsarnaev giving the finger to the security camera in his jail cell.

"This is Dzhokhar Tsarnaev — unconcerned, unrepentant and unchanged," federal prosecutor Nadine Pellegrini told the jury that will decide whether the 21-year-old former college student should be executed.

The penalty phase in the Boston Marathon bomber's trial opened in dramatic fashion Tuesday, with prosecutors portraying Tsarnaev as a coldblooded killer and "America's worst nightmare."

The government then began trying to drive home the horror of the attack by calling to the stand witnesses who lost legs or loved ones in the April 15, 2013, bombing.

"I remember hearing just bloodcurdling screams. I just remember looking around, just seeing blood everywhere, sort of like debris falling from the sky," said Celeste Corcoran, who made her way to the stand on two artificial limbs.

Pope Accepts Resignation Of US Bishop

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (AP) — Pope Francis accepted the resignation Tuesday of a U.S. bishop who pleaded guilty to failing to report a suspected child abuser, answering calls by victims to take action against bishops who cover up for pedophile priests.

Bishop Robert Finn, who led the Diocese of Kansas City-St. Joseph in Missouri for nearly 10 years, resigned under canon law that allows bishops to resign early for illness or some "grave" reason that makes them unfit for office. But his resignation did not provide a specific reason.

Finn, 62, is 13 years shy of the normal retirement age of 75.

In 2012, Finn pleaded guilty to a misdemeanor charge of failure to report suspected abuse and was sentenced to two years of probation, making him the highest-ranking church official in the U.S. to be convicted of not taking action in response to abuse allegations.

Prosecutors say the diocese did not notify police until six months after concerns were raised in 2011 about the Rev. Shawn Ratigan, whose computers were found to contain hundreds of lewd photos of young girls.

Mediterranean Boat Disaster

Mistake Turned A Rescue Into Tragedy

BY TRISHA THOMAS AND COLLEEN BARRY
Associated Press

CATANIA, Sicily — Rescue seemed so close at hand.

A ship with experience plucking migrants from unseaworthy smuggler's boats had arrived soon after the distress call went out. But then the fishing trawler's navigator made a maneuver that would seal the fate of the 850 people crammed inside: Instead of easing up alongside the merchant ship, he rammed it.

Relief gave way to panic. Terrified migrants rushed to one side, the trawler seized and capsized. What might have been another rescue in a period of unprecedented migrant crossings instead turned into a horrifying statistic: The deadliest shipwreck ever in the Mediterranean Sea.

The accounts of survivors who arrived early Tuesday in this Sicilian port 48 hours after the disaster offered new details of the tragedy. The traumatized witnesses corroborated a death toll of at least 800, making the capsizing "the deadliest incident in the Mediterranean that we have ever recorded," the U.N. refugee agency said.

Just 28 migrants, all men and boys in their teens, survived. And despite the enormous toll, only 24 bodies were recovered — frequently the case when ships sink on the high seas, especially when most passengers are locked below deck, as was the case Saturday night.

Aid agencies were quick to issue another warning: At the current pace, 2015 is set to be the deadliest year on record for migrants making the perilous crossing as they flee war, repression and poverty in the Middle East and Africa. In April alone, 1,300 have died.



ANSA/ZUMA PRESS/TNS

The image grabbed from a video released by Italian Coast Guard on April 19 shows the "Gregoretti" ship during search and rescue operations on the site of the shipwreck in the Strait of Sicily. A ship carrying about 850 migrants capsized overnight off the Libyan coast, with many feared dead.

The International Organization for Migration said the toll for the year could top 30,000 — nearly 10 times the 2014 total of 3,279, itself a record.

"We just want to make sure people understand how much more... rapid these deaths have been coming this year," said Joel Millman, the IOM spokesman.

Italian ships have rescued well over 10,000 people over the past two weeks, an unprecedented number for such a short period, authorities say. The rescues continued Tuesday, with another 112 migrants, all men, picked up in a deflating rubber life raft in waters some 50 miles (70 kilometers) north of the Libyan capital, Tripoli.

On Tuesday, seamen who participated in saving survivors of the weekend capsizing told tales of near-

miraculous rescue.

Among the ships to arrive in the pre-dawn hours Sunday was the coast guard ship Gregoretti, which dispatched medics in two dinghies. By then, the trawler had already disappeared into the sea.

"We found, literally, a floating cemetery. Bodies were everywhere. With the dinghies we had to literally slalom among the corpses," said Enrico Vitello, a 22-year-old medic from the Order of Malta.

Hearing screams, they killed the engines and shined a spotlight, locating a migrant floating in the sea.

"We got close by and rescued him," said Giuseppe Pomilla, a 30-year-old medic. "He asked our names and where we were from. We told him we were Italians and came to rescue him. He was so happy."

Soon after, a boy floating

in the sea grabbed their attention.

"We couldn't understand if he was alive or dead. He had his eyes wide open looking at us. He was not blinking, not moving or talking. We only realized he was alive when he grabbed us suddenly," Pomilla said.

When they took him on board, he "exploded in tears," the medic said.

Among the survivors were two alleged smugglers, who were detained for investigation of aiding and abetting illegal immigration. The Tunisian navigator, identified as 27-year-old Mohammed All Malek, could also face multiple counts of manslaughter and causing a shipwreck — the same charges the captain of the capsized Concordia luxury cruise liner was convicted of earlier this year.

Saudis: Yemen Campaign Enters New Phase

BY AYA BATRAWY AND AHMED AL-HAJ
Associated Press

NAJRAN, Saudi Arabia — Saudi Arabia declared an end on Tuesday to its nearly monthlong "Decisive Storm" air campaign against Houthi rebels in Yemen, and announced the start of a more limited military campaign aimed at preventing the rebels from operating.

Speaking at a news conference in Riyadh, spokesman for the Saudi-led coalition Brig. Gen. Ahmed Asiri said the campaign of heavy airstrikes would be scaled down, but did not confirm whether they would stop altogether.

"There might be less frequency and the scope of the actions might be less, but there will be military action," Asiri said.

He said the goals of the coalition's new phase, called "Renewal of Hope," are to prevent Houthi rebels from "targeting civilians or chang-

ing realities on the ground."

The U.S.-backed campaign by Saudi Arabia, which was launched March 26, was aimed at crushing the Houthis and allied military units loyal to former autocratic Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh, who had taken over the capital of Sanaa and much of northern Yemen. The kingdom says the aim is also to restore to power President Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi, who was forced to flee Yemen to Saudi Arabia last month.

Asiri said that Saudi Arabia and its coalition allies, mainly Gulf Arab countries, were concluding this phase of the operation upon the request of the "legitimate" Yemeni government, led by Hadi.

Hadi, in a speech broad-

cast after midnight on Saudi network Al-Arabiya and Qatar's Al-Jazeera, thanked his Saudi allies for supporting his "legitimacy" as president of Yemen.

Al-Qaida in Yemen has made tactical gains amid the chaos. The ground fighting and airstrikes have pushed Yemen, the Arab world's poorest country, to the brink of collapse. The fighting has also taken on the appearance of a proxy war between Iran, the Shiite powerhouse backing the Houthis, and Sunni-dominated Saudi Arabia.

The Houthi militias are active in the southern port city of Aden, which has seen fierce fighting and the shelling in recent weeks. Earlier Tuesday, the coalition pounded Houthis

and their allies, killing 20 fighters in the western city of Ibb, where Yemeni security officials say the rebels were assembling to head to Aden as reinforcements against forces loyal to Hadi.

Meanwhile, the civilian death toll rose to 38 from airstrikes the day before in the capital, Sanaa, officials said. All officials spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak to the media.

The rebel-controlled Interior Ministry said 84 people in total were killed across the country in Monday's airstrikes. The casualty figures could not be independently confirmed.

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