

# Annan Quits As Syrian Envoy

BY ELIZABETH A. KENNEDY  
AND JOHN HEILPRIN  
Associated Press

BEIRUT — Kofi Annan announced his resignation Thursday as peace envoy to Syria and issued a blistering critique of world powers, bringing to a dramatic end a frustrating six-month effort that failed to achieve even a temporary cease-fire as the country plunged into civil war.

Annan also had harsh words for the Syrian regime, saying it was clear President Bashar Assad "must leave office."

As the violence escalated on the ground, rebels used a captured tank to shell a military air base near Aleppo — one of the first known uses of heavy weapons by the insurgents.

Speaking to reporters in Geneva, Annan blamed the Syrian government's intransigence, the growing militancy of Syrian rebels and a divided Security Council that failed to forcefully back his effort. Since he took on the job, Russia and China have twice used their veto power to block strong Western- and Arab-backed action against President Bashar Assad's regime.

The White House said Annan's resignation highlighted the failure of Russia and China to support action against Assad and called the regime's continued violence against its own people "distasteful."

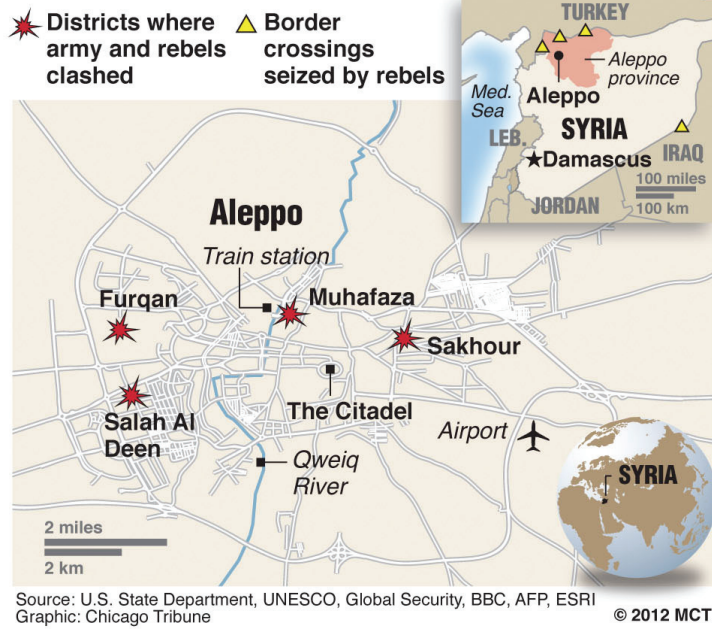
"It is impossible for me or anyone to compel the Syrian government and also the opposition to take the steps to bring about the political process," said Annan, a Nobel Peace Prize laureate and former U.N. secretary general.

"You have to understand: As an envoy, I can't want peace more than the protagonists, more than the Security Council or the international community for that matter."

## Syria's commercial capital

Tens of thousands of Aleppo residents have fled the city, while thousands are said to be living in schools, mosques and at other sites. Aid groups worry that a humanitarian disaster will arise if the combat and shelling spread to other districts of Syria's commercial hub.

- **Population** 4.6 million (metro area)
- **Height** 1,300 ft. (396 m) above sea level
- **Religion** Primarily Sunni Muslim, most of whom are Arab, but some who are Kurds; also home to the country's largest Christian population
- **Industry** Textiles, food processing, pharmaceuticals, plastics, glass, metal, cement
- **Landmark** The Citadel, a large structure in the center of the Old City that contains remains of ancient mosques, a palace and bath buildings



Annan singled out the regime for blame for the violence. But he also said the opposition's increasing militarization had contributed to dooming his six-point peace plan, which included a cease-fire and a Syrian-led political process to end the crisis.

"The bloodshed continues, most of all because of the Syrian government's intransigence, and continuing refusal to implement the six-point plan, and also be-

cause of the escalating military campaign of the opposition — all of which is compounded by the disunity of the international community," he said.

"At a time when we need — when the Syrian people desperately need action — there continues to be finger-pointing and name-calling in the Security Council."

U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said he accepted the resig-

nation with deep regret, adding that the search was under way for a successor to Annan, who will stay on until Aug. 31. Diplomacy can succeed only when "the parties to the violence make a firm commitment to dialogue, and when the international community is strongly united in support," Ban said in a statement.

In an opinion piece published by the Financial Times on Thursday under the headline "My Departing Advice on How to Save Syria," Annan had harsh words for all parties in the conflict. But he appeared to reserve particular criticism for the Assad regime, asserting in his strongest statement to date about the Syrian leader: "It is clear that President Bashar al-Assad must leave office."

During his six-month tenure, Annan managed, at least in theory, to get world powers behind his plan — including the Syrian government and its allies in Iran, Russia and China — although his appeals for peace were ignored on the ground.

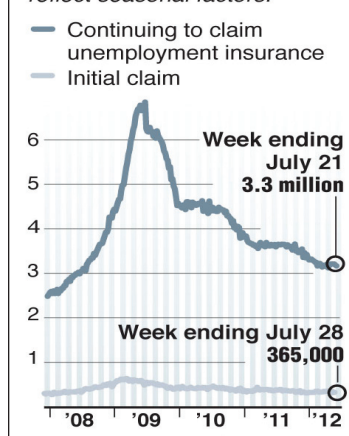
The regime and the rebels blamed each other for the violence, and Russia and China said attempts to sanction the regime ignored violations by the opposition.

Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton praised Annan for working "tirelessly" to try to end the bloodshed in Syria. "Unfortunately, the Security Council was blocked from giving him key tools to advance his efforts," she said.

Asked about Annan's resignation, the White House again called for Assad to step aside. The Syrian leader "continues to brutally murder his own people, to use heavy weapons in assaults on civilian population centers, to call on his military leaders to kill the Syrian people in his name," White House press secretary Jay Carney said.

## Out of work

The number of U.S. workers seeking jobless benefits rose last week, but the number may reflect seasonal factors.



NOTE: Report on continuing claims lags initial claims by one week.  
© 2012 MCT  
Source: U.S. Department of Labor

## Unemployment Aid Applications Rise To 365,000

BY CHRISTOPHER S. RUGABER  
AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON — The number of people seeking U.S. unemployment benefits rose last week, though the data was likely skewed higher by seasonal factors.

Weekly applications increased by 8,000 to a seasonally adjusted 365,000, the Labor Department said Thursday. The four-week average, a less volatile measure, fell for the sixth straight week to 365,500, the lowest since March 31.

The decline in the four-week average suggests the job market could be improving a bit. But economists are viewing last month's figures with some caution because the government struggles every July to account for temporary summer shutdowns in the auto industry. This year was even more complicated because some automakers skipped the shutdowns, resulting in fewer layoffs.

A Labor Department spokesman said the latest figures should be the last affected by the auto shutdown issues.

Even so, some economists saw positive signs in this week's report. "The net decline from a month ago is encouraging," Jim O'Sullivan, chief U.S. economist at High Frequency Economics, said in an email to clients.

Consumers are holding back on spending and the economy is showing other signs of weakening. But the dip in applications shows that companies aren't laying off workers in response, O'Sullivan said.

"Ongoing weakening in the labor market is invariably associated with a rising trend in (applications)," he said.

Weekly applications are a measure of layoffs. When they consistently fall below 375,000, it suggests hiring is strong enough to pull the unemployment rate down.

# Obama And Romney Trade Barbs Over Plans For U.S. Economy

BY STEVE PEOPLES  
AND JIM KUHNHENN  
Associated Press

GOLDEN, Colo. — Mitt Romney promised Thursday that his economic program will create 12 million new jobs in the next four years, and likened President Barack Obama to a "dog trying to chase its tail" when it comes to strengthening the sluggish recovery.

Firing back instantly, Obama said his rival favors "trickle-down fairy dust" that has failed to fix the economy in the past, and unleashed a new television ad with a scathing summation of Romney's tax plans: "He pays less. You pay more."

The two men campaigned in battleground states hundreds of miles apart, the incumbent in Florida, his challenger in Colorado, both on a mission to convert undecided voters to their side in a race dominated by the economy and high joblessness.

Nor was there any summer lull in the television ad wars. Americans For Prosperity, an independent group that backs Romney, intends to launch a \$25 million ad campaign beginning next week, according to officials familiar with the arrangements. The organization was founded by David and Charles Koch, billionaire brothers, and has spent about \$15 million in swing states this year on ads attacking Obama.

For Romney, the day meant a return to domestic campaigning after a weeklong overseas trip. Aides say he intends to disclose a vice presidential pick before the Republican National Convention opens on Aug. 27 in Tampa, Fla., but the former Massachusetts governor told reporters: "I've got nothing to give you" by way of information on his decision.

Instead, he unveiled what aides called Romney's plan for more jobs and more take-home pay, backed by an eight-page paper arguing that the economic stimulus and other policies backed by Obama "exacerbated the economy's structural problems and weakened the recovery ... At the present rate of job creation, the nation will never return to full employment," it said, on the eve of the release of the government's official report on July joblessness.

Following the release of Friday's jobs report, Obama planned to use the backdrop of the White House and surround himself with families who would benefit from the election year middle-class tax cut he's pushing Congress to adopt. "As dysfunctional as Washington can be, this fight is far from hopeless," White House senior adviser David Plouffe said in an email.

In remarks in Golden, Colo.,



JOE BURBANK/ORLANDO SENTINEL/MCT  
President Barack Obama greets supporters on arrival at Orlando International Airport Thursday.

Romney said his economic policies would lead to creation of 12 million jobs in the four years of his term, if he is elected, and help make North America energy independent, a pledge that aides said included Canada and Mexico as well as the United States.

Romney pledged expanded international trade, particularly with Latin America, and vowed to confront China over its own policies. "I'm finally going to sit down with the Chinese and they're going to understand that if they cheat there are going to be consequences, because we're not going to let them walk all over us," the former Massachusetts governor said.

He said he would help small

business owners, improve the education system and cut spending to reduce the deficit, but he offered relatively few specifics.

Romney previously has said he wants to extend the tax cuts due to expire on Dec. 31 and grant a new 20 percent cut in tax rates, in addition, to stimulate growth. He has also said he will reverse some of Obama's proposed defense cuts, and simultaneously reduce spending on other programs in a way that deficits would gradually subside.

But he so far has refused to identify which existing tax breaks he would curtail to accomplish his goals, and generally avoided naming individual programs he wants to cut or eliminate.

## GOP Solyndra Probe Cites Missed Red Flags

WASHINGTON (AP) — Republicans investigating the government's investment in a bankrupt solar panel manufacturer have concluded that the Obama administration ignored numerous red flags about the company's financial viability, leaving taxpayers on the hook for more than \$500 million.

For months, Republican lawmakers have made the government's loan to California-based Solyndra Inc. the centerpiece of their criticisms of President Barack Obama's \$787 billion economic stimulus package. The release of the report Thursday by the House Energy and Commerce Committee gave them another opportunity to reinforce that message.

The White House countered that the report showed that none of the accusations that Republicans had made about political interference in approving the loan turned out to be true. Democrats on the committee also released a memorandum taking issue with the findings.

"The Republican report is partisan and one-sided. It does not substantiate the primary allegation that motivated the committee's Solyndra investigation, which is that the loan guarantee decision was a form of political payoff to a campaign contributor," the Democratic memo said.

The Energy and Commerce investigation lasted 18 months and included the review of more than 300,000 pages of documents. Backers of the loan have said competition from Chinese solar-panel manufacturers was a major factor in Solyndra's failure. The report said White House Office of Management and Budget staff was aware that China's effort to penetrate the U.S. market could hurt Solyndra.

## Officials: Jets Weren't On Collision Course

WASHINGTON (AP) — None of the commuter jets that flew too close together near Washington was ever on course to collide head-on with the others, federal officials said Thursday.

During a news conference, U.S. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood strongly disputed media reports characterizing what happened as a near-miss.

"At no point were the three aircraft on a head-to-head course. They were not on a collision course," said Michael Huerta, administrator of the Federal Aviation Administration.

The jet problem occurred Tuesday after a miscommunication between a manager at Potomac Consolidated Terminal Radar Approach Control and two traffic management coordinators at Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport, Huerta said. Officials are investigating. The exact nature of the miscommunication was not immediately clear, but there was apparently a failure on both ends to follow standard procedure.

Traffic controllers at the time had been changing the direction planes were landing and taking off at the airport because of bad weather including several thunderstorms, the closest about 6 miles south.

## Senate Panel Revives Dozens Of Tax Breaks

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Senate's tax-writing panel voted to renew dozens of tax breaks for businesses like biodiesel and wind energy producers, even as the GOP-controlled House passed symbolic legislation to erase them and create a new tax code with lower rates and fewer special interest tax breaks.

The \$200 billion-plus package was approved by the Senate Finance Committee Thursday on a bipartisan 19-5 vote. It was anchored by a two-year provision to protect middle- and upper-income taxpayers from being hit by the alternative minimum tax, shielding them from higher levies originally meant to prevent the rich from escaping taxes altogether.

The bill faces an uncertain future and is likely to get lumped into a year-end debate in which lawmakers tackle the so-called fiscal cliff — a combination of the expiration of Bush-era tax cuts and \$110 billion in automatic spending cuts to the Pentagon and domestic programs that, taken together, have the potential to drive the economy back into recession.

The action came as Congress limped out of town for a five-week vacation. The House also passed drought relief legislation and reprimanded one of its members, while a cybersecurity bill ran aground in the Senate. The Senate Appropriations panel approved a \$604 billion Pentagon spending bill while rejecting a bid by Republicans to require defense contractors to send out notices of possible job layoffs due to the possible cuts.

The cost of Thursday's package ballooned by more than \$50 billion since its release on Wednesday, including a production tax credit for wind and other renewable energy producers of electricity criticized by presumptive GOP nominee Mitt Romney. That provision was initially targeted for elimination, but garnered critical support from Republicans like Charles Grassley of Iowa.

## Double-Decker Megabus Crashes In Illinois

LITCHFIELD, Ill. (AP) — A packed double-decker Megabus blew a tire and slammed into a concrete bridge support pillar on an Illinois interstate Thursday, leaving at least one person dead and more than two dozen others injured, officials said.

Illinois State Police Trooper Doug Francis said at least one person was killed in the afternoon wreck of the discount charter bus, which was traveling from Chicago to Kansas City. He didn't immediately have other details about the death.

At least four other people were flown by helicopter to a trauma center. Another hospital treated more than 20 other patients from the crash.

Numerous emergency vehicles could be seen on footage shot by a television helicopter flying above the bus, which sat with its crumpled front end smashed up against the bridge support as rescue crews climbed ladders to reach inside. Some passengers could be seen being tended to along the side of Interstate 55, which was shut down in both directions.

"We received a report it had blown a tire which caused it to run off the road," Francis said. "The bus did stay upright."

MegaBus spokeswoman Amanda Byers said the bus was at full capacity, carrying 81 passengers, when it crashed near Litchfield, about 55 miles northeast of St. Louis. It also was to stop in St. Louis and Columbia, Mo.

Graduate to gracious living...  
**Walnut Village**  
...a refined choice for your golden years..

**Senior Apartments**  
The perfect blend of privacy and community  
24 hour staff for your safety and security

Many features included such as housekeeping, church services, activities, exercise class, elevator and gathering/party rooms.

A la carte services such as laundry, scheduled transportation, respite care, garage, and heated/AC workshop available.

**Independent Apartments:**

- Breakfast and lunch
- Kitchen with custom cabinets and appliances
- 1 or 2 bedroom apartments available

**Assisted Living:**

- Assistance with personal tasks
- 3 meals daily plus snacks
- Medication management

YHS Historic District  
613 Walnut, Yankton, SD • WalnutVillageCare.com • 605-664-4220

...a refined choice for your golden years...