

U.S.: Syria Rebels Now Include Al-Qaida In Iraq

WASHINGTON (AP) — Top U.S. intelligence officials pointed to al-Qaida in Iraq on Thursday as the likely culprit behind recent bombings in Syria, the deadliest attacks against the Syrian government in the 11-month uprising.

Though the U.S. has called for Syrian President Bashar Assad to step down, his fall could lead to a power vacuum that al-Qaida's largest regional affiliate or other extremist groups could fill, Director of National Intelligence James Clapper told Congress. And that could allow such groups to help themselves to Syria's vast stockpiles of chemical weapons, he said.

At the Pentagon, Defense Secretary Leon Panetta said the crisis in Syria has become "that much more serious" and worrisome to the United States as a result of indications that al-Qaida has infiltrated the government's opposition.

"It does raise concerns for us that al-Qaida is trying to assert a presence there," he said. "As to just what their role is and how extensive their role is, I think that still remains to be seen."

In New York, meanwhile, the U.N. General Assembly approved a resolution backing an Arab League plan calling for Assad to step down and strongly condemning human rights violations it said his government had committed. The vote, though not legally binding, reflects widespread world opinion.

Iran Says It's The Victim In Nuclear Showdown

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Facing international sanctions over its nuclear program, Iran is taking the position that it's the victim, not the aggressor. Iran is pointing to the cases of five slain scientists whose deaths it blames on Israel and its allies.

From Iran's view, it's been the target of clandestine hit squads for more than two years while the West has ignored Iran's claims that the Israeli Mossad spy agency is the mastermind.

"Iran's official line is that it's under siege, not the aggressor. This shows up everywhere in Iran's policies and statements," said Mustafa Alani, an analyst at the Gulf Research Center based in Geneva.

President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad spoke on national television Wednesday next to photos of five nuclear scientists and researchers killed since 2010. Nearby was a large portrait of Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei holding the son of Mostafa Ahmadi Roshan, a senior director of Iran's main uranium enrichment facility, who was killed last month after a magnetic bomb tore through his car in Tehran.

During earlier ceremonies to insert domestically made fuel rods at a Tehran research reactor, Ahmadinejad lifted to his knee the daughter of nuclear electronics expert Darioush Rezaeinejad, who was fatally shot last year by a pair of gunmen on motorcycles. Iran's nuclear chief, Fereidoun Abbasi, embraced the girl.

N.C. School: Mistake At Lunch Led To Uproar

RALEIGH, N.C. (AP) — It was a tale of government meddling that outraged radio talk show hosts and a pair of Congress members: A 4-year-old was forced to dump her packed lunch and eat a state-dictated cafeteria lunch of chicken nuggets. Now school officials are blaming a teacher's error in making sure the child had a nutritious meal.

The incident happened two weeks ago at an elementary school in Raeford, near Fort Bragg. The girl's parents anonymously tipped off a Raleigh TV station and a conservative blogger after the girl brought home her packed lunch uneaten.

Conservatives who see it as yet another example of government overreach leaped on the story, and it reached a pair of North Carolina's U.S. representatives, Republican Renee Ellmers and Democrat Larry Kissel. They wrote a letter asking U.S. Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack to investigate.

"The content of a school lunch provided to a child by their parents should be governed only by the child's parents, not another government bureaucrat," they wrote in the letter.

"This is also kind of adding on to a lot of things that we're seeing coming out of the Obama Administration" that conservatives oppose, like requiring insurance coverage of contraceptives, Ellmers' press secretary Tom Doheny said. "We're joining this bipartisan call to get any and all information. It's one of those things that if it looks like a rat, and smells like a rat, odds are it could be."

Man Won't Be Buried Near Sons He Killed

SEATTLE (AP) — The man who killed his two sons in an explosive house fire in Washington state will not be buried in the same cemetery as the children, his family said Thursday.

Josh Powell's mother, Terri Powell, issued a written statement confirming that the family had given up a plot tentatively reserved at Woodbine Cemetery overlooking the boys' grave.

"We have tried so hard to be loving and considerate and respectful in making Josh's burial arrangements," she said. "We love our little Charlie and Braden and want their resting place to be a place of peace and comfort."

Powell, the husband of missing Utah woman Susan Powell, killed his 5- and 7-year-old sons and himself in a gas-fueled blaze Feb. 5 at a home he was renting in Graham.

More than 1,000 mourners attended the boys' funeral Saturday. They were later buried in a single casket at Woodbine, a municipal cemetery in Puyallup.

Parents Sentenced In Son's Cancer Death

CLEVELAND (AP) — The parents of an 8-year-old boy who died from Hodgkin lymphoma after suffering for months from undiagnosed swollen glands were sentenced to eight years in prison Thursday following their guilty pleas to denying him medical treatment.

Attorneys for Monica Hussing, 37, and William Robinson Sr., 40, had said the parents had financial problems and tried to get checkups for their son but couldn't afford it.

The couple was given the maximum sentence by Cuyahoga County Judge Michael Astrab, who accepted their guilty pleas last month to attempted involuntary manslaughter in a last-minute plea deal before their trial was about to begin. They were handcuffed and taken into custody immediately. Both plan to appeal the sentence.

"I loved my son," Robinson told the judge, occasionally wiping his eyes with a tissue. He said he was sorry.

"I tried to help my son," Hussing said as family members in the courtroom quietly sobbed.

Gov't: Parents Need More Info On Phone Apps

WASHINGTON (AP) — Who is monitoring the apps that kids use on their phones? The government complained Thursday that software companies producing games and other mobile applications aren't telling parents what personal information is being collected from kids and how companies are using it.

Apps could quietly be collecting a child's location, phone number, call logs and lists of friends, said a report by the Federal Trade Commission. The FTC blamed the companies that make the apps, and the stores that sell them, for failing to explain where that data might be recorded, for how long and who would have access to it.

"As gatekeepers of the app marketplace, the app stores should do more," the report said. "This recommendation applies not just to Apple and Google, but also to other companies that provide a marketplace for kids' mobile apps."

Apple declined to comment on the FTC report. Google, which created the Android software, said it has an "industry-leading permission system" that tells consumers what data an app can access and requires user approval before installation. "Additionally, we offer parental controls and best practices for developers to follow when designing apps that handle user data," Google said in a statement.

The FTC report signals a renewed interest by federal regulators who could pursue legal action against companies they accuse of violating the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act. The law bans collecting and disclosing personal information for children under 13 without their parents' consent.

The FTC is especially aggressive protecting the privacy rights of children. Last year a mobile app developer paid \$50,000 last year to settle FTC charges that it violated the children's privacy law.

Santorum Challenges Romney In Speech

BY STEVE PEOPLES

Associated Press

DETROIT — An aggressive Rick Santorum went after Mitt Romney on multiple fronts Thursday, challenging the Republican front-runner's economic policies, values and consistency in the city of his birth.

Santorum criticized his rival's record on federal bailouts in particular, although both men opposed the government's decision to rescue the auto industry.

"Gov. Romney supported the bailout of Wall Street and decided not to support the bailout of Detroit. My feeling was that the government should not be involved in bailouts period," Santorum said in an address to the Detroit Economic Club, just 23 miles from where Romney went to high school. "I think that's a much more consistent position."

Santorum spoke as Romney campaigned elsewhere in Michigan, ignoring Santorum and two other rivals for the GOP presidential nomination altogether while focusing his criticism on President Barack Obama.

Santorum, who has surged in state and national polls, is showing greater confidence in what should be safe territory for the longtime GOP front-runner. Romney not only grew up in Michigan, he is the son of a former governor. His family members also have been deeply involved in the state's politics for decades.

Despite those inherent advantages, Santorum vowed earlier in the week to "plant our flag" in Michigan, where the presidential primary is Feb. 28. He began to make good on that promise Thursday.

Known for staunch socially conservative views, Santorum outlined an economic policy with a heavy emphasis on family values. He supports additional tax breaks to encourage charitable donations to churches, for example.

"We certainly won't be able to have limited government, lower taxes, if the family continues to disintegrate," he said.

Santorum also linked Obama and Romney, suggesting neither wants to lead the entire country as he would.

"We have a president who says he supports occupiers who divide America between 99 and 1. We have another candidate in this race who suggested that he didn't care about the very poor," Santorum said of Romney. "How about a



ANDRE J. JACKSON/DETROIT FREE PRESS/MCT

Republican presidential candidate Rick Santorum attends the Detroit Economic Club luncheon at the Cobo Center in Detroit, Michigan, on Thursday, February 16, 2012.

candidate who cares about 100 percent?"

And while he said he supports economic opportunity for all, Santorum said income inequality is good.

"Why? Because people rise to different levels of success based on what they contribute to society and to the marketplace and that's as it should be," he said.

Santorum also reiterated his "Made in America" plan to eliminate a 35 percent corporate income tax on manufacturing to help rebuild the industry. He also wants to increase a tax credit for research and development, from 14 percent to 20 percent, to help create high-tech jobs.

Santorum spoke hours after he released tax returns showing his average income exceeded \$990,000 in recent years. He paid a considerably higher tax rate than Romney, whose income largely comes from interest on investments.

"Look, I do my own taxes. Heck, Romney paid half the tax rate I did, so obviously he doesn't do his own taxes," Santorum said. "Maybe I should hire an accountant in the future."

Religious Leaders:

Contraception Rule Violates Freedom

BY JIM ABRAMS

Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON — Religious leaders told a House panel Thursday the Obama administration was violating basic rights to religious freedom with its policies for requiring that employees of religion-affiliated institutions have access to birth control coverage.

The unity of the religious leaders contrasted with the partisan divide among lawmakers on the Oversight and Government Reform Committee, with Democrats saying they had been denied the ability to present witnesses who might support the government stance or speak for the rights of women to reproductive health coverage. They asked why women weren't better represented among the 10 witnesses at the hearing.

The issue has sparked a political firestorm for the administration, with Catholics and other religious groups strongly protesting an original Health and Human Services ruling that religion-affiliated institutions such as hospitals and universities must include free birth control coverage in their employee health plans. The churches themselves were exempted from the requirement.

Obama last Friday modified that policy so that insurance companies, and not the organization affiliated with a church, pay for birth control costs, but that didn't satisfy those testifying at the hearing.

Bishop William E. Lori, representing the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, compared the ruling to a law that would force all food providers, including kosher delicatessens, to serve pork.

"Does the fact that large majorities in society, even large majorities within the protesting religious community, reject a particular religious belief make it permissible for the government to weigh in on one side of that dispute?" he asked.

Churches played a role in the development of health care and "it is ironic that the religious organizations should have their rights crushed in the name of health care," said Dr. Craig Mitchell, a Baptist minister and head of the ethics department at



OLIVIER DOULIERY/ABACA PRESS/MCT

The president of Belmont Abbey College, Dr. William K. Thierfelder, second from right, waits to testify with other religious leaders in the contraception debate in front of the House Oversight Committee February 16, 2012 on Capitol Hill in Washington, DC.

the Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

The policy has split Catholics, a key constituency for Obama to win a second term in office.

The head of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, Cardinal-designate Timothy Dolan, told The Associated Press this week that his group would launch both legislative and court challenges to the health care mandate. Yet there are also some Catholic groups and individuals who have come out in support of the president's approach.

They were not there at Thursday's hearing.

"The chairman is promoting a conspiracy theory that the federal government is conducting a 'war' against religion," the top Democrat on the committee, Rep. Elijah Cummings of Maryland, said of committee chairman Darrell Issa, R-Calif. "He has also refused to allow a minority witness to testify about the interests of women who want safe and affordable coverage for basic preventive health care, including contraception," Cummings said of Issa.

Cummings added that a num-

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Mr. & Mrs. Cleadues Hovorka
are celebrating their **60th wedding anniversary** with an **Open House** on **Saturday, Feb. 18, in Tyndall at the Fr. Cronin Center at 7pm.**

Logue-Freeburg Wedding

Emily Jo Logue and John Theodore Freeburg were married Nov. 15, 2011, at the Calvary Lutheran Church in Irene with the Pastor Ralph Egbert officiating.

Parents of the couple are Charlie and Cathy Logue of Wakonda, and Gary and Amy Freeburg of Gayville.

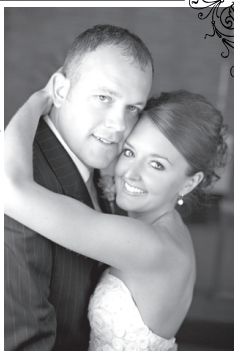
Matron of honor was Ashley Halvorson. Kim Koch, Rachel Martz, and Erica LeClair. Flower girl was Josie LeClair. The bride's personal attendants were Chelsea Bohlmann and Beth Freeburg.

Best man was Jory Freeburg. Groomsman were Travis Pokorney, Tyler Hoxeng, and Jeff Dreesen. Ring bearer was Jack Freeburg. Ushers were J.R. Willman and Nick Buckman.

Music for the ceremony was provided by The Rose Trio. The reception was held at Minerva's Convention Center in Yankton. Reception hosts were Melissa Fischer and Rachel Svartioien.

The bride graduated from Wakonda High School in 2004. She received her Bachelors degree in Dental Hygiene from USD in 2008. She currently is a dental hygienist at Houska Dental Clinic.

The groom is a 1999 graduate of Gayville-Volin High School. He graduated from Wyoming Tech in 2000 and Southeast Tech in 2002. He is currently employed at Freeburg Hay Co.



Nigerian Underwear Bomber Gets Life

DETROIT (AP) — Defiantly declaring "a day of victory," a Nigerian man was given a mandatory life sentence Thursday for trying to blow up a packed jetliner with a bomb sewn into his underwear. People aboard the flight testified that the failed attack had disturbed their sleep and travels for more than two years.

Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab was the same remorseless man who four months ago pleaded guilty to all charges related to Northwest Airlines Flight 253. He seemed to relish the mandatory sentence and defended his actions as rooted in the Muslim holy book, the Quran.

"Mujahideen are proud to kill in the name of God," he said. "Today is a day of victory."

Had the bomb not fizzled, nearly 300 people aboard the flight would probably have been killed.

The case stirred renewed fears that terrorists could still bring down an American jetliner more than eight years after 9/11, and it accelerated installation of body scanners at the nation's airports.

Before Thursday's sentencing, four passengers and a crew member from the flight told U.S. District Judge Nancy Edmunds that they have struggled to live and travel normally since the incident on Christmas Day 2009.

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