

Cease-Fire Between Takes Effect To Halt Hostilities

GAZA CITY, Gaza Strip (AP) — A cease-fire between Israel and Hamas meant to last at least three days and end nearly a month of fighting went into effect in the Gaza Strip on Tuesday morning.

The truce came ahead of talks in Cairo aimed at brokering a deal that would prevent future cross-border violence.

The temporary truce, agreed to by both sides, started at 8 a.m. (0500 GMT) and was to last for 72 hours during which Israel and Hamas are to hold indirect talks in the Egyptian capital.

But wide gaps remain and previous international attempts to broker a temporary halt in the fighting have failed. Hamas wants Israel and Egypt to lift their seven-year-old Gaza border blockade. Israel is reluctant to open Gaza's borders unless Hamas is disarmed.

The situation is still volatile. Just minutes ahead of the start of the truce, shelling still echoed across Gaza and Israel said Hamas fired a heavy barrage of rockets at southern and central Israel.

The war broke out on July 8 when Israel launched airstrikes it said were in response to weeks of heavy



CAROLYN COLE/LOS ANGELES TIMES/MCT
The bodies of seven people are buried on Monday after a home in Jabalia, a city north of Gaza City, was hit by an Israeli ordinance. The Israeli military said a strike before dawn Monday killed a leader of Islamic Jihad, an ally of the militant group Hamas, which dominates the territory. The army identified the dead man as Danyal Mansour, Islamic Jihad's commander in northern Gaza. Palestinians said at least six others died in the strike as well.

rocket fire out of Hamas-controlled Gaza. It expanded the operation on July 17 by sending in ground forces in what it described as a mission to destroy a network of tunnels used to stage attacks.

The fighting has claimed nearly 1,900 Palestinian lives — most of them civilians. The war has also left 67 dead on the Israeli side, all but three of them soldiers.

Talks in Cairo will be crucial in the coming days. Ending the Gaza conflict without a sustainable truce raises the probability of more cross-border fighting in the future. In the hours leading up to the cease-fire, there were also signs of tensions created by the Gaza fighting spreading to Jerusalem and the West Bank, including two attacks police say were carried out by Pales-

tinian militants.

A unilateral withdrawal would have allowed Israel to end the conflict on its own terms, without engaging in protracted negotiations with Hamas over new border arrangements in Gaza. In such talks, brokered by Egypt, Israel would be asked for concessions it has been unwilling to make, such as opening Gaza's borders.

Earlier Tuesday, the Israeli military announced that all its ground troops would leave Gaza by the start of the new cease-fire.

Military spokesman Lt. Col. Peter Lerner said the withdrawal was going forward after Israel neutralized cross-border tunnels that were built for Islamic militant attacks inside Israel.

"Overnight, we completed the destruction of 32 tunnels in the Gaza Strip," Lerner said. "They were part of a strategic Hamas plan to carry out attacks against southern Israel."

The rocket fire continued throughout the war, and by the time Tuesday's cease-fire went into effect, some 3,500 rockets had been fired at Israel, Lerner said. He estimated that Israeli forces destroyed another 3,000 rockets on the ground — but that Hamas has an equal number for future use.

Cuba Rejects 'Convert' US Program

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Cuban government on Tuesday called on Washington to halt hostile "covert" operations against it in the wake of the recent disclosure that an Obama administration program secretly sent young Latin Americans to Cuba on politically motivated missions.

A top Cuban diplomatic official, Josefina Vidal, said an Associated Press investigation this week reveals that the U.S. government "has not desisted in its hostile and interventionist plans against Cuba, which seek to create destabilizing situations to provoke changes in our political order."

Vidal demanded the U.S. "cease, once and for all, all its subversive, illegal and covert actions against Cuba" in a statement emailed to The Associated Press. She noted the U.S. government has "shamelessly acknowledged" running the program.

The project, funded and overseen by the U.S. Agency for International Development, deployed nearly a dozen young people from Latin America to Cuba to recruit political activists under the guise of health and civic projects. AP's investigation found the operation put the foreigners in danger not long after an American contractor was arrested in the communist island nation for doing secretive work.

The Obama administration this week defended its use of an HIV-prevention workshop for its Cuban democracy-promotion efforts, but disputed that the project was a front for political purposes. State Department spokeswoman Jen Psaki said the program "enabled support for Cuban civil society, while providing a secondary benefit of addressing the desires Cubans express for information and training about HIV prevention."

American With Ebola Arrives In Atlanta

ATLANTA (AP)— An American aid worker infected with Ebola arrived Tuesday in Atlanta, joining a second patient being given an experimental treatment that has never before been tested on humans.

Nancy Writebol, 59, traveled from Monrovia, Liberia, to Emory University Hospital, just downhill from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. She arrived two days after Kent Brantly, a doctor with whom she had worked in Liberia and who also contracted Ebola, showed up for treatment.

The differences were stark in how they went from the ambulance to Emory, which has a highly specialized isolation unit. While Brantly, 33, was able to walk with assistance into the hospital, Writebol — covered from head to toe in a protective suit — was wheeled in on a stretcher.

Still, the 59-year-old Writebol was described as weak but showing signs of improvement.

"A week ago we were thinking about making funeral arrangements for Nancy," her husband, David Writebol, said in a statement read by the president of SIM USA, the aid group with which she was working in Liberia. "Now we have a real reason to be hopeful."

Young Boy Fatally Stabbed At Playground

KENTWOOD, Mich. (AP) — A 9-year-old boy was repeatedly stabbed in the back by a 12-year-old boy at a playground, then ran screaming to his western Michigan home and collapsed bleeding on his porch, witnesses and police said Tuesday.

Michael Conner Verkerke died at a hospital shortly after the Monday evening attack in Kentwood, outside Grand Rapids. Witnesses said the 12-year-old boy went to a nearby home after the stabbing, called 911 and calmly turned himself in, then tried to flag down officers when they arrived.

The 12-year-old pleaded not guilty to a murder charge in juvenile court on Tuesday, according to his attorney. He was ordered held in a juvenile detention center.

Barb Poelman told The Associated Press she was sitting on her deck in the Pinebrook Village mobile home park when "we heard the kids run across the front ... screaming. He (Michael) ran with the kids that were with him."

General Killed In Afghan Attack

BY ROBERT BURNS
AP National Security Writer

WASHINGTON — Harold J. Greene, the two-star Army general who on Tuesday became the highest-ranking U.S. military officer to be killed in either of America's post-9/11 wars, was an engineer who rose through the ranks as an expert in developing and fielding the Army's war materiel. He was on his first deployment to a war zone.

Greene was killed when a gunman believed to be an Afghan soldier opened fire at a military academy near Kabul. More than a dozen other coalition soldiers were wounded, including about eight Americans, according to early accounts of the at-

tack. It was among the bloodiest insider attacks of the war in Afghanistan.

The Army's top soldier, Gen. Ray Odierno, issued a statement Tuesday evening saying the Army's thoughts and prayers were with Greene's family as well as the families of those injured in the attack.

In a 34-year career that began at Fort Polk, La., Greene, a native of upstate New York, earned a reputation as an inspiring leader with a sense of humility. He had been in Afghanistan since January, serving as deputy commander of a support command called the Combined Security Transition Command, in Kabul.

At the time of the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks

Greene was serving at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, and when the U.S. invaded Iraq in March 2003, he was a student at the Army War College in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, at the rank of lieutenant colonel.

Greene flourished in the less glamorous side of the Army that develops, tests, builds and supplies soldiers with equipment and technology. That is a particularly difficult job during wartime, since unconventional or unanticipated battlefield challenges like roadside bombs in Iraq and Afghanistan, call for urgent improvements in equipment.

In 2009-2011, for example, he served as deputy commanding general of the Army's Research, Develop-

ment and Engineering Command and senior commander of the Natick Soldier System Center at Aberdeen Proving Ground in Aberdeen, Maryland. During that tour of duty he, gained the rank of brigadier general, and at his promotion ceremony in December 2009, he was lauded for his leadership skills and ability to inspire those around him.

Lt. Gen. Stephen Speakes applauded Greene for a "sense of self, a sense of humility" and an exemplary work ethic, according to an account of the promotion ceremony published by the Times Union of Albany, N.Y., which called Greene an Albany native.



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