

After Debate, Candidates Head To Work

ATLANTA (AP) — The raucous field of Republican presidential candidates hustled back before voters Friday, hoping to build on momentum from their first meeting of the 2016 campaign — and clean up any debate-night messes left behind. “It’s not easy with 10 people debating,” said Jeb Bush, who spent Friday on the New Hampshire coast before an evening town hall. Bush, among the rivals scrambling for notice in a campaign dominated at the moment by Donald Trump, said: “I don’t view debating as a question of winning and losing. It’s the cumulative effect of shaping people’s opinions of who you are that matters over the long haul.”

After Thursday night’s debate, a long haul is what the GOP appears in for. With billionaire businessman Trump showing no signs of letting up, and none of the other 16 major Republicans in the race ready to concede anything after just one debate, the contest for the Republican nomination is an unsettled affair that’s just getting started.

Theater Shooter To Get Life Sentence

CENTENNIAL, Colo. (AP) — Colorado theater shooter James Holmes will be sentenced to life in prison without parole after a jury failed to agree Friday on whether he should get the death penalty for his murderous attack on a packed movie premiere. The nine women and three men said they could not reach a unanimous verdict on each of the murder counts. That automatically eliminates the death penalty for the failed neuroscientist, who blamed his calculated killings of 12 people on mental illness. Prosecutors argued Holmes deserved to die because he methodically planned the 2012 assault at a midnight screening of a Batman movie, even blasting techno music through ear phones so he wouldn’t hear his victims scream. Seventy people were injured in the attack. The verdict came as a surprise. The same jury rejected Holmes’ insanity defense, finding him capable of understanding right from wrong when he carried out the attack. It also quickly determined the heinousness of Holmes’ crimes outweighed his mental illness in a prior step that brought them closer to the death penalty. As it was read, Holmes’ mother Arlene, who had pleaded for jurors to spare her son’s life, leaned her head against her husband’s shoulder and began sobbing. Tears broke out across the courtroom. In the back, Aurora police officers who responded to the bloody scene of Holmes’ attacks began crying.

Iran Nuclear Deal Opens Channels

BEIRUT (AP) — The nuclear deal with Iran was widely expected to affect other Middle East issues, and that may already be happening with Syria: A series of recent diplomatic maneuvers suggest a growing willingness to at least engage with the Iranian-backed government of Bashar Assad on ways to end the country’s civil war. The embattled leader seems no more inclined to step aside now than he did four years ago, and any agreement still looks to be far off — but the search seems to be on for an elegant solution that might, for example, allow him a transitional role. In part, it is also driven by the new leadership team in Saudi Arabia, which emerged with the accession to the throne of King Salman in January. Another factor is the emergence and spread of the violent and fanatical Islamic State group as the most potent opposition to Assad, far more so than the relatively moderate rebels who won a measure of world support after the conflict began four years ago. Despite his government’s brutality and aerial bombardment that has leveled some opposition-held areas, the 50-year-old former eye doctor now seems, at least to some, comparatively more palatable. The civil war has killed at least 250,000, displaced half the population, flooded brittle neighboring countries with refugees and has left jihadis occupying not only much of Syria but also perhaps a third of Iraq.

Thousands Of Iraqis Stage Rally

BAGHDAD (AP) — Thousands of Iraqis braved the scorching summer heat to stage a huge protest in central Baghdad on Friday, calling on the prime minister to dissolve the parliament and sack corrupt government officials. Security forces and riot police sealed off Iraq’s iconic Tahrir Square and searched anyone who entered the area, but tens of thousands of men, women and children thronged the sprawling square, waving Iraqi flags. “In the name of religion, the thieves robbed us,” they chanted long into the evening. Men with the government-backed Popular Mobilization Forces, the umbrella group made up predominantly of Shiite militias and new volunteers, to reinforce the Iraqi military after it crumbled in the face of the Sunni militant blitz that seized a third of the country. Their gesture was welcomed by roaring shouts in support of the paramilitary force now fighting the Islamic State group. The PMU was hastily assembled last year, with pre-existing militias and new volunteers, to reinforce the Iraqi military after it crumbled in the face of the Sunni militant blitz that seized a third of the country.

France Expands Hunt For Debris

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia (AP) — A French search plane lifted off Friday for a bird’s-eye view of Reunion Island, seeking any more potential debris from Malaysia Airlines Flight 370. French authorities said Friday they’ve launched a one-week-long operation with boats and aircraft scouring the Indian Ocean island, where a wing fragment was discovered nine days ago. Malaysian officials say it came from the missing Boeing 777 but investigators from other countries are being more cautious. The prefect of the French overseas department, Dominique Sorain, said Friday that the search would cover an area 120 kilometers (75 miles) by 40 kilometers (25 miles) around the east coast — where the 2-meter-long wing fragment was found. Sorain said other objects have been found on the island’s beaches since last week and have been removed for examination, but he said officials “don’t know” if these belong to a plane.

Kabul Blasts Kill 35, Test Afghan President’s Peace Plan

BY LYNNE O'DONNELL
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Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan — Two massive attacks in Kabul on Friday, one near a government and military complex in a residential area and the other a suicide bombing outside a police academy, killed at least 35 people, sending the strongest message yet to Afghan President Ashraf Ghani that militants are still able to strike at his heavily fortified seat of power. No one claimed responsibility for the attacks, though officials indicated they blamed the Taliban. The implications of the assaults, however, undermine claims by security services and the government that the capital is immune from devastating attacks. They also pose a major challenge to Ghani, who has made the peace process with the Taliban the hallmark of his presidency since taking office last year. In the evening hours, a suicide bomber dressed in a police uniform struck outside the gates of a police academy in Kabul, killing at least 20 recruits and wounding 24, Afghan officials said. The attacker walked into a group of recruits waiting outside the academy and detonated his explosives-laden vest, said a police officer, who goes by the name of Mabubullah. Many Afghans use only one name. A security official, who spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to talk to reporters, said there were at least 24 wounded among the recruits. Later on Friday evening, insurgents launched an attack on a NATO military base near Kabul’s international airport, according to the coalition spokesman, Col. Brian Tribus. Two insurgents were killed in the assault, he added, without giving further details. No one claimed responsibility for that attack and it was not immediately clear if there was any damage to the NATO base. Earlier in the day, a massive truck bomb killed at least 15 people in a residential area of Kabul. That 1 a.m. blast flattened an entire city block and also wounded 240 people,



OMID/XINHUA/ZUMA PRESS/TNS
An Afghan policeman stands guard at the blast site Aug. 7 in Kabul, Afghanistan. At least 8 civilians were killed and nearly 400 others wounded in a truck bomb attack in the Afghan capital of Kabul at wee hours on Friday, police said.

officials said. It was one of the largest ever in Kabul — a city of 4.5 million people — in terms of scale, flattening a city block and leaving a 10-meter (30-foot) crater in the ground. The president’s office said 47 women and 33 children were among the casualties in that attack. The president’s deputy spokesman, Zafar Hashemi, said about 40 of the wounded would remain hospitalized. It was unknown how the attackers smuggled a large amount of explosives into the heavily guarded city. Ghani threatened a rapid and forceful response to the bombing, saying it was aimed at diverting public attention from the Taliban’s leadership struggle. Last week, Afghan authorities announced the death Mullah Mohammad Omar, the one-eyed, secretive head of the Taliban who hosted Osama Bin Laden’s al-Qaida in the years leading up to the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks. Mullah Omar had not been seen in public since fleeing over the border into Pakistan after the 2001 U.S.-led invasion that ousted the Taliban. The Afghan intelligence agency said Mullah Omar had

been dead for more than two years. The Taliban leadership confirmed his death — and even appointed a successor — but the revelation still sparked a leadership struggle among senior Taliban figures, raising concerns of a succession crisis that could splinter the group. Pakistan, which wields significant influence over the insurgent group and which hosted the first round of landmark Afghan-Taliban peace talks last month, denied that Mullah Omar had died in Karachi. Pakistan’s defense minister, Khawaja Muhammad Asif, repeated that denial in parliament on Friday. The peace talks were indefinitely postponed following the announcement of Mullah Omar’s death. Ghani, freshly returned from medical treatment in Germany, visited the wounded from the early Friday attack in hospital as social media carried calls for blood donations. “We are still committed to peace. But we will respond to these sort of terrorist attacks with force and power,” Ghani said in a statement, condemning the high civilian casualty count.

Zafar Hashemi, the president’s deputy spokesman, blamed the Taliban and said the attackers aimed to “hide the cracks between their own factions and create terror.” At a White House briefing Friday, press secretary Josh Earnest said the U.S. “condemns in the strongest terms” the bombing in Kabul. “This heinous attack demonstrates once again the ever-growing gulf between extremists and the people of Afghanistan and it certainly shows the blatant disregard for human life on the part of those extremists,” Earnest said, adding that the Afghan people have endured much but remain resilient “even in the face of a brutal insurgency.” The Obama administration continues to urge the Taliban to heed Ghani’s call for reconciliation and make peace with the government, Earnest also said. The appointment of Mullah Omar’s deputy, Mullah Akhtar Mansoor, to succeed him sparked protests from his brother and son, and appears to have led to serious rifts that internal committees are now trying to heal.

Steady US Jobs Cause Higher Rates

WASHINGTON (AP) — A new era of higher rates on home and car loans, steeper borrowing costs for businesses and the government — maybe even a bit more return for savers — is about to arrive. That, at least, is the word from most economists. After another solid U.S. jobs report Friday, they say the Federal Reserve seems all but sure to raise its short-term interest rate next month after keeping it pinned near zero for nearly seven years. It would be the Fed’s first rate hike since 2006. And it would end the aggressive campaign the central bank began after the 2008 financial crisis to save a teetering banking system and energize an ailing economy. While it could take months, the Fed’s moves should eventually drive up interest rates for mortgages, auto loans and other consumer and business borrowing. “The most advertised and anticipated play” is a Fed rate hike in September, David Kotok, chief executive at money management firm Cumberland

Advisors, said Friday after the July jobs report showed that employers added 215,000 jobs and that the unemployment rate held at a nearly normal 5.3 percent. “Markets, economists, and analysts expect it.” Not all of them do. Some economists argue that a September rate increase isn’t guaranteed. They say Friday’s figures showed that some gauges of the job market remain weak. Pay increases, for example, are still sluggish. And hiring hasn’t been strong enough to draw millions of Americans who’ve given up on their job searches back into the hunt. What’s more, a strong dollar is hurting U.S. exporters and making foreign goods cheaper in the United States, which could shrink inflation even further below the Fed’s 2 percent target. “A September rate hike is by no means a done deal,” Chris Williamson, chief economist at Markit, said in a research note. “Low inflation and cooling growth will create powerful arguments against rate hikes.”

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