

First Responders At Massacre Carry Burdens

NEWTOWN, Conn. (AP) — While the people of Newtown do their best to cope with loss and preserve the memories of their loved ones, another class of residents is also finding it difficult to move on: the emergency responders who saw firsthand the terrible aftermath of last week's school shooting.

Firefighter Peter Barresi was driving through Newtown on Friday when police cars with lights flashing and sirens blaring raced toward his oldest son's elementary school. After he was sent to Sandy Hook school himself, he saw things that will stay with him forever.

With anguished parents searching for their children, he prepared to receive the wounded, but a paramedic came back empty-handed, underscoring the totality of the massacre. Barresi, whose own son escaped unharmed, later discovered that among the 26 dead were children who played baseball with his son and had come to his house for birthday parties.

"For some of us, it's fairly difficult," said Barresi, of the Sandy Hook Volunteer Fire and Rescue Co. "Fortunately most of us did not go in."

Newtown and environs weathered a fourth day of funerals Thursday, six days after a 20-year-old gunman killed his mother at home, 20 children and six adults at the school and himself for reasons still unknown. Mourners laid to rest Catherine Hubbard, Benjamin Wheeler, Jesse Lewis and Allison Wyatt, all 6 years old; and Grace McDonnell, 7.

House Approves \$633 Billion Defense Bill

WASHINGTON (AP) — The House has voted for a \$633 billion defense bill for next year despite Pentagon complaints that it spares outdated but politically popular weapons at the expense of the military's ability to fight.

The vote Thursday was 315-107. The bill now heads to the Senate, where lawmakers could vote Thursday evening.

The White House had threatened a veto of earlier versions of the bill, and spokesman Jay Carney said the threat still stands.

The far-reaching bill that covers the cost of ships, aircraft, weapons and military personnel would authorize \$528 billion for the Defense Department's base budget.

It also provides \$88.5 billion for the war in Afghanistan and \$17 billion for defense and nuclear programs in the Energy Department.

Syria's Wounded May Need Long-Term Care

ATMEH, Syria (AP) — A baby boy joined the ranks of Syria's tens of thousands of war wounded when a missile fired by Bashar Assad's air force slammed into his family home and shrapnel pierced his skull.

Four-month-old Fahed Darwish suffered brain damage and, like thousands of others seriously hurt in the civil war, he will likely need care well after the fighting is over. That's something doctors say a post-conflict Syria won't be able to provide.

Making things worse, there has been a sharp spike in serious injuries since the summer, when the regime began bombing rebel-held areas from the air, and doctors say a majority of the wounded they now treat are civilians.

This week, Fahed was recovering from brain surgery in an intensive care unit, his head bandaged and his body under a heavy blanket, watched over by Mariam, his distraught 22-year-old mother.

She said that after her first-born is discharged from the hospital in Atme, a village in an area of relative safety near the Turkish border, they will have to return to their village in a war zone in central Syria.

Little-Known Rival Will Buy NYSE For \$8B

NEW YORK (AP) — The Big Board just isn't so big anymore.

In a deal that highlights the dwindling stature of what was once a centerpiece of capitalism, the New York Stock Exchange is being sold to a little-known rival for \$8 billion — \$3 billion less than it would have fetched in a proposed takeover just last year.

The buyer is Intercontinental Exchange, a 12-year-old exchange headquartered in Atlanta that deals in investing contracts known as futures.

Intercontinental Exchange, known as ICE, said Thursday that little would change for the trading floor at the corner of Wall and Broad streets, in Manhattan's financial district.

But the clout of the two-centuries-old NYSE has gradually been eroded over decades by the relentless advance of technology and regulatory changes. Its importance today is mostly symbolic.

Extreme Forecast Was Dead-On In 2012

WASHINGTON (AP) — As 2012 began, winter in the U.S. went AWOL. Spring and summer arrived early with wildfires, blistering heat and drought. And fall hit the eastern third of the country with the ferocity of Superstorm Sandy.

This past year's weather was deadly, costly and record-breaking everywhere — but especially in the United States.

If that sounds familiar, it should. The previous year also was one for the record books.

"We've had two years now of some angry events," said Deke Arndt, U.S. National Climatic Data Center monitoring chief. "I'm hoping that 2013 is really boring."

In 2012 many of the warnings scientists have made about global warming went from dry studies in scientific journals to real-life video played before our eyes: Record melting of the ice in the Arctic Ocean. U.S. cities baking at 95 degrees or hotter. Widespread drought. Flooding. Storm surge inundating swaths of New York City.

Booker Won't Run For NJ Gov, Eyes Senate

TRENTON, N.J. (AP) — Newark Mayor Cory Booker, perhaps New Jersey's highest-profile Democrat, has ruled out a bid for governor next year and is eyeing a run for U.S. Senate in 2014.

The decision, announced Thursday on Twitter, means Booker has decided against a possible campaign against Republican Gov. Chris Christie. But depending on how things play out, he could find himself in a Democratic primary race against Sen. Frank Lautenberg, who is 88 and declined to talk Thursday about his political future.

Booker's announcement alters the landscape for both races, and for politics in Newark, the state's largest city, where his term runs through June 2014.

"Let there be no doubt, I will complete my full second term as mayor," Booker said in a statement posted on Facebook and linked to on Twitter. "As for my political future, I will explore the possibility of running for the United States Senate in 2014."

But with nearly 23 months to go before that election, there is plenty of doubt about it — including whether Lautenberg intends to run and whether Booker would pursue the seat even if Lautenberg does too.

Fiscal Cliff

GOP Axes Vote On 'Plan B'

BY DAVID ESPO

AP Special Correspondent

WASHINGTON — Confronted with a revolt among the rank and file, House Republicans abruptly put off a vote Thursday night on legislation allowing tax rates to rise for households earning \$1 million and up, complicating attempts to avoid a year-end "fiscal cliff" that threatens to send the economy into recession.

In a brief statement, House Speaker John Boehner said the bill "did not have sufficient support from our members to pass." At the same time he challenged President Barack Obama and Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, D-Nev., to work on legislation to avert the fiscal cliff.

"The Senate must now act," Boehner, R-Ohio, said.

Emerging from a hurriedly-called evening

meeting of House Republicans, Ohio Rep. Steve LaTourette said Boehner had told lawmakers he's "going to call the president and he's going to go down and talk to him and maybe they can hammer something out."

There was no immediate response from either the White House or Reid's office.

The legislation was crafted to prevent tax increases set to kick in on Jan. 1, 2013, on tens of millions of Americans. But another provision that would have let rates rise for those at the upper income range — a violation of long-standing Republican orthodoxy — triggered the opposition of anti-tax lawmakers inside the party.

The abrupt turn of events left precious little time for divided government to prevent across-the-board tax increases and deep spending cuts from taking effect with the new year. Economists say the combination threat-

ened a return to recession for an economy that has been recovering slowly from the last one.

The House will not meet again until after Christmas, if then, and the Senate is expected to meet briefly on Friday, then not reconvene until next Thursday.

The fiscal cliff issue has dominated the post-election session of Congress. More broadly, it marks the end of a tumultuous two-year period that began when tea party-backed Republicans roared into the House demanding lower taxes, only to be asked by their leadership to bless higher tax rates at upper incomes.

Boehner said Thursday night's legislation — he'd dubbed it Plan B — marked a move to "protect as many American families and small businesses as possible from the tax hikes that are already scheduled to occur" with the new year.



BRAD HARRIGAN/HARTFORD COURANT/MCT

A visitor pays respects at a memorial at Church Hill Road and Washington Avenue Thursday in Newtown, Conn.

Pension Funds Reconsidering Investments In Gun Makers

BY MICHAEL GORMLEY

Associated Press

ALBANY, N.Y. — From California to New York, teacher and public-worker retirement funds are reconsidering their investments in gun makers and confronting an uncomfortable fact: Their pensions have supported the manufacture of deadly weapons, in some cases the same type of gun used in the Connecticut school shooting.

For years, the gun industry has been a reliable investment, attracting tens of millions of dollars from some of the nation's largest retirement funds. The firearms business has been strong, driven by relaxed laws for carrying concealed handguns and by buyers who feared that tighter gun restrictions were more likely under President Obama.

But after the bloodbath in Connecticut, the practice is under review in at least four states, including two of the most populous, California and New York.

Although the amount of money involved is relatively small compared with the size of the pension funds, it has raised questions about the social responsibilities of huge retirement systems that invest on behalf of millions of American workers.

"It's a bad investment to put money behind companies that put military-grade weapons on our streets and refuse to take responsibility for the outcome," said New York City Public Advocate Bill de Blasio. "We should not be giving capital to an industry that is responsible for the deaths of thousands of Americans each year ... it's our moral responsibility."

New York state Comptroller Thomas DiNapoli, who has sometimes wielded the state's \$150.1 billion pension fund to urge

companies to change their practices, is now reviewing nearly \$12 million invested in firearms companies, which have seen their stocks plummet since the attack.

If they decide to dump the investments, the process is more complicated than merely liquidating stocks. Fund managers are required by law to invest in profitable companies, often without any specific power to consider social or ethical issues.

The California State Teachers' Retirement System announced Tuesday that it would review investments in the national and international firearms business.

That system had invested \$600 million in the private equity firm Cerberus Capital Management, which on the same day put up for sale the gun maker known as Freedom Group International, manufacturer of the Bushmaster AR-15 military-style rifle, the weapon Adam Lanza used to kill 26 people at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Conn.

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40th Anniversary Celebration



Mr. & Mrs. Robert Lyngstad

Mr. and Mrs. Robert Lyngstad of Volin, SD, will celebrate their 40th wedding anniversary on Saturday, December 22, 2012.

Their family requests a card shower. Greetings may be sent to 44479 299th St., Volin, SD 57072.

Marilyn Heine and Robert Lyngstad were married December 22, 1972, at the St. Columba Church in rural Irene, SD.

They have five children: Laura (Rob) Kessler of Harrisburg, SD; Wes (Steph) Lyngstad of Brandon, SD; Melissa (Jeremy) Mead of Mason City, IA; Matt (Laura) Lyngstad of Irene, SD and Nicole Lyngstad (Aaron George) of Tea, SD. The couple has 13 grandchildren.

Season's Greetings

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