

Nelson Mandela Released From Hospital

JOHANNESBURG (AP) — Former South African President Nelson Mandela was released Wednesday from the hospital after being treated for a lung infection and having gallstones removed, a government spokesman said.

The 94-year-old anti-apartheid icon will continue to receive medical care at home.

Mandela had been in the hospital since Dec. 8. In recent days, officials have said he was improving and in good spirits, but doctors have taken extraordinary care with his health because of his age.

Mandela was released Wednesday evening and will receive "home-based high care" at his residence in the Johannesburg neighborhood of Houghton until he fully recovers, said presidential spokesman Mac Maharaj.

NY Killer Left Chilling Note, Death Toll Now 3

WEBSTER, N.Y. (AP) — The ex-con turned sniper who killed two firefighters wanted to make sure his goodbye note was legible, typing out his desire to "do what I like doing best, killing people" before setting the house where he lived with his sister ablaze, police said.

Police Chief Gerald Pickering said Tuesday that the 62-year-old loner, William Spengler, brought plenty of ammunition with him for three weapons including a military-style assault rifle as he set out on a quest to burn down his neighborhood just before sunrise on Christmas Eve.

And when firefighters arrived to stop him, he unleashed a torrent of bullets, shattering the windshield of the fire truck that volunteer firefighter and police Lt. Michael Chiapperini, 43, drove to the scene. Fellow firefighter Tomasz Kaczowka, 19, who worked as a 911 dispatcher, was killed as well.

Two other firefighters were struck by bullets, one in the pelvis and the other in the chest and knee. They remained hospitalized in stable condition and were expected to survive.

On Tuesday, investigators found a body in the Spengler home, presumably that of the sister a neighbor said Spengler hated: 67-year-old Cheryl Spengler. Spengler's penchant for death had surfaced before. He served 17 years in prison for manslaughter in the 1980 hammer slaying of his grandmother.

Settlement Reached In Toyota Recall Case

LOS ANGELES (AP) — A plaintiffs' attorney says Toyota Motor Corp. has reached a settlement in a case involving hundreds of lawsuits over accelerations problems.

Steve Berman said Wednesday the settlement, which still needs a federal judge's approval, was worth more than \$1 billion and is the largest settlement in U.S. history involving automobile defects.

Toyota has recalled more than 14 million vehicles worldwide due to acceleration problems in several models and brake defects with the Prius hybrid. Toyota has blamed driver error, faulty floor mats and sticky accelerator pedals for the unintended acceleration.

A phone message left with Toyota's attorneys was not immediately returned.

George H.W. Bush In Intensive Care

HOUSTON (AP) — Former President George H.W. Bush has been admitted to the intensive care unit at a Houston hospital "following a series of setbacks including a persistent fever," but he is alert and talking to medical staff, his spokesman said Wednesday.

Jim McGrath, Bush's spokesman in Houston, said in a brief email that Bush was admitted to the ICU at Methodist Hospital on Sunday. He said doctors are cautiously optimistic about his treatment and that the former president "remains in guarded condition."

No other details were released about his medical condition, but McGrath said Bush is surrounded by family. Bush has been hospitalized since Nov. 23.

Earlier Wednesday, McGrath said a fever that kept Bush in the hospital over Christmas had gotten worse and that doctors had put him on a liquids-only diet.

"It's an elevated fever, so it's actually gone up in the last day or two," McGrath told The Associated Press earlier in the day. "It's a stubborn fever that won't go away."

Sales

From Page 1

added. "Unfortunately, there was no snow on the ground and it was windy. We're hoping that one of these years we'll have some snow."

Deputy Fire Chief Larry Nickles said no fireworks-related incidents were reported last year during the New Year holiday.

"If we don't get any snow cover, the potential is there for problems," he stated.

On Wednesday, the South Dakota Division of Wildland Fire and the Rapid City Fire Department urged the public to take extra precautions to prevent wildfires over the holiday weekend. Grassland areas still remain dry, they warned.

Nickles said one thing to watch for is sparks from fireworks getting into the upper levels of trees and starting a fire. With the dry conditions, that occurred this past year during brush fires.

If things go according to plan, Blom said Dam Fireworks will be open Friday through Monday.

"I'm pretty sure we'll be open, but I won't be positive until I see an updated weather forecast," he stated.

You can follow Nathan Johnson on Twitter at twitter.com/AnInland-Voyage

Morsi Calls Constitution Dawn Of New Republic

BY SARAH EL DEEB
Associated Press

CAIRO — Egypt's Islamist president proclaimed the country's newly adopted constitution as the dawn of a "new republic" in a television address Wednesday, calling on the opposition to join a dialogue with him after a month of violent turmoil and focus on repairing a damaged economy.

Mohammed Morsi sought to present the Islamist-drafter charter as the turning of a historic page for Egypt, but his speech did little to ease the suspicions of those who fear he and his Muslim Brotherhood are entrenching their power. He offered no concrete gestures to an opposition that has so far rejected his dialogue and vowed to fight the constitution.

Instead, with a triumphalist tone, he presented the constitution, which was approved by nearly 64 percent of voters in a referendum that ended last weekend, as creating a democracy with balanced powers between branches of government and political freedoms.

"We don't want to return to an era of one opinion and fake, manufactured majorities. The maturity and consciousness (of voters) heralds that Egypt has set on a path of democracy with no return," Morsi said. "Regardless of the results, for the sake of building the nation, efforts must unite. There is no alternative to a dialogue that is now a necessity."

The opposition says the constitution allows a dictatorship of the majority — which Islamists have won with repeated election victories the past two years. It says the charter's provisions for greater implementation of Islamic law, or Shariah, would allow Islamists who hold the presidency and overwhelmingly dominate the temporary legislature to restrict civil rights and limit the freedoms of minorities and women.

Opponents also say the low turnout in the referendum, just under 33 percent, undermines the document's legitimacy.

The main opposition National Salvation Front said it would study Morsi's speech to see if his call for dialogue is serious. But it dismissed a "national dialogue" body that he launched before the results emerged as "farfetched and simply theater." The dialogue is mainly between Morsi and other Islamists.

"The president is talking to himself," said Hussein Abdel-Ghani, a leading figure in the Front told a press conference after Morsi's

speech. He said the opposition would only enter "real and effective" talks, suggesting Morsi was aiming to assuage the United States, which has called for compromise and talks, without offering real substance. The Front said it will continue to be in opposition to the current rulers who "seek to establish a repressive regime in the name of religion."

Morsi's prerecorded address was his first speech since Dec. 6 after laying low amid the turmoil leading up to the referendum. It came a day after official referendum results were announced, formally bringing into effect the first constitution since the ouster of authoritarian leader Hosni Mubarak in February 2011.

Morsi's main message: it is time to put aside differences and start "the epic battle for construction and production."

He said he had asked his Prime Minister Hesham Kandil to make changes to his Cabinet to meet the "needs of the coming period" and to introduce measure to facilitate investment. But he made no gesture of inviting the opposition to join the reshuffled government.

"As we set on a new phase moving from the first republic to the second republic, a republic that has this constitution as its strong base ... I renew my pledge to respect the law and constitution," Morsi said, repeating his oath of office based on the new charter.

The line signaled the formal end of the political system in place in Egypt since 1952, when a military coup pushed out the Western-backed king and Egypt was declared a republic.

Morsi acknowledged the "respectable" proportion that voted against the constitution, but gave no nod to the concerns opponents have over the charter. Liberals and Christians withdrew from the assembly writing the document, complaining that the Islamist majority was railroaded it through. Opponents worry about provisions giving Muslim clerics a say over legislation, subordinating many civil rights to Shariah and providing little protection for women's rights.

Morsi declared the constitution Egypt's first to be drafted and passed through a popularly approved process, saying it protects human dignity, enshrines moderation, protects freedoms and ensures rights to work, education and health.

His implicit message to those who complain that the Muslim Brotherhood, from

which he hails, is dominating government was that he could be trusted and that in the end, voters can remove them.

"God only knows I make no decision except for God, and for the interest of the nation," Morsi said. "As you know, I am not a lover of authority or someone who is keen to monopolize power. Power is with the people."

He defended decrees he issued in November granting himself sweeping powers, which sparked a wave of protests. He said the decrees, since revoked, were necessary to swiftly push through the constitution to a referendum to end instability. The opposition had urged him to postpone the vote.

The administrator of a Facebook page seen as a major mobilizer for the uprising that forced out Mubarak dismissed Morsi's speech, saying, "His words don't match his deeds."

Abdel-Rahman Mansour, of the "We are All Khaled Said" page, said Morsi had violated earlier promises to respect processes and institutions and is now calling for a dialogue after rushing through a constitution that was highly disputed.

"You can't talk about a second republic when it is based on a constitution that has no national consensus," Mansour said. "He says he doesn't want power but acts differently."

Under the new constitution, the Islamist-dominated Shura Council, the traditionally toothless upper house, was granted temporary legislative powers and began its work on Wednesday. It will legislate until elections for a new lower house are held within two months. Morsi has had legislative powers for months since a court dissolved the law-making lower house of parliament.

Morsi filled out the Shura Council this week by appointing 90 members to bring it to its full 270 members, adding a few non-Islamist members to the body recommended by the national dialogue. But the main liberal and secular opposition groups rejected the appointments as "political bribery."

The parliamentary affairs minister, Mohammed Mahsoub, told Wednesday's session that the government will prepare new legislation for the Shura Council to discuss, including a law to regulate the upcoming parliamentary elections, anti-corruption laws, and laws to organize Egypt's efforts to recover money from corrupt Mubarak-era officials.

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