

Syrian VP: Regime, Rebels Both Losing In War

BEIRUT (AP) — Syria's longtime vice president says both sides are going down a losing path after 21 months of civil war, as rebels fighting to topple President Bashar Assad advance on the battlefield.

Farouk al-Sharaa told a Lebanese newspaper that neither the rebels nor the Assad regime can "decide the battle militarily."

Al-Sharaa spoke to the newspaper Al Akhbar as rebel forces were moving closer to Damascus, Assad's seat of power. He appeared to be trying to show that the rebels are not the solution to the Syrian conflict, and their victory might bring chaos to the country.

Balancing that, he said the Assad regime "cannot achieve change." Excerpts of the interview were posted on Al-Akhbar's English-language website late Sunday.

Egypt Rights Groups Criticize Referendum

CAIRO (AP) — Egyptian rights groups called Sunday for a repeat of the first round of the constitutional referendum, alleging the vote was marred by widespread violations. Islamists who back the disputed charter claimed they were in the lead with a majority of "yes" votes, though official results have not been announced.

Representatives of seven rights groups charged that there was insufficient supervision by judges in Saturday's vote in 10 of Egypt's 27 provinces and independent monitors were prevented from witnessing vote counts.

The representatives told a news conference that they had reports of individuals falsely identifying themselves as judges, of women prevented from voting and that members of Islamist President Mohammed Morsi's Muslim Brotherhood were allowed inside polling stations. They also complained that some polling centers closed earlier than scheduled and that Christians were denied entry to polling stations.

Mohamed ElBaradei, Egypt's best known reform leader, was as frustrated by the referendum was run as the rights groups.

"Is a referendum held under insufficient judicial supervision, clearly tenuous security and the violence and violations we are witnessing the road to stability or playing with the country's destiny?" the Nobel Peace Laureate and former U.N. nuclear agency chief wrote on his Twitter account.

Conservative LDP Returns To Power In Japan

TOKYO (AP) — Japan's conservative Liberal Democratic Party returned to power in a landslide election victory Sunday after three years in opposition, according to unofficial results, signaling a rightward shift in the government that could further heighten tensions with China, a key economic partner as well as rival.

The victory means that the hawkish former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe will get a second chance to lead the nation after a one-year stint in 2006-2007. He would be Japan's seventh prime minister in six-and-a-half years.

In the first election since the March 11, 2011, earthquake, tsunami and nuclear disasters, atomic energy ended up not being a major election issue even though polls show about 80 percent of Japanese want to phase out nuclear power.

Public broadcaster NHK's tally showed that the LDP, which ruled Japan for most of the post-World War II era until it was dumped in 2009, won 294 seats in the 480-seat lower house of parliament. Official results were not expected until Monday morning.

LDP, the most pro-nuclear power party, had 118 seats before the election. A new, staunchly anti-nuclear power party won just nine seats, according to NHK.

Box Office Numbers Are 'Hobbit' Forming

NEW YORK (AP) — Peter Jackson's "The Hobbit" led the box office with a haul of \$84.8 million, a record-setting opening better than the three previous "Lord of the Rings" films.

The Warner Bros. Middle Earth epic was the biggest December opening ever, surpassing Will Smith's "I Am Legend," which opened with \$77.2 million in 2007, according to studio estimates Sunday. "The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey" also passed the December opening of "Avatar," which opened with \$77 million. Internationally, "The Hobbit" also added \$138.2 million, for an impressive global debut of \$223 million.

Despite weak reviews, the 3-D adaptation of J. R. R. Tolkien's first novel in the fantasy series was an even bigger draw than the last "Lord of the Rings" movie, "The Return of the King." That film opened with \$72.6 million. "The Hobbit" is the first of another planned trilogy, with two more films to be squeezed out of Tolkien's book.

While Jackson's "Rings" movies drew many accolades — "The Return of the King" won best picture from the Academy Awards — the path for "The Hobbit" has been rockier. It received no Golden Globes nominations on Thursday, though all three "Rings" films were nominated by the Hollywood Foreign Press Association for best picture.

Particularly criticized has been the film's 48-frames-per-second (double the usual rate), a hyper-detailed look that some have found jarring. Most moviegoers didn't see "The Hobbit" in that version, though, as the new technology was rolled out in only 461 of the 4,045 theaters playing the film.

Regardless of any misgivings over "The Hobbit," the film was a hit with audiences. They graded the film with an "A" CinemaScore.

"What's really important, what makes this special is the CinemaScore," said Dan Fellman, president of domestic distribution for Warner Bros. "All these things point to a great word of mouth. We haven't even made it to the Christmas holidays yet. Kids are still in school this week."

Fiscal Cliff

BY JIM KUHNHEHN AND ANDREW TAYLOR

Associated Press Writers

WASHINGTON — Big differences remain, but there is finally movement in long-stalled talks on avoiding the "fiscal cliff."

House Speaker John Boehner is offering \$1 trillion in higher tax revenue over 10 years and an increase in the top tax rate on people making more than \$1 million a year. He's also offering a large enough extension in the government's borrowing cap to fund the government for one year before the issue must be revisited — conditioned on Obama agreeing to the \$1 trillion in cuts.

The offer, made Friday after a long impasse between Boehner, R-Ohio, and President Barack Obama, calls for about \$450 billion in revenue

from increasing the top rate on million-dollar-plus income from 35 percent to the Clinton-era rate of 39.6 percent.

The additional revenue would be collected through a rewrite of the tax code next year and by slowing the inflation adjustments made to tax brackets.

In return, Boehner is asking for \$1 trillion in spending cuts from government benefit programs like Medicare. Those cuts would defer most of a painful set of across-the-board spending cuts set to slash many domestic programs and the Pentagon budget by 8-9 percent, starting in January.

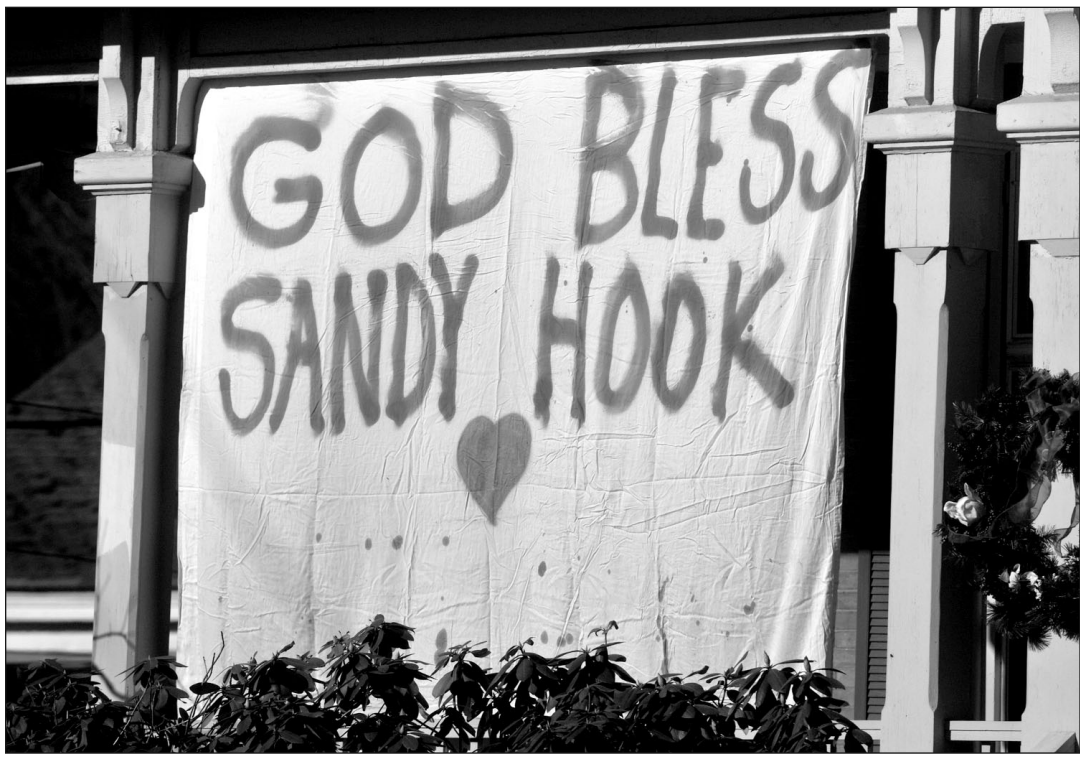
Boehner also continues to press for a less generous inflation adjustment for Social Security benefits, a move endorsed by many budget hawks. Obama and Democrats on last year's deficit "su-

percommittee" endorsed the idea in offers made last year, but they're more reluctant now.

Democrats rejected the offer and some say an increase in the Medicare eligibility age is a non-starter. They are also pressing for extended jobless benefits for the long-term unemployed.

Boehner's proposal was described by officials familiar with it. They required anonymity because of the sensitivity of the talks.

The movement comes as an increasing number of Republicans have called for a tactical retreat that would hand Obama a victory on his longstanding campaign promise to raise taxes on households making more than \$250,000 a year. That increase, combined with an increase in the tax rate on investment income from 15 to 20 percent, would raise about \$800 billion in tax revenue over a decade.



Signs in support of the family of the victims of Friday's shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School are seen in Newtown, Conn., on Saturday.

Lieberman, Democrats Want To Institute Ban On Assault Weapons

WASHINGTON (AP) — Democratic lawmakers and independent Sen. Joe Lieberman said Sunday that military-style assault weapons should be banned and that a national commission should be established to examine mass shootings in the United States.

The proposals were among the first to come from Congress in the wake of Friday's school shooting in Newtown, Conn.

"Assault weapons were developed for the U.S. military, not commercial gun manufacturers," Lieberman said before a vigil Sunday night in Newtown.

"This is a moment to start a very serious national conversation about violence in our society, particularly about these acts of mass violence," said the Connecticut senator, who is retiring next month.

Gun rights activists remained largely quiet on the issue, all but one declining to appear on the Sunday talk shows. Meanwhile, Democrats vowed action and said it was time to hear from voters — not gun lobbyists — on how to prevent the next shooting.

The time for "saying that we can't talk about the policy implications of tragedies like this is over," said Rep. Chris Murphy, D-Conn., who won a Senate seat in the November elections.

President Barack Obama and Senate Democrats haven't pushed for new gun controls since rising to power in the 2008 national elections. Outspoken advocates for stricter laws, including Sen. Dianne Fein-

stein, say that's because of the powerful sway of the National Rifle Association.

But advocates also say the latest shooting is a tipping point that could change the dynamic of the debate dramatically. Feinstein, D-Calif., said she will propose legislation next year that would ban big clips, drums and strips of more than 10 bullets.

"It can be done," she said Sunday of reviving the 10-year ban that expired in 2004.

New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg said Obama could use executive powers to enforce existing gun laws, as well as throw his weight behind legislation like Feinstein's.

Rep. Louie Gohmert, R-Texas, was the sole representative of gun rights' activists on the various Sunday talk shows. In an interview on "Fox News Sunday," Gohmert defended the sale of assault weapons and said that the principal at Sandy Hook Elementary School, who authorities say died trying to overtake the shooter, should herself have been armed.

"I wish to God she had had an M-4 in her office, locked up so when she heard gunfire, she pulls it out and she didn't have to lounge heroically with nothing in her hands. But she takes him (the shooter) out, takes his head off before he can kill those precious kids," Gohmert said.

High Court Fight Looms Over Right To Carry A Gun

WASHINGTON (AP) — The next big issue in the national debate over guns — whether people have a right to be armed in public — is moving closer to Supreme Court review.

A provocative ruling by a panel of federal appeals court judges in Chicago struck down the only statewide ban on carrying concealed weapons, in Illinois. The ruling is somewhat at odds with those of other federal courts that have largely upheld state and local gun laws, including restrictions on concealed weapons, since the Supreme Court's landmark ruling declaring that people have a right to have a gun for self-defense.

In 2008 the court voted 5-4 in District of Columbia v. Heller to strike down Washington's ban on handgun ownership and focused mainly on the right to defend one's own home. The court left for another day how broadly the Second Amendment may protect gun rights in other settings.

Legal scholars say the competing appellate rulings mean that day is drawing near for a new high court case on gun rights.

The appeals court ruling in Chicago came early in a week that ended with the mass shooting in Connecticut that left 28 people dead, including 20 elementary school children and the presumed gunman.

Laurie Levenson, a professor at the Loyola Law School in Los Angeles, said that along with thorny legal issues, "we have the overlay of these tragedies hitting us on a somewhat regular basis."

The author of a book that traces the battle over gun control in the U.S. said he thinks Supreme Court intervention is likely in the short term. "Since the Heller case, the next great question for the Supreme Court to decide was whether there is a right to carry guns in public," said UCLA law professor Adam Winkler, whose book "Gunfight" was published last year.

OBITUARIES

Donald Bensen

Donald Burnell Bensen, 85, of Vermillion, passed away Friday, December 14 at the Morningside Care Center in Alcester, SD.

Donald was born July 19, 1927 in Vermillion to Nels and Amanda (Hanson) Bensen. He graduated from Vermillion High School in 1945 and married Roberta Hood February 25, 1948 in Yankton, SD. They lived in Yankton where he was employed with northwestern Bell Telephone Company and moved to Vermillion in 1949.

In Vermillion he was the South Dakota Job Training Safety Instructor for the State REA for five years, and worked at Clay-Union Electric as a Linesman Foreman and Material Clerk for 30 years, retiring in 1986.

He was baptized and confirmed at the Bergen Lutheran

Church in Meckling, SD and was a member of the Trinity Lutheran Church in Vermillion, Trinity Men's Breakfast Group, Fraternal order of the Eagles and the Senior Citizens Center.

He was preceded in death by his parents, two sons: David and Scott, and Four brothers: Amos, Darrel, Adrian and Glenn and two sisters: Emlyn Bensen and Glen-nys Robbins.

He is survived by his wife Roberta of Alcester, two daughters: Susan (Alan) Ruedebusch of Port Orchard, WA and Carol Bensen of Tacoma, WA and a daughter in law Anne Bensen of Sioux Falls, SD and a sister Shirley Marcotte of Worthington, MN. He is also survived by three grandchildren: Jason, Vanessa and Jessica, a great grandson Bryson Allen Bensen and several

nieces and nephews.

Funeral services will be 11:00 a.m. Wednesday, December 19 at the Trinity Lutheran Church in Vermillion with burial of ashes at a later date. Visitation will be from 5-7 p.m. Tuesday, December 18 at the Hansen Funeral Home in Vermillion.

Visit hansenfuneralhome.com.
Yankton Press & Dakotan
December 17, 2012

Jimmy Waldman

Funeral services for Jimmy G. Waldman, 78, of Niobrara, Neb., are at 10:30 a.m. Tuesday, Dec. 18, 2012, at the Niobrara Lutheran Church. Pastor Kelley Pedersen will officiate, with burial in the L'Eau Qui Court Cemetery at Niobrara.

Visitation is 6-8 p.m. today

(Monday) at Brockhaus Funeral Home, Niobrara.

Jimmy died Saturday, Dec. 15, 2012, at Avera Creighton Care Centre, Creighton, Neb.

Helen Larson

Helen Larson, 48, of Yankton died Friday, Dec. 14, 2012, at

Avera Sacred Heart Hospital, Yankton.

A memorial service will be held in the spring of 2013 when all of her family can gather together to celebrate her life.

Arrangements are under the direction of Wintz & Ray Funeral Home and Cremation Service, Yankton.

Yes, you can plan a meaningful ceremony followed by cremation



When it comes to cremation, there are many options to consider – from traditional services to contemporary celebrations. Regardless of your choice, we will help you and your family ensure that your ceremony is a reflection of the person you are and the life you've lived.

To learn more, please contact us.

WINTZ & RAY
FUNERAL HOME
and Cremation Service, Inc.

Yankton, 605-665-3644
wintzrayfuneralhome.com
Garden of Memories Cemetery

Her love for you
was special.

Her memorial
should be too.

Finest quality personalized memorials,
as unique as the lives they honor.



Home Office & Carving Center
1609 Broadway • Yankton, SD • 605.665.3052
Visit us on-line at: www.lukenmemorials.com



Member
Monument Builders of North America
THE MARK OF EXCELLENCE

KYNT
AM 1450

MORNING COFFEE
WEEKDAYS
7:40 AM
MONDAY
THRU FRIDAY

Yankton's Home Team!

HONORING THEIR MEMORY
Our Thoughts And Prayers Are With Them

Our care and concern does not end with the funeral service. This week we remember with family and friends the anniversary of the deaths of:

Theodore "Ted" Mueller
who passed away on
December 19, 2011

Velma Mettler
who passed away on
December 19, 2011

Edward Novak
who passed away on
December 19, 2011

Buzz Mann
who passed away on
December 21, 2011

Bea Merrigan
who passed away on
December 14, 2010

Don Schwarz
who passed away on
December 18, 2002

This remembrance is brought to you free of charge. If you have a loved one you would like remembered, contact us at Opsahl-Kostel Funeral Home & Crematory. Guiding and serving families with compassion and trust.

OPSAHL-KOSTEL
FUNERAL HOME & CREMATORY INC.
Funeral Home & Crematory, Yankton
Memorial Resource Center, Tyndall
Memorial Chapels, Tyndall, Tabor & Menno
665-9679 • 1-800-495-9679
www.opsahl-kostelfuneralhome.com