

Blizzard Threatens NYC And New England

BOSTON (AP) — A blizzard of potentially historic proportions threatened to strike the Northeast with a vengeance Friday, with up to 2 feet of snow feared along the densely populated Interstate 95 corridor from the New York City area to Boston and beyond.

From Pennsylvania to Maine, people rushed to stock up on food, shovels and other supplies, and road crews readied salt and sand, halfway through what had been a merciful winter.

Before the first snowflake had even fallen, Boston, Providence, R.I., Hartford, Conn., and other New England cities canceled school Friday, and airlines scratched more than 1,700 flights, with the disruptions certain to ripple across the U.S.

Forecasters said this could be one for the record books.

“This one doesn’t come along every day. This is going to be a dangerous winter storm,” said Alan Dunham, meteorologist for the National Weather Service in Taunton, Mass. “Wherever you need to get to, get there by Friday afternoon and don’t plan on leaving.”

Boy Scouts Face Pressure Before Vote On Gays

It promises to be a campaign as passionate and dramatic as any big election. For the next 14 weeks, the Boy Scouts of America will be the focus of prayers, petitions and pressure tactics aimed at swaying a vote on whether to ease its ban on gays as Scouts or adult leaders.

The decision will be made the week of May 20 by the roughly 1,400 voting members of the BSA’s National Council.

The policy was supposed to be settled Wednesday by the Scouts’ 70-member national executive board, but the board concluded the issue was so complex that the organization needed more time to study it.

At stake is a proposal to ease the ban by allowing sponsors of local Scout units to decide for themselves whether to admit gays. Gay-rights groups say the plan is inadequate, and that no units should be allowed to discriminate. Some conservative religious leaders and advocacy groups want the ban to stay in place nationwide.

Both sides are girding for intensive lobbying between now and late May, hoping to influence the outcome.

“Keep the pressure on,” was the message Thursday from the Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation to its supporters.

Tunisian Political Crisis Grows

TUNIS, Tunisia (AP) — Tunisia sank deeper into political crisis Thursday, as the ruling Islamist party rejected its own prime minister’s decision to replace the government after the assassination of a leftist politician led to a wave of angry protests.

The murder of Chokri Belaid, a 48-year-old secularist and a fierce critic of headline Islamists as well as the more moderate ruling party, laid bare the challenges facing this nation of 10 million, whose revolution two years ago sparked the Arab Spring uprisings.

Because of its small, well-educated population, there were hopes Tunisia would have the easiest time transitioning from dictatorship to democracy.

But instead Tunisia — a staunchly secular state under ex-dictator Zine El Abidine Ben Ali — is now a battleground pitting secularists, moderate Islamists, and hardline Islamists against one another.

The economy has struggled, power-sharing negotiations have stalled, and political violence is on the rise. The rejection of the prime minister’s move to create a government of technocrats to guide the country to elections also made clear that divisions exist between hardliners and moderates within the ruling party, Ennahda.

Police used tear gas Thursday to drive off the few dozen protesters who tried to demonstrate in front of the Interior Ministry, averting a repeat of the large rallies that swept the capital hours after Belaid’s assassination Wednesday.

150-Foot Asteroid Will Buzz Earth Next Week

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP) — A 150-foot-wide asteroid will come remarkably close to Earth next week, even closer than high-flying communication and weather satellites. It will be the nearest known flyby for an object of this size.

But don’t worry. Scientists promise the megarock will be at least 17,100 miles away when it zips past next Friday.

“No Earth impact is possible,” Donald Yeomans, manager of NASA’s Near-Earth Object program at Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena, Calif., said Thursday.

Even the chance of an asteroid-satellite run-in is extremely remote, Yeomans and other scientists noted. A few hundred satellites orbit at 22,300 miles, higher than the asteroid’s path, although operators are being warned about the incoming object for tracking purposes.

“No one has raised a red flag, nor will they,” Yeomans told reporters. “I certainly don’t anticipate any problems whatsoever.”

NTSB: Gov’t Should Reconsider 787’s Batteries

WASHINGTON (AP) — The government should reassess its safety approval of the Boeing 787’s lithium ion batteries, the nation’s top accident investigator said Thursday, casting doubt on whether the airliner’s troubles can be remedied quickly.

If Boeing is forced to switch to a different type of battery, it would add weight to the plane — and fuel efficiency is one of the 787’s main selling points.

The aircraft maker did get some good news Thursday: It received permission from the Federal Aviation Administration to conduct test flights under limited circumstances with special safeguards.

The tests are a critical step toward resolving the plane’s troubles. The airliners have been grounded for the past three weeks. Boeing needs to test the batteries under flight conditions before a solution can be approved.

The flights will be conducted over unpopulated areas, and extensive pre-flight testing and inspections and in-flight monitoring are required, the FAA said in a statement.

But there also was new trouble for the plane Boeing has dubbed the “Dreamliner.”

The National Transportation Safety Board said the results so far of an investigation into last month’s battery fire in a Japan Airlines 787 while it was parked at a Boston airport raise new questions about the safety certification of its batteries.

An analysis of the origin of the fire contradicts some of the assumptions that were made about the battery’s safety at the time the system won government approval, the board’s chairwoman, Deborah Hersman, said.

Woman Accused Of Witchcraft Burned Alive

PORT MORESBY, Papua New Guinea (AP) — A woman accused of witchcraft has been burned alive in front of hundreds of witnesses in Papua New Guinea town in one of the highest profile sorcery-rated murders in this South Pacific island nation, police said Friday.

The brutal slaying of 20-year-old mother of one Kepari Leniata on Wednesday has been condemned by the nation’s prime minister, police and diplomatic observers.

Leniata was stripped naked by several assailants, tortured with a hot iron rod, bound, doused in gasoline, then set alight on a pile of car tires and trash in the Western Highlands provincial capital of Mount Hagen, police spokesman Dominic Kakas said.

Some of the hundreds of bystanders took photographs. Grisly pictures were published on the front pages of the country’s biggest circulating newspapers, *The National* and *Post-Courier*.

Leniata was accused of sorcery by relatives of a 6-year-old boy who died in the local hospital the day before, Kakas said.

A Massive Manhunt

Killings Set Off Search For Ex-Cop In California

BY TAMI ABDOLLAH
Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — A fired police officer who threatened to bring “warfare” to the Los Angeles Police Department went on a shooting rampage that left a policeman and two others dead and set off an extraordinary manhunt Thursday that put Southern California on edge, led hair-trigger officers to mistakenly shoot at innocent citizens and forced police to guard their own.

The search for Christopher Dorner had three states and Mexico on alert before shifting Thursday afternoon to the snowy mountains around Big Bear Lake, about 80 miles east of Los Angeles, where police found his burned-out pickup truck and tracks leading away from the vehicle.

San Bernardino County Sheriff John McMahon said 125 officers were going door to door and attempting to track the suspect, and that a SWAT team was providing added security to those in the community. Schools were put on lockdown while investigators examined the vehicle and spread out across the area.

“He could be anywhere at this point, and that’s why we’re searching door to door,” McMahon said, adding that the manhunt would continue “as long as we can.” A snow storm was expected in the region with temperatures dipping into the teens overnight.

Said LAPD Assistant Chief Michel Moore: “This complex and violent investigation has led to this mountain.”

The pickup was to be processed at a crime lab Thursday evening and examined by investigators from multiple agencies.

Throughout the day, thousands of heavily armed officers patrolled highways throughout Southern California, while some stood guard outside the homes of people police say Dorner vowed to attack in a rant posted online. Electronic billboards, which usually alert motorists about the commute, urged them to call 911 if they saw him.

“I will bring unconventional and asymmetrical warfare” to Los Angeles Police Department officers, on or off duty, said the manifesto. It also asserted: “Unfortunately, I will not be alive to see my name cleared. That’s what this is about, my name. A man is nothing without his name.”

Dorner, 33, had several weapons including an assault rifle, said police Chief Charlie Beck, who urged him to surrender at a press conference held amid heightened security in an underground room at police headquarters.

“Of course he knows what he’s doing; we



ROBERT GAUTHIER/LOS ANGELES TIMES/MCT
Officers move toward a home in Big Bear, California, on Thursday, February 7, 2013, as the manhunt continues for Christopher Jordan Dorner. Dorner, a former member of the Los Angeles Police Department, is suspected in three murders and has vowed to retaliate against law enforcement.

trained him. He was also a member of the Armed Forces,” he said. “It is extremely worrisome and scary.”

The nearly 10,000-member LAPD dispatched officers to protect more than 40 potential targets, including police officers and their families. The department also pulled officers from motorcycle duty, fearing they would make for easy targets.

“I never had the opportunity to have a family of my own, I’m terminating yours,” the manifesto said.

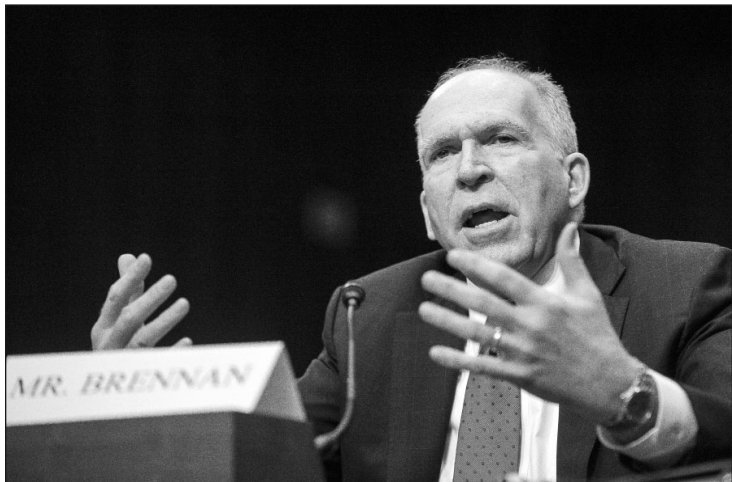
At one point, officers guarding one location mistakenly opened fire on a pickup truck, believing it matched the description of Dorner’s dark-colored 2005 Nissan Titan. Two occupants were injured.

The chief said there had been a “night of extreme tragedy in the Los Angeles area” and that the department was taking measures to ensure the safety of officers.

The search for Dorner, who was fired from the LAPD in 2008 for making false statements, began after he was linked to a weekend killing in which one of the victims was the daughter of a former police captain who had represented him during his disciplinary hearing. Thursday was the anniversary of his first day on the job at the department eight years ago.

Monica Quan and her fiance, Keith Lawrence, were found shot in their car at a parking structure at their condominium on Sunday in Irvine. Quan, 28, was an assistant women’s basketball coach at Cal State Fullerton. Lawrence, 27, was a public safety officer at the University of Southern California.

Police said Dorner implicated himself in the couple’s killings in the manifesto posted on Facebook. They believe he was the one who wrote it because there were details in it only he would know.



PETE MAROVICH/MCT
John Brennan testifies before the Senate (Select) Intelligence Committee hearing on his nomination to be director of the Central Intelligence Agency, Thursday, February 7, 2013 in Washington, D.C.

Brennan Defends Drone Strikes, Even On Americans

BY KIMBERLY DOZIER
AP Intelligence Writer

WASHINGTON — CIA Director-designate John Brennan strongly defended anti-terror attacks by unmanned drones Thursday under close questioning at a protest-disrupted confirmation hearing. On a second controversial topic, he said that after reading a classified intelligence report on harsh interrogation techniques, he does not know if waterboarding has yielded useful information.

Despite what he called a public misimpression, Brennan told the Senate Intelligence Committee that drone strikes are used only against targets planning to carry out attacks against the United States, never as retribution for an earlier one. “Nothing could be further from the truth,” he declared.

Referring to one American citizen killed by a drone in Yemen in 2011, he said the man, Anwar al-Alawki, had ties to at least three attacks planned or carried out on U.S. soil. They included the Fort Hood, Texas, shooting that claimed 13 lives in 2009, a failed attempt to down a Detroit-bound airliner the same year and a thwarted plot to bomb cargo planes in 2010.

“He was intimately involved in activities to kill innocent men women and children, mostly Americans,” Brennan said.

In a sign that the hearing had focused intense scrutiny on the drone program, Senate Intelligence Committee Chairman Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif., told reporters after the hearing that she thinks it may be time to lift the secrecy off the program so that U.S. officials can acknowl-

edge the strikes and correct what she said were exaggerated reports of civilian casualties.

Feinstein said she and a number of other senators are considering writing legislation to set up a special court system to regulate drone strikes, similar to the one that signs off on government surveillance in espionage and terror cases.

Speaking with uncharacteristic openness about the classified program, Feinstein said the CIA had allowed her staff to make more than 30 visits to the CIA’s Langley, Va., headquarters to monitor strikes, but that the transparency needed to be widened.

“I think the process set up internally is a solid process,” Feinstein said, but added: “I think there’s an absence of knowing exactly who is responsible for what decision. So I think we need to look at this whole process and figure a way to make it transparent and identifiable.”



AM 1450

MORNING COFFEE

WEEKDAYS
MONDAY-FRIDAY

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(Katie Hunhoff, Heidi Marsh)

8:20 am Coaching Honor
(Carmen Robinson)



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Iran:

Sanctions Make Nuclear Talks With U.S. Futile

BY NASSER KARIMI
Associated Press

TEHRAN, Iran — American proposals for direct talks with Iran are pointless while Washington is “holding a gun” to the country through sanctions, Iran’s supreme leader said Thursday, quashing a possible breakthrough in contacts with the West over the nuclear standoff.

The message from Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who has the final say in all major decisions in Iran, was reiterated by Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad during a news conference in Cairo later in the day.

Their dismissal of one-on-one dialogue raises the stakes when wider negotiations between Iran and world powers, including the United States, resume this month.

Another dead-end round — after three stalemated sessions last year — could fuel accusations by Israel and others that Iran is using the talks as a stalling tactic while it gets closer to having the capabilities to build a nuclear weapon.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has warned that the world has until this summer — at the latest — to keep Iran from building a bomb. He’s hinted that Israel could attack unilaterally if all other efforts fail.

Iran denies it seeks atomic

arms, saying its nuclear fuel is only for energy-producing reactors and medical applications. Iran officials have frequently called attention to a religious edict by Khamenei that says nuclear arms are contrary to Islamic beliefs.

“Talks are held to arrive at an understanding, not to impose anything,” Ahmadinejad said. “Such talks will be meaningless if someone raises a club and imposes” something on Iran, he added.

Talks would be productive only if they were based on mutual respect, he said. “Things will be fine if the Americans correct the manner in which they address us.”

The earlier comments by Khamenei were his first public reaction since a White House offer of direct dialogue received a high-profile boost this week from U.S. Vice President Joe Biden during a security summit in Munich attended by Iran’s foreign minister.

“Talks will not solve any problems,” Khamenei said in comments posted on his website.

“You are holding a gun against Iran saying, ‘Talks or you’ll fire.’ The Iranian nation will not be frightened by such threats,” Khamenei added in a reference to U.S. sanctions over Iran’s nuclear efforts.



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