

US Sending Special Ops Force To Fight IS

WASHINGTON (AP) — The U.S. military will deploy a new special operations force to Iraq to step up the fight against Islamic State militants who are unleashing violence and are determined to hold territory they have seized in Iraq and Syria, Defense Secretary Ash Carter told Congress on Tuesday.

The introduction of the assault force puts U.S. combat troops on the ground in a more permanent role in Iraq and Syria for the first time in the year-plus fight against IS. It comes as Republicans have called for more U.S. boots on the ground, while war-weary Americans stand divided about the prospect of greater military involvement.

Carter, who testified alongside Gen. Joseph Dunford, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, faced skeptical lawmakers who argued that the U.S. needs to be more forceful in countering the threat from IS, credited with attacks in Paris and Beirut and the downing of a Russian airliner.

Carter told the House Armed Services Committee that over time, the special operations force will be able to conduct raids, free hostages, gather intelligence and capture IS leaders. Carter said that will improve intelligence and generate more targets for attacks.

There currently are about 3,300 U.S. troops in Iraq, and President Barack Obama had previously announced he was sending fewer than 50 special operations forces to Syria.

Iraqi Forces Surround Ramadi

BAGHDAD (AP) — After months of sluggish progress, stalled advances and outright failures, Iraqi troops and militias backed by U.S.-led airstrikes have surrounded the key city of Ramadi and appear poised to launch a new attempt to wrest it from the Islamic State group.

The battle that is shaping up threatens to turn into a drawn-out siege, with thousands of residents caught in the middle as the forces try to wear down the militants since they took over the capital of western Anbar province in May. Western officials and analysts warned that the strategy of a methodical, slow siege could make the fight even more difficult.

On Monday, the Iraqi military dropped leaflets into the city, telling the remaining residents — estimated at anywhere from 4,000 to 10,000 — to leave, the strongest signal yet that an assault is imminent.

But residents told The Associated Press on Tuesday that the militants have clamped down, setting up checkpoints across the city to monitor civilians' movements and prevent anyone from going.

"Loudspeakers from mosques give warnings that civilians are not allowed to leave, and anyone who tries to do so will be either arrested or killed," one resident said, speaking on condition of anonymity for fear for his safety.

Gays Under IS Rule Fear Of A Cruel Death

REYHANLI, Turkey (AP) — Before a crowd of men on a street in the Syrian city of Palmyra, the masked Islamic State group judge read out the sentence against the two men convicted of homosexuality: They would be thrown to their deaths from the roof of the nearby Wael Hotel.

He asked one of the men if he was satisfied with the sentence. Death, the judge told him, would help cleanse him of his sin.

"I'd prefer it if you shoot me in the head," 32-year-old Hawas Mallah replied helplessly. The second man, 21-year-old Mohammed Salameh, pleaded for a chance to repent, promising never to have sex with a man again, according to a witness among the onlookers that sunny July morning who gave The Associated Press a rare first-hand account.

"Take them and throw them off," the judge ordered. Other masked extremists tied the men's hands behind their backs and blindfolded them. They led them to the roof of the four-story hotel, according to the witness, who spoke in the Turkish city of Reyhanli on condition he be identified only by his first name, Omar, for fear of reprisals.

Notorious for their gruesome methods of killing, the Islamic State group reserves one of its most brutal for suspected homosexuals. Videos it has released show masked militants dangling men over the precipices of buildings by their legs to drop them head-first or tossing them over the edge. At least 36 men in Syria and Iraq have been killed by IS on charges of sodomy, according to the New York-based OutRight Action International, though its Middle East and North Africa coordinator, Hossein Alizadeh, said it was not possible to confirm the sexual orientation of the victims.

PP Shooting: Domestic Terrorism?

WASHINGTON (AP) — The man accused of killing three people at a Colorado Planned Parenthood clinic brought several guns, ammunition and propane tanks that officials say he assembled around a car.

For hours, he holed up inside the clinic, unleashing a fusillade that wounded nine others and sent shoppers scattering inside surrounding buildings during a standoff with police.

To some in the community, the attack resembled an act of domestic terrorism, sparking a debate over what to call Robert Lewis Dear's rampage even before he was taken into custody.

But the legal system may not resolve that question. Dear faces state charges of first-degree murder, and the federal criminal code has no specific, catchall charge for acts of domestic terrorism. That means federal prosecutors pursuing charges for ideologically motivated violence often turn to other statutes — such as those for firearms, explosives, hate crimes or murder — to cover offenses that could arguably be labeled as terror. The punishment may be the same, but generally without the branding more often associated with international terrorism.

Chicago Mayor Fires Police Chief In Wake Of Video Release

BY DON BABWIN
Associated Press

CHICAGO — Rahm Emanuel sought for months to keep the public from seeing a video that shows a white police officer shooting a black teenager 16 times.

Now, a week after the video's release, the Chicago mayor has fired the police superintendent, created a task force for police accountability and expanded the use of body cameras.

But Emanuel's effort to keep the video secret and his long wait to take action at the police department has stirred deep skepticism among those protesting the teen's death. Many activists are especially incensed by the fact that the video first surfaced during a re-election campaign, when the mayor was seeking African-American votes.

"In our community, everyone is saying it (the video) was not released because of the election," said Corey Brooks, a prominent black minister.

The mayor's quest for a second term sustained a setback after he failed to win the February election. He desperately needed black support to prevail in an April runoff.

But Emanuel had angered black voters with his decision to close dozens of schools. And many African-Americans complained that the city was not doing enough to police the predominantly black West and South Sides.

Had it emerged earlier, the video "could have buried" Emanuel's chances for re-election, Columbia Law School professor Bernard E. Harcourt wrote in a New York Times op-ed piece published Monday.

The mayor defended the decision to withhold the video from the public until the investigation was finished and the officer charged with murder. He said the move had nothing to do with his 2015 campaign.

"You don't compromise an ongoing investigation," he said Tuesday. "Yet it's clear you all want and the public deserves that information. They're two conflicting principles."

Asked by a reporter if Emanuel thought he would become a distraction himself and would consider resigning, the mayor responded, "You'll make that judgment. I think I'm doing my job."

Emanuel announced the dismissal of Superintendent Garry McCarthy, whose



NUCCIO DINUZZO/CHICAGO TRIBUNE/TNS

Mayor Rahm Emanuel and then-Chicago Police Supt. Garry McCarthy hold a news conference at Chicago Police Headquarters in Chicago on Tuesday. Emanuel announced Tuesday that he has dismissed McCarthy, citing a lack of public trust in police leadership in the wake of the Laquan McDonald shooting.

departure on Tuesday came just a week after the video was released.

The mayor praised McCarthy's leadership but called it an "undeniable fact" that the public's trust in the police had eroded.

"Now is the time for fresh eyes and new leadership," Emanuel said.

Protesters have been calling for McCarthy's dismissal in response to the handling of the death of Laquan McDonald, a 17-year-old who was killed in October 2014.

Some aldermen, particularly members of the city council's black caucus, have also been seeking McCarthy's resignation, citing the city's crime rate and questions about the department's transparency.

The city released video of the shooting only after a judge ordered it to be made public. On the same day, officer Jason Van Dyke was charged.

The mayor also announced the creation of a task force on police accountability that will help develop an early warning system allowing the department to intervene with problem officers racking up complaints from the public.

Van Dyke was the subject of 18 civilian complaints over 14 years, including allegations that he used racial epithets and excessive force. Complaints against police are not uncommon, but the number filed against Van Dyke was high compared with other officers.

Emanuel's office an-

nounced Sunday that the police department would expand its use of officer body cameras from a single district to roughly a third of Chicago.

Chief of Detectives John Escalante will oversee the department until a permanent replacement is named, Emanuel said.

Emanuel introduced McCarthy as his pick to lead the department in May 2011, replacing former FBI agent Jody Weis, who was unpopular with many rank-and-file officers who claimed Weis did not stand behind them.

The mayor credited McCarthy with modernizing the police force, getting illegal guns off the streets and pushing a community policing strategy that the mayor said had reduced overall crime rates to a record low.

In particular, McCarthy was a constant preacher on the need for tougher punishments for gun offenses. He hammered on the fact that many murder suspects had prior gun convictions, which McCarthy argued should have kept them off the streets.

But the police chief came under pressure because of homicides that included high-profile cases such as the slaying of Hadiya Pendleton.

Pendleton, an honor student, became a national symbol of gun violence when she was gunned down in 2013 as she talked with friends just a mile from President Barack Obama's South Side home. She died just days after re-

turning from the president's inauguration.

Through a spokesman, McCarthy declined to comment Tuesday to The Associated Press.

The silent Chicago video shows McDonald walking down the middle of a four-lane street. He appears to veer away from two officers as they emerge from a vehicle, drawing their guns. Van Dyke opens fire from close range and continues firing after McDonald crumples to the ground.

Police have said McDonald was carrying a knife, and an autopsy revealed that he had the hallucinogenic drug PCP in his system. Cook County State's Attorney Anita Alvarez has said the 3-inch blade recovered from the scene had been folded into the handle.

Defense attorney Dan Herbert has said the officer feared for his life, acted lawfully and that the video does not tell the whole story. Van Dyke was released from jail Monday after paying the required \$150,000 of his \$1.5 million bail.

Also Tuesday, relatives of another person fatally shot last year by Chicago police stepped up their pleas to have the squad car video made public. Emanuel spokeswoman Kelley Quinn said the city was "looking into" releasing it.

Police have said 25-year-old Ronald Johnson III was fatally shot by an officer on Oct. 12, 2014. At the time, authorities said he pointed a gun at police.

His mother, Dorothy Holmes, has said he was running away from officers. She and attorney Michael Oppenheimer have seen a copy of the video because of lawsuits they have filed.

Kenya Police Investigate University Drill In Which 1 Died

BY TOM ODULA
Associated Press

NAIROBI, Kenya — A leading Kenyan university should have sought authorization from the "highest security office in the country" for a practice exercise to test terrorism preparedness that led to a stampede in which one person died, a police spokesman said Tuesday.

Police are discouraging institutions from carrying out drills on their own, said Charles Owino said in a statement Tuesday. Strathmore University in Nairobi

carried out a drill Monday that students believed was real and stampeded, killing one staff member. Strathmore has said the drill was carried out in collaboration with area police.

Strathmore University board apologized to the school fraternity and condolences to the family of one staff member who died as a result of injuries received during the drill aimed at testing the preparedness of the university and emergency response team in the event of an attack.

University vice chancellor, Prof.

John Odhiambo, said the institution will pay the medical fees for the 30 people injured including 20 who are still in a hospital, two in critical condition.

Some students told local radio station Capital FM that loud bangs and people pretending to be extremist attackers caused panic, causing everyone to flee. Memories of the April 2 attack by four gunmen from Somali extremist group al-Shabab that killed 147 people at a university in eastern Kenya are still fresh with many Kenyans.



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