

## Papua New Guinea Volcano Erupts

CANBERRA, Australia (AP) — A volcanic eruption on Papua New Guinea has led to nearby communities being evacuated and some international flights being diverted. The Australian government said authorities in the South Pacific nation had evacuated communities close to Mount Tavurvur, which erupted early Friday in Rabaul district on East New Britain Island. The government said in a statement that residents of Rabaul town, the provincial capital, had been advised to remain indoors to avoid falling ash. Qantas Airways said the ash cloud from the volcano had prompted minor alterations to flight paths between Sydney and Tokyo and between Sydney and the Chinese city of Shanghai. The volcano destroyed the town of Rabaul in 1994 when it erupted simultaneously with nearby Mount Vulcan.

## An Intelligence Worse Nightmare

WASHINGTON (AP) — The case of Mehdi Nemmouche haunts U.S. intelligence officials. Nemmouche is a Frenchman who authorities say spent 11 months fighting with the Islamic State group in Syria before returning to Europe to act out his rage. On May 24, prosecutors say, he methodically shot four people at the Jewish Museum in central Brussels. Three died instantly, one afterward. Nemmouche was arrested later, apparently by chance. For U.S. and European counterterrorism officials, that 90-second spasm of violence is the kind of attack they fear from thousands of Europeans and up to 100 Americans who have gone to fight for extremist armies in Syria and now Iraq. The Obama administration has offered a wide range of assessments of the threat to U.S. national security posed by the extremists who say they've established a caliphate, or Islamic state, in an area straddling eastern Syrian and northern and western Iraq, and whose actions include last week's beheading of American journalist James Foley. Some officials say the group is more dangerous than al-Qaida. Yet intelligence assessments say it currently couldn't pull off a complex, 9-11-style attack on the U.S. or Europe. However, there is broad agreement across intelligence and law enforcement agencies of the immediate threat from radicalized Europeans and Americans who could come home to conduct lone-wolf operations. Such plots are difficult to detect because they don't require large conspiracies of people whose emails or phone calls can be intercepted.

## Obama Will Face Coalition If US Attacks

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Barack Obama's acknowledgment the U.S. still lacks a strategy for defeating the growing extremist threat emanating from Syria reflects a still unformed international coalition. The president is meeting with his top advisers and consulting members of Congress to prepare U.S. military options. At the same time, he is looking for allies around the world to help the U.S. root out the Islamic State group that has seized large swaths of territory in Syria and Iraq. "Any successful strategy ... needs strong regional partners," Obama told reporters Thursday. In the last year-and-a-half, Islamic State extremists have fought the Syrian army, Hezbollah and Iranian forces. They've clashed with al-Qaida's local affiliate, routed Iraq's army and pushed back Kurdish peshmerga fighters. American airstrikes in Iraq have recently caused somewhat of a retreat. But U.S. military leaders say the terrorists can't be crushed unless their sanctuaries in Syria are targeted. While debate in the United States centers on military tactics and Obama's level of congressional and public support for action in Syria, U.S. officials are trying to come up with a coordinated approach to fighting the Islamic State group among a wide range of governments and militias. Some are competing against each other for influence or engaged in outright war.

## Planes Grounded In German Pilot Strike

BERLIN (AP) — Thousands of passengers are feeling the impact of a pilots strike in Germany after negotiations between the country's biggest airline Lufthansa and the union representing pilots collapsed over a long-running dispute regarding wages and early retirement benefits. Germanwings, a subsidiary of Germany's biggest airline Lufthansa, said up to 15,000 passengers were affected by Friday's strike which started at 6 a.m. and was to last until noon local time (0400-1000 GMT).

## Slums Sealed Off To Stop Ebola Spread

DAKAR, Senegal (AP) — Liberia says it will open up a slum in its capital where thousands of people were barricaded to contain the spread of Ebola. Information Minister Lewis Brown says lifting the quarantine Saturday morning will not mean there is no Ebola in the West Point Slum. But authorities feel confident they can screen for the sick and that the community now actively fighting the disease.

# Russian-Backed Rebels Aim To Push West Along Coast

BY PETER LEONARD  
AND JUERGEN BAETZ  
Associated Press

NOVOAZOVSK, Ukraine — Their tanks bearing the flag of their would-be state, Russian-backed separatists held control Friday over this coastal town on the new front in the Ukraine conflict and announced their intention to keep pushing west toward a major port city. None of the half-dozen tanks seen by Associated Press reporters in the town of about 12,000 people bore Russian markings, but the packaging on their field rations said they were issued by the Russian army. The Ukrainian government the day before accused Russia of sending tanks, artillery and troops across the border, and NATO estimated at least 1,000 Russian troops were in Ukraine. As tensions rose, European Union foreign ministers called for heavier sanctions against Moscow ahead of Saturday's summit of EU leaders in Brussels. Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko was invited to address the summit. The rebels denied they are getting Russian military vehicles. "We are fighting with the machinery the (Ukrainian forces) abandon. They just dump it and flee," said a rebel commander who identified himself by the nom de guerre Frantsuz, or the



Frenchman. Although such claims of using only confiscated Ukrainian equipment are common, top rebel leader Alexander Zakharchenko himself has said Russia was supplying equipment and fighters — something Moscow has steadfastly denied doing. "Despite Moscow's hollow denials, it is now clear that Russian troops and equipment have illegally crossed the border," NATO Secretary-General Anders Fogh Rasmussen said Friday. "This is a blatant violation of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. It defies all diplomatic efforts for a peaceful solution." A spokesman for the rebels in Novoazovsk, who identified himself only as Alexander, said their plan was to push westward to the major port city of Mariupol, about 35 kilometers (20 miles) away. There was no sign of im-

minent movement on Friday, but Alexander's statement underlined fears that the rebels' eventual aim is to establish a land bridge between the Russian mainland and the Crimean Peninsula, which was annexed by Russia earlier this year. Speaking at a Kremlin-organized youth camp on Friday, Russian President Vladimir Putin likened the Ukrainian government's efforts to put down the separatist uprising to the Nazi siege of Leningrad in 1941-44. The Leningrad comparison is a powerful one for Russians and clearly aimed at portraying the Ukraine conflict in stark, good-versus-evil terms. The 872-day siege, in which at least 670,000 civilians died, is seen by many Russians as one of the most heroic chapters in the country's history. To stop the bloodshed, the Kiev government should open talks with the rebels, Putin said. The death toll in the fighting reached nearly 2,600 as of Wednesday, said Ivan Simonovic, U.N. assistant secretary-general for human rights. He described the humanitarian situation in eastern Ukraine as "alarming," with people unable to leave cities caught up in the fighting. The U.N. human rights office on Friday accused both sides of deliberately targeting civilians. The separatists have car-

ried out murders, torture and abductions along with other serious human rights abuses, while Ukraine's military is guilty of such acts as arbitrary detentions, disappearances and torture, the organization said in a report. At a meeting in Milan, several EU foreign ministers accused Russia of invading eastern Ukraine and said Moscow should be punished with additional sanctions. The diplomats were expected to draw up measures that could put before the EU heads of state on Saturday. The head of the EU's executive Commission, Jose Manuel Barroso, warned Putin that further destabilization of Ukraine "will carry high costs." Putin called on the separatists to release Ukrainian soldiers who have been surrounded by the rebels in eastern Ukraine. He appeared to be referring to soldiers trapped outside the town of Ilovaysk, east of Donetsk, for nearly a week. Zakharchenko, the rebel leader, said the Ukrainian troops would have to lay down their arms before they would be allowed to go "so that this weaponry and ammunition will not be used against us in future." A spokesman for Ukraine's national security council, Col. Andriy Lysenko, rejected the demand: "Ukraine is not ready to surrender arms and kneel in front of the aggressor."

# US: Too Soon To Evaluate Pakistan Offensive

BY LOLITA C. BALDOR  
Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP) — U.S. military leaders say it's too soon to tell if Pakistan's offensive against militants in North Waziristan has been effective or simply symbolic, but they say the operations have temporarily disrupted the enemy and sent insurgents fleeing into Afghanistan. Marine Gen. Joseph Dunford, who stepped down Tuesday as the top U.S. commander in Afghanistan, said there's no doubt that some fighters escaped across the border, along with displaced civilians trying to get away from the violence. Frustrated U.S. officials had long pressed Pakistan to move into North Waziristan, which has been a safe haven for militants including the al-Qaida linked Haqqani network. The Haqqanis used the region as a base to launch attacks against U.S., Afghan and coalition troops across the border in Afghanistan. North Waziristan is considered a stronghold for a number of groups including the Pakistani Taliban, the Afghan Taliban and members of al-Qaida, and it has also served as a hub for militants seeking to overthrow Pak-

istan's government. Pakistan's military launched the military assault in June, but there were persistent questions about whether the army would actually go after the Haqqanis, and if the initial spate of airstrikes merely gave thousands of people, including insurgents, time to pack up and flee. So far, said Dunford, "we didn't see hundreds of fighters massing, or any significant level of violence increase that would indicate the enemy came from North Waziristan and was able to conduct operations inside Afghanistan." Dunford and Army Gen. Martin Dempsey, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said it's still premature to judge the operations. "I think it's too soon to say this has all been, you know, symbolic, or this has been less effective than it needs to be," Dempsey told reporters during a visit to Kabul this week for the U.S. military's change of command ceremony. "What will really matter is if they can complete all three phases: clear, hold and build." He said Pakistan's military remains in the clearance phase of the operation and will now have to show it can hold the territory it gained.

Then, Dempsey added, it will be important for Pakistan to restore governance in that region that will be responsive to the central government in Islamabad. If Pakistan is able to do that, he said, then the insurgents will have trouble if they try to re-enter the area. "I think the important thing will be what comes out of it (the operation)," he said. Dunford, who turned over command to Army Gen. John Campbell Tuesday and then flew back to Washington with Dempsey, said it's not clear yet whether the opera-

tions will have a lasting effect. But, he said, "I do think it's disrupted the enemy in the near term." The key question, he said, will be whether the enemy is able to go back into the region once the operations are over. The operation also comes as both Afghanistan and Pakistan work to form new governments. That, said Dempsey, may help lay the groundwork for the two countries to work more collaboratively "on what is a very common interest — which is these insurgents that migrate back and forth across the border."



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