

Islamic Extremism Grows In Sinai

EL-ARISH, Egypt (AP) — After decades of neglect and with the collapse of government authority the past 18 months, Egypt’s Sinai Peninsula has become fertile ground for Islamic extremists. Militant groups have taken root, carrying out attacks against neighboring Israel and now turning their guns against Egypt’s military as they vow to set up a puritanical Islamic state.

At a mosque in the northern Sinai village of Sheikh Zuweyid, a Bedouin tribal sheik gestures out toward the deserts that stretch outside of town. There, Sheik Arafa Khedr said, it’s well known that militants have set up training camps. Jihadists recruit young Bedouin. Palestinian militants from neighboring Gaza help in weapons training.

The danger, Khedr said, is that Sinai could become another Yemen, where al-Qaida-linked militants last year managed to take over a swath of territory in the south.

“We’re expecting the entire region to be like Jaar,” he said, referring to a southern Yemeni town that militants held for months until Yemeni troops uprooted them earlier this year.

Egypt’s army and security forces on Tuesday launched an offensive to “restore control” over Sinai after a stunning attack this week made clear the militants’ growing strength. On Sunday, gunmen attacked an army checkpoint near where the borders of Egypt, Israel and Gaza meet, killing 16 soldiers, stealing vehicles and driving them into Israel in an apparent attempt to carry out another attack before they were hit by Israeli forces.

Syria Launches Ground Assault In Aleppo

TEL RIFAT, Syria (AP) — Syria launched a ground assault Wednesday on rebel-held areas of the besieged city of Aleppo, the center of battles between government forces and opposition fighters for more than two weeks.

It was not immediately clear if the offensive was “the mother of all battles” that Syria’s state-controlled media vowed last month would take place for control of Aleppo. In recent weeks, the regime’s blistering attacks on rebel positions seem to have slowly chipped away at the opposition’s grip on its strongholds in the country’s largest city.

The official SANA news agency said regime forces have fully regained control of the Salaheddine neighborhood, the main rebel area in Aleppo. It claimed the “fall” of hundreds of “armed terrorists,” the government’s catchall term for its opponents, without specifying what that meant.

Rami Abdul-Rahman, the director of the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, said troops met resistance in the offensive.

About 25 miles (40 kilometers) north of Aleppo, Syrian fighter jets carried out airstrikes early Wednesday on the village of Tel Rifat, hitting a home and a high school and killing six people from the same family, residents said.

Latinos To Be Counted As A Separate Race

WASHINGTON (AP) — To keep pace with rapidly changing notions of race, the Census Bureau wants to make broad changes to its surveys that would treat ‘Hispanic’ as a distinct category regardless of race, end use of the term ‘Negro’ and offer new ways to identify Middle Easterners.

The recommendations released Wednesday stem from new government research on the best ways to count the nation’s demographic groups. Still it could face stiff resistance from some racial and ethnic groups who worry that any kind of wording change in the high-stakes government count could yield a lower tally for them.

“This is a hot-button issue,” said Angelo Falcon, president of the National Institute for Latino policy in New York City and a community adviser to the census. “The burden will be on the Census Bureau to come up with evidence that wording changes will not undermine the Latino numbers.”

The research is based on an experiment conducted during the 2010 census in which nearly 500,000 households were given forms with the race and ethnicity questions worded differently. The findings show that many people who filled out the traditional form did not feel they fit within the five government-defined categories of race: white, black, Asian, Pacific Islander and American Indian/Alaska Native; when questions were altered to address this concern, response rates and accuracy improved notably.

For instance, because Hispanic is currently defined as an ethnicity and not a race, some 18 million Latinos — or roughly 37 percent — used the “some other race” category on their census forms to establish a Hispanic racial identity. Under one proposed change to the census forms, a new question would simply ask a person’s race or origin, allowing them to check a single box next to choices including black, white, or Hispanic.

Heavy Rains Leave Much Of Manila Submerged

MANILA, Philippines (AP) — People struggling to walk in streets through water often up to their chests. Rescuers in rubber boats frantically trying to reach distressed residents of submerged villages. Churches turned into temporary refuges.

Massive flooding has turned much of the Philippine capital into what one top government official called a “water world,” a deluge that has killed at least 23 people and forced hundreds of thousands to flee.

Here are images of some of the worst flooding in the area since 2009, when hundreds were killed in non-stop monsoon rains and flash floods.

Breeds That Can Survive Droughts Sought

DES MOINES, Iowa (AP) — Cattle are being bred with genes from their African cousins who are accustomed to hot weather. New corn varieties are emerging with larger roots for gathering water in a drought. Someday, the plants may even be able to “resurrect” themselves after a long dry spell, recovering quickly when rain returns.

Across American agriculture, farmers and crop scientists have concluded that it’s too late to fight climate change. They need to adapt to it with a new generation of hardier animals and plants specially engineered to survive, and even thrive, in intense heat, with little rain.

“The single largest limitation for agriculture worldwide is drought,” said Andrew Wood, a professor of plant physiology and molecular biology at Southern Illinois University.

On his Kansas farm, Clay Scott is testing a new kind of corn called Droughtguard as his region suffers through a second consecutive growing season with painfully scarce precipitation.

“These are products I really need,” Scott said. “I couldn’t be any happier that they are working on these products.”

July In United States Was Hottest Ever In History Books

BY SETH BORENSTEIN
AP Science Writer

WASHINGTON — This probably comes as no surprise: Federal scientists say July was the hottest month ever recorded in the Lower 48 states, breaking a record set during the Dust Bowl of the 1930s.

And even less a surprise: The U.S. this year keeps setting records for weather extremes, based on the precise calculations that include drought, heavy rainfall, unusual temperatures, and storms.

The average temperature last month was 77.6 degrees. That breaks the old record from July 1936 by 0.2 degree, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. Records go back to 1895.

“It’s a pretty significant increase over the last record,” said climate scientist Jake Crouch of NOAA’s National Climatic Data Center in Asheville, N.C. In the past, skeptics of global warming have pointed to the Dust Bowl to argue that recent heat isn’t unprecedented. But Crouch said this shows that the current year “is out and beyond those Dust Bowl years. We’re rivaling and beating them consistently from month to month.”

Three of the nation’s five hottest months on record have been recent Julys: This year, 2011 and 2006. Julys in 1936 and 1934 round out the top five.

Last month also was 3.3 degrees warmer than the 20th century average for July.

Thirty-two states had months that were among their 10 warmest Julys, but only one, Virginia, had the hottest July on record. Crouch said that’s a bit unusual, but that it shows the breadth of the heat and associated drought.

For example in 2011, the heat seemed to be centered mostly in Oklahoma and Texas. But this summer “the epicenters of the heat kind of migrated around. It kind of got everybody in the action this month,” Crouch said.

The first seven months of 2012 were the warmest on record for the nation. And August 2011 through July this year was the warmest

12-month period on record, just beating out the July 2011-June 2012 time period.

But it’s not just the heat that’s noteworthy. NOAA has a measurement called the U.S. Climate Extreme Index which dates to 1900 and follows several indicators of unusually high and low temperatures, severe drought, downpours, and tropical storms and hurricanes. NOAA calculates the index as a percentage, which mostly reflects how much of the nation experience extremes. In July, the index was 37 percent, a record that beat the old mark for July last year. The average is 20 percent.

For the first seven months of the year, the extreme index was 46 percent, beating the old record from 1934. This year’s extreme index was heavily driven by high temperatures both day and night, which is unusual, Crouch said.

“This would not have happened in the absence of human-caused climate change,” said Pennsylvania State University climate scientist Michael Mann.

Crouch and Kevin Trenberth, climate analysis chief of the National Center for Atmospheric Research, said what’s happening is a double whammy of weather and climate change. They point to long-term higher night temperatures from global warming and the short-term effect of localized heat and drought that spike daytime temperatures.

Drought is a major player because in the summer “if it is wet, it tends to be cool, while if it is dry, it tends to be hot,” Trenberth said.

So the record in July isn’t such a big deal, Trenberth said. “But the fact that the first seven months of the year are the hottest on record is much more impressive from a climate standpoint, and highlights the fact that there is more than just natural variability playing a role: Global warming from human activities has reared its head in a way that can only be a major warning for the future.”

Here are some more numbers unlikely to provide cold comfort. The coolest July on record was in 1915. The coldest month in U.S. history was January 1979 with an average temperature of 22.6 degrees.

Forest Service Gets More Aggressive On Small Fires

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — The U.S. Forest Service has directed supervisors on federal forest lands to temporarily abandon its policy of letting small fires keep burning in isolated areas, with rampant forest fires in the country’s western half putting a strain on firefighting resources and concerns over the possibility of more fires in drought-stricken areas.

“We’re concerned about how dry it is,” said Joe Walsh, spokesman for the U.S. Forest Service in Washington. “It was this concern, and this comes down from our chief, that we need to get in and suppress fires early and not let them get ahead of us.”

For years, the policy has been that supervisors on Forest Service land can opt to let fires burn if they start naturally, usually by lightning strikes, and are not a threat to nearby homes or other assets. Scientists view fires as a natural part of forest regeneration, making room for new growth and also diminishing future threat of larger fires by clearing areas of fuel sources.

But that decision can go wrong. That’s what happened last August in Minnesota’s Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness, where a fire that burned slowly at first under the supervision of Superior National Forest managers gained unexpected strength thanks to a blast of hot, windy weather in early September.

The Pagami Creek fire quickly grew out of control, burning about 145 square miles and costing \$23 million to fight. It took another month to extinguish, with help from nearly 1,000 firefighters across the country.

Brenda Halter, supervisor of Superior National Forest, said her staff has already put out a handful of small fires in isolated areas that under normal circumstances probably would have been allowed to burn.

Last year, the Forest Service spent a record \$48 million for recovery work alone on burned areas. By the end of July, the agency had already spent \$28 million on recovery and is on track for another possible record.

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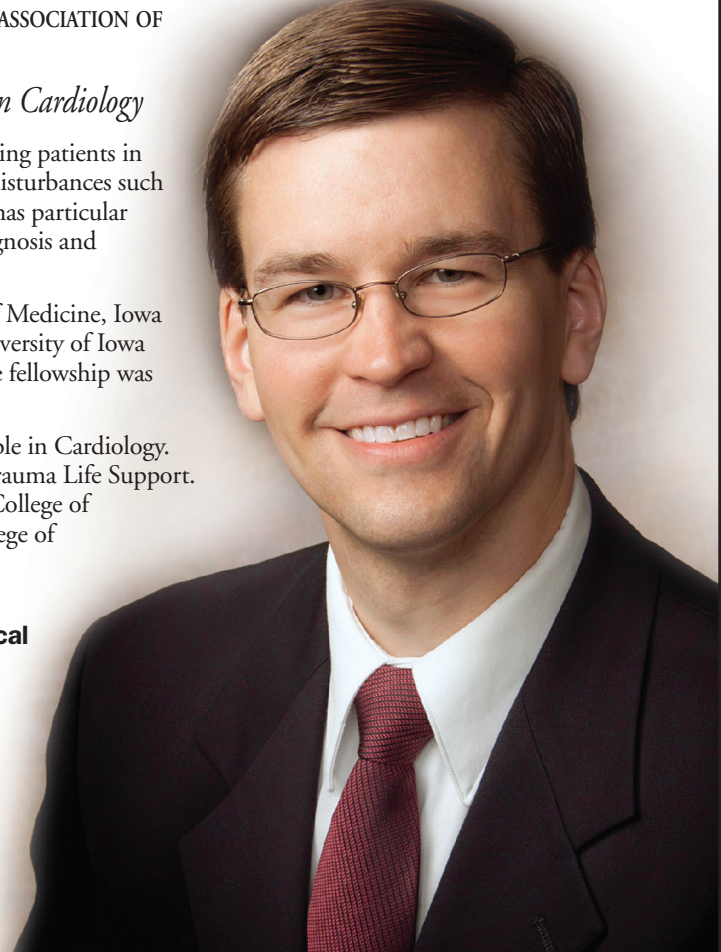
Dr. Irwin is a graduate of the University of Iowa Carver College of Medicine, Iowa City, IA. He completed his Internal Medicine residency at the University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics, Iowa City, IA. His Cardiovascular Medicine fellowship was completed at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI.

Dr. Irwin is Board Certified in Internal Medicine and Board Eligible in Cardiology. He is certified in Advanced Cardiac Life Support and Advanced Trauma Life Support. He is a member of the American Medical Association, American College of Physicians-American Society of Internal Medicine, American College of Cardiology, American Society of Echocardiography, as well as the American Society of Nuclear Cardiology.

Dr. Irwin has begun seeing patients at the Yankton Medical Clinic. To schedule your appointment, please call 605-664-2742.


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