

Judge And Prosecutor Assassinated In Syria

BEIRUT (AP) — Gunmen in Syria staged a guerrilla-style ambush that killed a senior state prosecutor and a judge Sunday in an attack that suggested armed factions are growing bolder and more coordinated in their uprising against President Bashar Assad’s regime.

The roadway slayings — reported in an opposition-dominated northern region by the Syrian state news agency — came a day after a deadly hit-and-run attack on a political figure in the heart of the pro-Assad city of Aleppo.

The targeted killings have not reached Assad’s inner circle, but they indicate a growing shift toward violent tactics by the opposition as it brings aboard more military defectors and seeks to tighten control over the small pieces of territory in its hands.

The fears of a looming civil war have neighboring Jordan racing to finish a refugee camp near the Syrian border to handle a possible exodus of people fleeing for safety.

Meanwhile, Egypt became the latest Arab nation to publicly snub Assad by ordering the withdrawal of its ambassador in Damascus.

Officials: 44 Killed In No. Mexico Prison Riot

MONTERREY, Mexico (AP) — A fight among inmates led to a prison riot in northern Mexico that killed 44 people Sunday, a security official said.

Nuevo Leon state public security spokesman Jorge Domene Zambrano said the riot broke out at about 2 a.m. in a high-security section of a prison in the city of Apodaca outside the northern industrial city of Monterrey.

Several inmates attacked others, and the fighting then spread and blew up into a riot, Domene said. Forty-four people died before authorities regained control of the prison a couple of hours later, he said.

Families of the prisoners gathered outside the prison pushing at the fences and shouting at police to demand word of the victims.

Deadly fights happen periodically in Mexico’s prisons as gangs and drug cartels stage jail breaks and battle for control of penitentiaries, often with the involvement of officials.

Houston Is Laid To Rest In Private Ceremony

WESTFIELD, N.J. (AP) — Whitney Houston was laid to rest Sunday at a brief private ceremony in New Jersey, the end of a weekend that saw the pop star’s family and friends gather at a star-studded funeral to mourn her loss while celebrating her career.

Fans and onlookers gathered in several places along the route the motorcade took from the Newark funeral home to the cemetery about 20 miles away in Westfield, where Houston was buried next to her father, who died in 2003.

The 48-year-old singer died Feb. 11 in California, hours before she was to attend a pre-Grammy Awards party. No cause of death has been determined.

On Saturday, she was mourned at an invitation-only funeral at the church in Newark where she sang in the choir as a child. She was remembered by the biggest names in the music: Stevie Wonder and Alicia Keys sang, and industry mogul Clive Davis was among those who spoke, as was Kevin Costner, Houston’s co-star in “The Bodyguard.”

The funeral was closed to fans, who were not allowed within blocks of the church. Still, many came to Newark to take part in what ways they could, some from as far as Miami and Washington, D.C.

FDA To Probe The Safety Of Inhalable Caffeine

BOSTON (AP) — U.S. Food and Drug Administration officials plan to investigate whether inhalable caffeine sold in lipstick-sized canisters is safe for consumers and if its manufacturer was right to brand it as a dietary supplement.

AeroShot went on the market late last month in Massachusetts and New York, and it’s also available in France. Consumers put one end of the canister in their mouths and breathe in, releasing a fine powder that dissolves almost instantly.

Each grey-and-yellow plastic canister contains B vitamins, plus 100 milligrams of caffeine powder, about the equivalent of the caffeine in a large cup of coffee.

AeroShot inventor, Harvard biomedical engineering professor David Edwards, says the product is safe and doesn’t contain taurine and other common additives used to enhance the caffeine effect in energy drinks.

AeroShot didn’t require FDA review before hitting the U.S. market because it’s sold as a dietary supplement. But New York’s U.S. Sen. Charles Schumer said he met with FDA Commissioner Dr. Margaret Hamburg and she agreed to review the safety and legality of AeroShot.

ESPN Fires Employee Responsible For Headline

BRISTOL, Conn. (AP) — ESPN fired an employee responsible for an offensive headline about Knicks sensation Jeremy Lin.

The headline Friday on ESPN’s mobile website was used for a story about a New York loss in which Lin had nine turnovers. The headline was an idiom that contains a word that also can be used as a slur against Chinese.

“I don’t think it was on purpose or whatever, but (at) the same time they have apologized. And so from my end I don’t care anymore,” Lin said after leading the Knicks to a 104-97 win over Dallas on Sunday. “Have to learn to forgive, and I don’t even think that was intentional. Or hopefully not.”

Lin is the NBA’s first American-born player of Chinese or Taiwanese descent. He captivated fans by leading the Knicks to seven straight wins before Friday’s loss.

In a statement Sunday, ESPN apologized for that headline and said it is aware of two other “offensive and inappropriate” comments. An ESPNNEWS anchor who used the same phrase was suspended for 30 days. The cable network said a similar reference was made on ESPN Radio New York, but the commentator is not an ESPN employee.

Decision 2012

Santorum Chides ‘World View’

BY STEVE PEOPLES
Associated Press

CUMMING, Ga. — Rick Santorum on Sunday condemned what he called President Barack Obama’s world view that “elevates the Earth above man,” discouraging increased use of natural resources.

The GOP presidential candidate also slammed Obama’s health care overhaul for requiring insurers to pay for prenatal tests that, Santorum said, will encourage more abortions.

A day after telling an Ohio audience that Obama’s agenda is based on “some phony theology, not a theology based on the Bible,” Santorum said he wasn’t criticizing the president’s Christianity.

“I’ve repeatedly said I don’t question the president’s faith. I’ve repeatedly said that I believe the president’s Christian,” Santorum told CBS’ “Face the Nation.”

“I am talking about his world view, and the way he approaches problems in this country. I think they’re different than how most people do in America,” he said in the broadcast interview.

The former Pennsylvania senator said Obama’s environmental policies promote ideas of “radical environmentalists,” who, Santorum argues, oppose greater use of the country’s natural resources because they believe “man is here to serve the Earth.” He said that was the reference he was making Saturday in his Ohio campaign appearance when he denounced a “phony theology.”



ED SUBA JR./AKRON BEACON JOURNAL/MCT
GOP presidential candidate Rick Santorum speaks during the 2012 Lincoln Day Dinner held at Quaker Station on Saturday in Akron, Ohio.

When pressed by reporters after he made the initial remark, however, Santorum made no mention of the president’s environmental policies. Instead, he suggested that Obama practices one of the “different stripes of Christianity.”

Santorum walked back those comments on CBS Sunday morning.

But later in the day, he again criticized Obama’s “theology” — with no reference to his environmental policies — while speaking to more than 2,000 supporters gathered at a suburban Atlanta megachurch.

The president is “trampling on a constitutional right,” Santorum said of the Obama administration’s recent decision to allow employees

of religious schools and hospitals to have birth control covered by their insurance policies.

“It is imposing his ideology on a group of people expressing their theology, their moral code,” Santorum told those gathered in the First Redeemer Church, a megachurch that hosted former presidential candidate Mike Huckabee four years ago.

Obama’s campaign said Santorum’s initial remarks were another attack on the president’s faith by Republican rivals in a nominating contest that has grown increasingly bitter and negative.

“It’s just time to get rid of this mindset in our politics that, if we disagree, we have to question character and faith,” said Robert

Gibbs, Obama’s former press secretary, on ABC’s “This Week.”

“Those days have long passed in our politics. Our problems and our challenges are far too great,” Gibbs said.

Santorum said his claim that Obama’s health care overhaul encourages abortions stems from the requirement for insurance companies to pay for prenatal testing, which he said will result in more pregnant women having more procedures. He specified amniocentesis, a procedure that can identify physical problems in the unborn.

“The bottom line is a lot of prenatal tests are done to identify deformities in utero and the customary procedure is to encourage abortion,” he said.

A doctor recommended abortion when a sonogram discovered health problems for Santorum’s youngest daughter, who was born three years ago with a genetic condition known as Trisomy 18, which typically proves fatal. She has lived longer than most children born with the condition.

“This is typical,” Santorum said. “This is what goes on in medical rooms around the country.”

He said he’s critical of the mandate in Obama’s health care plan that insurers must pay for the tests, not of prenatal testing in general.

“There are all sorts of prenatal testing which should be provided free. I have no problem with that if the insurance companies want to. I’m not for any of these things to be forced,” Santorum said.

Iran Cuts Oil Exports To France, UK

BY ALI AKBAR DAREINI
Associated Press

TEHRAN, Iran — Iran has halted oil shipments to Britain and France, the Oil Ministry said Sunday, in an apparent pre-emptive blow against the European Union after the bloc imposed sanctions on Iran’s crucial fuel exports.

The EU imposed tough sanctions against Iran last month, which included a freeze of the country’s central bank assets and an oil embargo set to begin in July. Iran’s Oil Minister Rostam Qassemi had warned earlier this month that Tehran could cut off oil exports to “hostile” European nations. The 27-nation EU accounts for about 18 percent of Iran’s oil exports.

However, the Iranian action was not likely to have any significant direct impact on European supplies because both Britain and France had already moved last year to sharply curtail oil purchases from Tehran to less than 3 percent of their daily needs.

The EU sanctions, along with other punitive measures imposed by the U.S., are part of Western efforts to derail Iran’s disputed nuclear program, which the West fears is aimed at developing atomic weapons. Iran denies the charges, and says its program is for peaceful purposes.

The spokesman for Iran’s Oil Ministry, Ali Reza Nikzad-Rahbar, said on the ministry’s website Sunday that “crude oil exports to British and French companies have been halted.”

“We have our own customers and have no problem to sell and export our crude oil to new customers,” he said.

Britain’s Foreign Office declined

comment, and there was no immediate response from French officials.

The semiofficial Mehr news agency said exports were suspended to the two countries Sunday. It also said the National Iranian Oil Company has sent letters to some European refineries with an ultimatum to either sign long-term contracts of two to five years or be cut off.

Mehr did not specify which countries were sent the ultimatum, but Spain, Italy and Greece are among Europe’s biggest buyers of Iranian oil.

Iran’s targeting of Britain and France appeared to be a political decision to punish the two countries for supporting tougher sanctions against Iran over its nuclear program.

Sunday’s announcement follows a flurry of contradictory signals by Iran about backlash against the EU for imposing a boycott on Iranian oil.

Last week, state media said Iran was planning to cut off oil exports to six EU nations, including France, but later reports said the nations were only told that Iran has no problem finding replacement customers for the European shipments.

The EU sanctions, imposed last month, were part of Western efforts to target Iran’s critical oil sector in attempts to rein in Tehran’s nuclear program.

Also on Sunday, the secretary general of Iran’s central bank said a decision by SWIFT, an international banking clearinghouse used by nearly every country and major cor-

poration in the world, to shut Iran out from its respected network will not harm the country.

“The country will not face any problems as a result of the SWIFT measures,” Mahmoud Ahmadi was quoted as saying by the official IRNA news agency. He added that Iran has been “pursuing alternative solutions” since Western nations imposed sanctions on Tehran. He did not elaborate.

SWIFT said in a statement on its web site Friday that it will comply with expected instructions from the EU to cut off Iranian banks. SWIFT has previously brushed off international efforts to use its network to target countries or companies, telling enforcers that it does not judge the merits of the transactions passing through the portal.

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