

Hope Brings Dow Within 50 Points Of 13,000

NEW YORK (AP) — The Dow edged teasingly close to the 13,000 marker on Friday, a milestone it hasn't reached since before the financial crisis brought the U.S. economy to its knees.

The Dow Jones industrial average rose 45.79 points, or 0.4 percent, to close at 12,949.87, its highest close for the year so far. That followed a 123-point surge the day before, when it also set a closing record for 2012.

The rest of the market struggled for direction on what turned out to be a quiet news day as traders prepared for the long Presidents' Day weekend. The Standard & Poor's 500 rose 3.19 points, or 0.2 percent, to 1,361.23, also setting a record close for 2012. The Nasdaq composite, after surging Thursday, fell 8.07 points, or 0.3 percent, to 2,951.78. Greek debt talks idled and a key economic indicator, U.S. consumer prices, came in at about what analysts were expecting.

The Dow hasn't closed above 13,000 since May 19, 2008, a time when the Bush administration was still in charge, Lehman Brothers and Merrill Lynch still existed, and unemployment was just 5.4 percent, compared to the current 8.3 percent.

Though 13,000 in some ways would be just a number on a board, with no direct bearing on the fundamentals of the economy, its psychological effect could still be important. People and businesses tend to spend based on how they feel about the economy, and big round numbers can affect feelings just as much as money in the wallet.

ICE Supervisor Shot During Job Counseling

LONG BEACH, Calif. (AP) — A federal immigration agent killed a colleague who had shot a high-ranking official six times while being counseled on his job performance inside an Immigration and Customs Enforcement office, the FBI said Friday.

Authorities identified the gunman in the Thursday evening attack as supervisory special agent Ezequiel Garcia, 45, and the victim as Kevin Kozak, 51, deputy special agent in charge of the Los Angeles area.

Garcia was killed by an unidentified agent who intervened after Kozak was shot. Kozak was in stable condition at a hospital and was described as alert and talking.

"He is a fighter and I believe that's why he's alive today," said Claude Arnold, ICE special agent in charge. "He refused to succumb to his injuries and in law enforcement that's what makes the difference between people who go home at the end of the day and those who don't."

Arnold said he wasn't aware of any issues between Garcia and Kozak.

Obama Promotes Steps To Boost U.S. Trade

EVERETT, Wash. (AP) — President Barack Obama called Friday for more steps to help U.S. companies compete overseas, standing in front of an enormous Boeing Dreamliner to summon a bright future for American manufacturing and exports.

Visiting a Boeing plant in Washington state where he watched some of the massive 787s under assembly, Obama pushed for Congress to continue financing a national export credit agency crucial to a goal of doubling exports by 2014.

The president announced steps to offer financing to U.S. companies to match help their foreign competitors are getting from overseas to help reduce trade imbalances that favor other countries.

Addressing workers at the plant, Obama said: "You're the most productive on earth. You can compete with anybody. You will out-work anybody. As long as the playing field is level, you can compete with any worker, anywhere, anytime, in China, in Europe, it does not matter. If we have a level playing field, America will always win, because we have the best workers."

"I will not stand by when our competitors don't play by the rules," he said.

Obama delivered his remarks in front of a huge Dreamliner turbine after emerging from the back of the aircraft and walking down red-carpeted stairs to the tune of "Hail to the Chief" in a dramatic piece of White House staging. It came at the end of a three-day trip that included heavy fundraising along the West Coast and a stop at a Milwaukee padlock manufacturer.

Obama called on Congress to extend the Export-Import Bank's authorization. Congress already extended it through May of this year, but White House officials said the bank will reach its lending limit at the end of March. Obama pointed to the bank as a key player in helping promote U.S. exports.

Josh Powell Had 400 Sex And Incest Images

OLYMPIA, Wash. (AP) — Josh Powell had hundreds of images of disturbing cartoon sex and graphic depictions of incest on his home computer, something Utah authorities investigating his wife's disappearance kept private for about two years, according to files released Friday.

A Washington state psychologist who had previously said Powell's strong parenting skills should allow him to continue supervised visits altered her assessment after reviewing the images, calling them a "great concern" and suggesting a more intense evaluation of the father. That conclusion came just six days before he killed himself and two sons in an explosive house fire two weeks ago.

Many of the approximately 400 images described in the state social services included sexual depictions of popular cartoons, including child-focused characters such as Rugrats, Dennis the Menace and SpongeBob SquarePants. Another 15 images showed 3-D depictions of sex involving parents and their children.

Powell had initially told the psychologist that he visited only pornography sites featuring adults.

"Given the gaps of information about Mr. Powell there seems reason to conclude he may not presently be a stable and appropriate resource for his children," wrote Dr. James Manley in a follow-up report.

Washington officials overseeing the care of Powell's children first got word of the graphic content in November, when a Utah investigator wrote in an email that they were looking to disclose to social workers about 5-6 images recovered in 2009 shortly after Susan Powell's disappearance.

But two months later, social worker Forest Jacobson wrote that the images weren't received until mid-January and told the psychologist "it is now clear there are many more images than initially indicated."

A spokesman for the West Valley City police in Utah did not return a call seeking comment Friday.

Syrian Refugees Flee Escalation

BY DALE GAVLAK AND ZEINA KARAM
 Associated Press

RAMTHA, Jordan — Syrian refugees fleeing to Jordan for their lives described a dramatic escalation in violence and a mounting toll of dead and wounded in the southern city of Daraa and the country's battered central region.

Medical workers in neighboring Jordan prepared blood donations to send to Daraa, the city where the uprising against President Bashar Assad erupted nearly a year ago, as the regime struggled to extinguish major pockets of dissent with intensive shelling.

Activists said at least 26 civilians were killed Friday, many of them in the rebellious central city of Homs, where shells slammed into rebel-held residential areas.

The fighting in Homs, coupled with fresh violence in Daraa, has triggered a new wave of wounded refugees crossing the border into Jordan.

"Government troops are shelling everything, whether it's buildings, people, houses. They consider us nothing. They want to eliminate us totally," said Seif, a 22-year-old who was receiving medical treatment in a Jordanian hospital along with other Syrian refugees.

Seif said he was working with army defectors from the Free Syrian Army, helping retrieve the wounded from collapsed buildings and

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SEIF

homes, when he was hit by shrapnel in his leg. He could not receive medical treatment in Syria, fearing he would be arrested and killed by pro-Assad gunmen.

"Our crime was helping people," said Seif, who gave only his first name for fear of reprisals by Assad's government. "But the regime accuses us of being terrorists."

Attacks on Daraa, where the uprising was touched off last March by the arrest of teenagers who scrawled anti-regime graffiti on the walls of the provincial capital, have escalated in the past few days.

Mohamed Ahmed Iyad of the Jordanian aid group Kitab and Sunna, which provides aid to some 10,000 Syrians in Jordan, said his group was preparing blood bags and other medical supplies to send to Daraa.

In the past two days alone, 170 families — around 850 people — have fled to Ramtha, located just seven miles (11 kilometers) from the Syrian border, Iyad said. Most were from Daraa.

Terror Suspect Arrested Near Capitol In FBI Sting

BY NEDRA PICKLER AND ERIC TUCKER
 Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A 29-year-old Moroccan man was arrested Friday near the U.S. Capitol as he was planning to detonate what he thought was a suicide vest, given to him by FBI undercover operatives, said police and government officials.

Amine El Khalifi of Alexandria, Va., was taken into custody with an inoperable gun and inert explosives, according to a counterterrorism official. He arrived near the Capitol in a van with the two undercover FBI officers, and walked toward the building, according to court papers. He was arrested before he left the parking garage.

El Khalifi made a brief appearance in federal court in Alexandria, Va., on Friday afternoon, wearing a green shirt and black pants and holding his arms together behind his back. A judge set a bail hearing for Wednesday at 2 p.m.

FBI agents in blue jackets raided a red brick rambler in Arlington after the arrest. A police car blocked the entrance.

A criminal complaint charges him with knowingly and unlawfully attempting to use a weapon of mass destruction against property that is owned and used by the United States. The charge carries a maximum penalty of life in prison.

El Khalifi, who was under constant surveillance, expressed interest in killing at least 30 people and considered targeting a building in Alexandria and a restaurant, synagogue and a place where military personnel gather in Washington before he settled on the Capitol after canvassing that area a couple of times, the counterterrorism official said. During the investigation, El Khalifi went with undercover operatives to a quarry in West Virginia in January to practice detonating explosives, ac-



OLIVIER DOULIERY/ABACA PRESS/MCT
FBI Joint Terrorism Task Force agents conduct a terrorism investigation at a house on Friday, February 17, 2012, in Arlington, Virginia. The search is related to the arrest earlier in the day of a Moroccan man by the FBI who planned on conducting a suicide attack on the U.S. Capitol.

ording to court documents.

El Khalifi came to the U.S. when he was 16 years old and is unemployed and not believed to be associated with al-Qaida. He had been under investigation for about a year and had overstayed his visitor visa, which expired in 1999, making him in the country illegally, according to court documents.

According to the affidavit filed by an FBI agent, El Khalifi told acquaintances in January 2011 that he agreed the "war on terrorism" was a "war on Muslims" and that they needed to be ready for war.

Before settling on a plot to conduct a suicide bombing in the Capitol, El Khalifi considered blowing up an office building in Alexandria, where military officials worked

and a restaurant in Washington to target military officials who gathered there. He even purchased supplies including nails for the operation, according to the affidavit.

Later, when he settled on bombing the Capitol, El Khalifi asked his associates for more explosives that would be detonated by dialing a cell phone number. In January, he unknowingly told authorities he wanted to know if an explosion would be large enough to destroy an entire building.

El Khalifi met with two undercover law enforcement officers, who gave him an automatic weapon, which had been rendered inoperable. El Khalifi carried the firearm around the room, practiced pulling the trigger and looking at himself in the mirror.

Santorum Surges But Scrutiny On Rise Intensifies

BY STEVE PEOPLES
 AND JULIE CARR SMYTH
 Associated Press

COLUMBUS, Ohio — Rick Santorum stole a key endorsement from chief rival Mitt Romney on Friday as polls in Ohio and elsewhere suggest the former Pennsylvania senator has seized the momentum in the rollercoaster Republican presidential contest.

Amid the shift, however, are signs of stress within a disorganized Santorum campaign and intensifying questions about whether he can sustain a rise that has come and gone once before already. Romney's mammoth political machine — coupled with new scrutiny — will give Santorum little margin for error.

He was all smiles at the Ohio State House on Friday afternoon as state Attorney General Mike DeWine formally shifted his allegiance from Romney to Santorum, a decision that comes just 18 days before Ohio and nine other states host critical Super Tuesday



Santorum

Santorum said.

But on what should have been an overwhelmingly positive day, Santorum could not escape a campaign misstep from the day before.

Foster Friess, the main donor behind Santorum's "super PAC," created a stir Thursday when he suggested on national television that aspirin used to be an acceptable method for contraception.

"The gals put it between their knees and it wasn't that costly," he said.

Friess apologized Friday in a blog post. But Santorum was re-

contests.

"I just am very, very grateful that he would step forward in his fashion and lead a spark here in the state of Ohio that I think is going to deliver us a great victory on Super Tuesday,"

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"The gals put it between their knees and it wasn't that costly," he said.

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peatedly forced to dissociate himself from his surrogate's comments, which he later described as "a bad joke." Whether it was a joke or not, the comments drew unwanted attention to his own positions on contraception and women's issues.

Santorum has said he wouldn't try to take away the birth control pill or condoms but that states should be free to ban them. He told a Christian blog last year that as president he would warn the nation about "the dangers of contraception" and the permissive culture it encourages.

Speaking to reporters after the DeWine announcement, he said he and his wife, as Catholics, don't practice birth control.

"To be attacked on that, which I

have been, that somehow or another that just because I personally believe this, that somehow now I'm going to be the uber-czar that's going to try to impose that on the rest of the country, it's absurd," he said. "It's absurd on its face, and it's absurd based on my record in the Congress."

The contraception flap, according to Republican observers, is evidence of an undisciplined campaign that is already stumbling under the weight of intensifying scrutiny. Polling suggests that significant numbers of voters still don't know Santorum well. And he may struggle to win over female voters in particular as they begin to pay more attention, according to Phil Musser, a GOP strategist who doesn't work for either campaign.

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