

Afghans Dissatisfied With Sentence

JOINT BASE LEWIS-MCCHORD, Wash. (AP) — The U.S. soldier who massacred 16 Afghan civilians last year in one of the worst atrocities of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars was sentenced Friday to life in prison with no chance of parole — the most severe sentence possible, but one that left surviving victims and relatives of the dead deeply unsatisfied.

"We wanted this murderer to be executed," said Hajji Mohammad Wazir, who lost 11 family members in the attack by Staff Sgt. Robert Bales. "We were brought all the way from Afghanistan to see if justice would be served. Not our way — justice was served the American way."

Bales, 40, pleaded guilty in June in a deal to avoid the death penalty for his March 11, 2012, raids near his remote outpost in Kandahar province, when he stalked through mud-walled compounds and shot 22 people — 17 of them women and children. Some screamed for mercy, while others didn't even have a chance to get out of bed.

The soldier showed no emotion as the sentence was announced at Joint Base Lewis-McChord, south of Seattle.

His mother, sitting in the front row of the court, bowed her head, rocked in her seat, and wept.

San Diego Mayor Agrees To Resign

SAN DIEGO (AP) — San Diego Mayor Bob Filner has agreed to resign Aug. 30 amid allegations that he sexually harassed women.

The City Council voted 7-0 Friday on a deal that ends a political stalemate after more than a dozen women publicly identified themselves as targets of unwanted advances, including touching, forcible kisses and lurid comments.

The city's first Democratic mayor in 20 years has become a pariah in his own party since the allegations surfaced in July. All nine members of the City Council have insisted that he step down.

Todd Gloria, the Democratic City Council president, becomes acting mayor until a special election is held within 90 days after the resignation takes effect.

Russia Urges Syria To Allow UN Inquiry

BEIRUT (AP) — Russia on Friday added its diplomatic weight to demands for a swift probe into an alleged chemical weapons attack that has injected new vigor into calls for international military action in Syria's civil war.

The U.S., Britain, France and other countries have pressed for a team of United Nations inspectors already in Syria to be granted immediate access to the sites of Wednesday's purported gas attack that activists say killed more than 130 people. In an attempt to push things along, U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon is dispatching his disarmament chief to Damascus to press President Bashar Assad's regime to agree to an investigation.

Timing is vital, experts say, because the more time passes, the harder it is to detect what chemicals — if any — were used. Immediate access also would allow inspectors to collect blood and soil samples themselves and safeguard the chain of custody of and the integrity of the investigation.

But in the chaos and violence of Syria's civil war, safe passage to the eastern Damascus suburbs in question would be difficult.

Iraq Suicide Bombing Kills At Least 36

BAGHDAD (AP) — A suicide bomber attacked a park in northern Baghdad crowded by cafe- and restaurant-goers Friday night, the bloodiest attack in a day of violence that killed at least 36 people across the country, authorities said.

Attacks have been on the rise in Iraq since a deadly security crackdown in April on a Sunni protest camp. More than 3,000 people have been killed in violence during the past few months, raising fears Iraq could see a new round of widespread sectarian bloodshed similar to that which brought the country to the edge of civil war in 2006 and 2007.

The suicide bomber struck a park in the Qahira neighborhood of Baghdad late Friday night, an area popular with locals, police said. The bomber detonated his explosives in a crowd of people, killing at least 26 people and wounding 55.

Violence has stepped up in strikes on so-called soft targets in Iraq — like civilians at coffee shops or those shopping along busy commercial streets.

There was no claim of responsibility for Friday's suicide bombing. Sunni extremists such as al-Qaida's Iraq arm that seek to undermine the Shiite-led government are frequently blamed for attacks targeting civilians.

Lebanon: Twin Explosions Kill 29

TRIPOLI, Lebanon (AP) — In scenes reminiscent of Lebanon's devastating civil war, charred bodies lay in the streets Friday after twin car bombs exploded outside mosques packed with worshippers, killing 29 people and wounding hundreds.

The coordinated attacks in this predominantly Sunni city — the deadliest fallout from Syria's civil war to hit Lebanon — raised sectarian tensions to dangerous levels amid fears the country was slipping into a prolonged cycle of revenge.

The blasts marked the second such attack in just over a week. A deadly car bombing targeted an overwhelmingly Shiite district south of Beirut controlled by the militant Hezbollah group on Aug. 15, demonstrating the alarming degree to which the country is being torn apart by the civil war next door.

Friday's attacks shocked residents of Tripoli, which has been the scene of frequent clashes between supporters and opponents of President Bashar Assad in recent months. But the city, Lebanon's second-largest, has not seen such bombings in decades.

Obama Plays Down Syria Intervention

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Barack Obama on Friday played down the prospect of speedy U.S. intervention in Syria, stressing the difficulty of ordering military action against the Assad government without a strong international coalition and a legal mandate from the United Nations.

Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel said Obama has asked the Pentagon to provide military options in light of reports that the Syrian government used chemical weapons against civilians. While Hagel declined to discuss any specific force movements, U.S. defense officials said the Navy moved a fourth warship into the region. Each can launch ballistic missiles.

"The Defense Department has a responsibility to provide the president with options for contingencies, and that requires positioning our forces, positioning our assets, to be able to carry out different options — whatever options the president might choose," Hagel told reporters traveling with him to Asia.

U.S. Navy ships are capable of a variety of military action, including launching Tomahawk cruise missiles, as they did against Libya in 2011 as part of an international action that led to the overthrow of the Libyan government.

Ft. Hood Shooter Convicted

Army Psychiatrist May Face Death Penalty

BY WILL WEISSERT AND PAUL J. WEBER
Associated Press

FORT HOOD, Texas — A military jury on Friday convicted Maj. Nidal Hasan in the deadly 2009 shooting rampage at Fort Hood, making the Army psychiatrist eligible for the death penalty in the shocking assault against American troops by one of their own on home soil.

There was never any doubt that Hasan was the gunman. He acknowledged to the jury that he was the one who pulled the trigger on fellow soldiers as they prepared to deploy overseas to Iraq and Afghanistan. And he barely defended himself during a three-week trial.

The unanimous decision on all 13 counts of premeditated murder made Hasan eligible for execution in the sentencing phase that begins Monday.

"This is where members (of the jury) decide whether you will live or whether you will die," said Col. Tara Osborn, the trial judge.

Hasan, who said he acted to protect Muslim insurgents abroad from American aggression, did not react to the verdict, looking straight at jurors as they announced their findings. After the hearing, relatives of the dead and wounded fought back tears. Some smiled and warmly patted each other's shoulders as they left court.

Because Hasan never denied his actions, the court-martial was always less about a conviction than it was about ensuring he received a death sentence. From the beginning, the federal government has sought to execute Hasan, believing that any sentence short of a lethal injection would deprive the military and the families of the dead of the justice they have sought for nearly four years.

Autumn Manning, whose husband, retired Staff Sgt. Shawn Manning, was shot six times during the attack, wept when the verdict was read. She said she had been concerned that some charges might be reduced to manslaughter, which would have taken a death sentence off the table.

Verdict in massacre

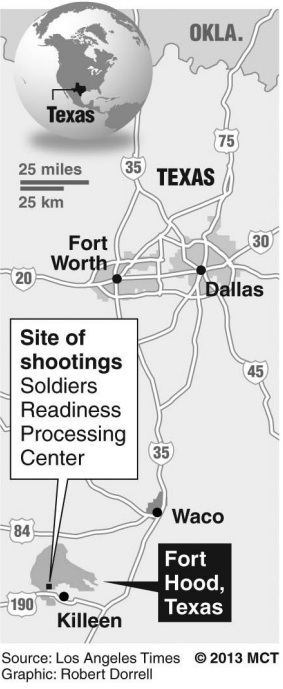


Maj. Nidal Malik Hasan

• A psychiatrist, he admitted to a 2009 shooting rampage at Fort Hood; 13 people died, 31 were injured

• Attack stopped when Hasan was shot by a police officer; Hasan is paralyzed now

• On Aug. 23, Hasan was convicted on 13 counts of premeditated murder; he could face the death penalty



Huge Calif. Wildfire Spreads Into Yosemite National Park

BY GOSIA WOZNIAKKA
Associated Press

FRESNO, Calif. — A giant wildfire raging out of control spread into Yosemite National Park on Friday as authorities urged more evacuations in nearby communities where thousands have already been forced out by flames marching through the timbered slopes of the western Sierra Nevada.

The fire hit the park at the height of summer season, as officials geared up for a busy Labor Day weekend. It has closed some backcountry hiking but was not threatening the Yosemite Valley region, one of California's most popular tourist destinations.

The spectacular valley carved by glaciers offers visitors such iconic sights as the Half Dome and El Capitan rock formations and Bridalveil and Yosemite falls.

The weeklong blaze has spread to more than 165 square miles and was only 2 percent contained. It continued to grow in several directions, although "most of the fire activity is pushing to the east right into Yosemite," said Daniel Berlant, spokesman for the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection.

Smoke blowing across the Sierra into the state of Nevada forced officials in several counties to cancel outdoor school activities and issue health advisories, especially for people with respiratory problems.

Authorities urged more evacuations in nearby communities where thousands have already been forced out by flames.

The fire was threatening about 4,500 residences, according to the U.S. Forest Service. Already, the blaze has destroyed four homes and 12 out-

buildings in several different areas. More than 2,000 firefighters were on the lines and one sustained a heat-related injury.

While the park remained open, the blaze closed a 4-mile stretch of State Route 120, one of three entrances into Yosemite on the west side. Two other western routes and an eastern route were open.

Within the park, the blaze was burning on about 17 square miles in a remote area around Lake Eleanor, about 4 miles northwest of Hetch Hetchy reservoir, Yosemite spokeswoman Kari Cobb said.

Backcountry permits are required to hike in that area, Cobb said. The park was no longer issuing those and had contacted every person who had received a permit to go there. Two roads into that area were closed and occupants of a campground near the Route 120 west entrance were relocated.

Okinawa Veteran Beaten To Death in Random Attack


SPOKANE, Wash. (AP) — Police in Spokane, Wash., have arrested one of two teens suspected of fatally beating an 88-year-old veteran of World War II who had survived the battle for Okinawa.

Police contend that two 16-year-old boys approached Delbert Belton in his car at random Wednesday night outside an Eagles Lodge as he was waiting for a friend.

Belton was found by police with serious head injuries and died in the hospital Thursday.

Belton's death has struck a chord nationally and sparked outrage on social media.

"He fought for this country," said Belton's sister, Alberta Tosh, on Friday. "Then he comes home and a couple of creeps kill him in the worst way."



Human Services Program Specialist I
Pierre, SD

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