

**Syrian Kurds Have Mixed Feelings About Syria**

DOMIZ REFUGEE CAMP, Iraq (AP) — Syrian Kurds who fled their country's civil war have mixed feelings about a future without Bashar Assad: They hope to win a measure of autonomy after the fall of the regime, but fear chaos and the rise of Islamists could instead make their lives worse.

More than 81,000 Syrian Kurds have found refuge in northern Iraq's autonomous Kurdish region in recent months and hundreds more arrive every day. Few seem in a rush to go home.

The Kurdistan Regional Government allows fellow Kurds from Syria to work and move freely in the three provinces of northern Iraq it controls. Some 30,000 refugees still live in a camp of tents and cinderblock shacks near the Syrian border, while the rest have found jobs and homes in towns across the autonomous region, some staying with relatives.

Even those struggling with the hardships of camp life say they prefer to stay in Iraq after the fall of the regime, until they have a better idea how Islamists and other groups in the Sunni Arab-dominated Syrian opposition will deal with Kurds, Syria's largest ethnic minority.

"If the Muslim Brotherhood takes over and there are problems in the future, we want to stay here," said Faroush Fattah, a 28-year-old laborer from the northeastern Syrian town of Qamishli who arrived in the Domiz camp three months ago.

**Pistorius Girlfriend's Family Wants Answers**

JOHANNESBURG (AP) — The family of Oscar Pistorius' slain girlfriend wants answers, her mother told a Johannesburg newspaper, as South Africans braced to hear why prosecutors believe a national hero murdered the model who was shot multiple times.

June Steenkamp, Reeva Steenkamp's mother, told *The Times* in a front page interview published Monday: "Why? Why my little girl? Why did this happen? Why did he do this?"

"Just like that she is gone," the newspaper quoted her as saying in what it described as an emotional telephone interview. "In the blink of an eye and a single breath, the most beautiful person who ever lived is no longer here."

Pistorius, who remains in custody in a red-brick, one-story police station in Pretoria, is set to return to court Tuesday for the start of his bail hearing. It will be the first opportunity for the prosecution to describe evidence police gathered against the 26-year-old double-amputee runner and the reasons why he was charged with murder. Prosecutors allege the killing was premeditated.

Pistorius' family denies he committed murder though they have not addressed whether he shot her. When word first emerged about the killing there was speculation in the local media that Steenkamp had been mistaken for an intruder in Pistorius' home. Police have said that was not something they were considering.

**EU Slaps More Sanctions On North Korea**

BRUSSELS (AP) — The European Union imposed trade and economic sanctions on North Korea while condemning "in the strongest terms" the nation's latest nuclear test.

The 27 EU finance ministers also demanded North Korea abstain from further tests and urged it to sign the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty without delay. The statement came as the ministers met Monday in Brussels.

Their action brings the number of North Koreans subject to a travel ban and an asset freeze to 26, and the number of sanctioned companies to 33. The ministers also banned the export of components for ballistic missiles, such as certain types of aluminum, and prohibited trade in new public bonds from North Korea.

The United States is currently negotiating in the Security Council for stronger U.N. sanctions against Pyongyang after the council quickly condemned the Feb. 12 atomic blast, the third conducted by the North since 2006.

**Hugo Chavez Returns Home To Venezuela**

CARACAS, Venezuela (AP) — President Hugo Chavez returned to Venezuela early Monday after more than two months of treatment in Cuba following cancer surgery, his government said, triggering street celebrations by supporters who welcomed him home while he remained out of sight at Caracas' military hospital.

Chavez's return was announced in a series of three messages on his Twitter account, the first of them reading: "We've arrived once again in our Venezuelan homeland. Thank you, my God!! Thank you, beloved nation!! We will continue our treatment here."

They were the first messages to appear on Chavez's Twitter account since Nov. 1.

"I'm clinging to Christ and trusting in my doctors and nurses," another tweet on Chavez's account said. "Onward toward victory always!! We will live and we will triumph!!"

Vice President Nicolas Maduro said on television that Chavez arrived at 2:30 a.m. and was taken to the Dr. Carlos Arvelo Military Hospital in Caracas, where he will continue his treatment.

**Russians Want Answers In Adoptee's Death**

DALLAS (AP) — Russian authorities have blamed "inhuman treatment" for the death of a 3-year-old boy adopted by an American family, but Texas officials say they are still investigating claims that the child was abused before his death.

Russia's Investigative Committee said Monday that it had questions about the death of an adoptee authorities identified as Maxim Kuzmin. The committee is the country's top investigative agency.

Texas Child Protective Services spokesman Patrick Crimmins confirmed the agency had received a report on Jan. 21 of the death of a 3-year-old named Max Shatto, and that the Ector County Sheriff's Office in West Texas was investigating.

Crimmins said CPS had received allegations of physical abuse and neglect, but had not determined whether those allegations were true. Sgt. Gary Duesler, spokesman for the Ector County Sheriff's Office, said no arrests have been made and authorities are waiting for autopsy results.

An obituary for Max Shatto published Jan. 26 by the Midland Reporter-Telegram says he was born on Jan. 9, 2010, in the town of Pskov, near Russia's western border with Estonia. The boy lived with a family in Gardendale, about 350 miles west of Dallas, before his death on Jan. 21, according to the obituary.

**Cause Of Cruise Ship Fire: Leak In Fuel Line**

MOBILE, Ala. (AP) — A Coast Guard official said Monday that the cause of the engine-room fire on the Carnival cruise ship *Triumph* was a leak in a fuel oil return line.

Cmdr. Teresa Hatfield gave the description in a conference call with reporters and estimated that the investigation of the disabled ship would take six months.

Hatfield said the Bahamas — where the ship is registered, or flagged — is leading the investigation, with the Coast Guard and National Transportation Safety Board leading U.S. interests in the probe.

She said investigators have been with the ship since it arrived Thursday in Mobile. Since then, she said, interviews have been conducted with passengers and crew and forensic analysis has been performed on the ship.

**Burger King Plans Apology After Twitter Hack**

NEW YORK (AP) — Somebody hacked Burger King's Twitter account on Monday, posting obscene messages and changing its profile picture to a McDonald's logo.

The tweets stopped after a little more than an hour, and Burger King said it had reached out to Twitter to suspend the account. A Twitter spokesman did not immediately respond to a phone message left on Monday.

Late Monday, Burger King tweeted: "Interesting day here at BURGER KING, but we're back! Welcome to our new followers. Hope you all stick around!"

Burger King, which usually tweets several times a week, typically does so to promote sales on chicken sandwiches, or to ask questions such as how many bites it takes to eat a chicken nugget.

But just after noon EST on Monday, someone tweeted via Burger King's account, "We just got sold to McDonalds!" They also changed the icon to rival McDonald Corp.'s golden arches and the account's background picture to McDonald's new Fish McBites.

About 55 tweets and retweets followed over the next hour and a quarter, including some that contained racial epithets, references to drug use and obscenities. The account tweeted: "if I catch you at a wendys, we're fightin'!"

**Climate Change May Produce Less Snow But More Blizzards**

BY SETH BORENSTEIN  
AP Science Writer

WASHINGTON — With scant snowfall and barren ski slopes in parts of the Midwest and Northeast the past couple of years, some scientists have pointed to global warming as the culprit.

Then when a whopper of a blizzard smacked the Northeast with more than 2 feet of snow in some places earlier this month, some of the same people again blamed global warming.

How can that be? It's been a joke among skeptics, pointing to what seems to be a brazen contradiction.

But the answer lies in atmospheric physics. A warmer atmosphere can hold, and dump, more moisture, snow experts say. And two soon-to-be-published studies demonstrate how there can be more giant blizzards yet less snow overall each year. Projections are that that's likely to continue with man-made global warming.

Consider: — The United States has been walloped by twice as many of the most extreme snowstorms in the past 50 years than in the previous 60 years, according to an upcoming study on extreme weather by leading federal and university climate scientists. This also fits with a dramatic upward trend in extreme winter precipitation — both rain and snow — in the Northeastern U.S. charted by the National Climatic Data Center.

— Yet the Global Snow Lab at Rutgers University says that spring snow cover in the Northern Hemisphere has shrunk on average by 1 million square miles in the last 45 years.

— And an upcoming study in the *Journal of Climate* says computer models predict annual global snowfall to shrink by more than a foot in the next 50 years. The study's author said most people live in parts of the United States that are likely to see annual snowfall drop between 30 and 70 percent by the end of the century.

"Shorter snow season, less snow overall, but the occasional knockout punch," Princeton University climate scientist Michael Oppenheimer said. "That's the new world we live in."

Ten climate scientists say the idea of less snow and more blizzards makes sense: A warmer world is likely to decrease the overall amount of snow falling each year and shrink



RICK HARTFORD/HARTFORD COURANT/MCT

**Electrical subcontractors for CL&P work to restore power to homes on East Pattagansett Road in East Lyme, Conn., on Feb. 10 after a historic blizzard pounded the northeastern U.S.**

snow season. But when it is cold enough for a snowstorm to hit, the slightly warmer air is often carrying more moisture, producing potentially historic blizzards.

"Strong snowstorms thrive on the ragged edge of temperature — warm enough for the air to hold lots of moisture, meaning lots of precipitation, but just cold enough for it to fall as snow," said Mark Serreze, director of the National Snow and Ice Data Center. "Increasingly, it seems that we're on that ragged edge."

Just look at the last few years in the Northeast. Or take Chicago, which until late January had 335 days without more than an inch of snow. Both have been hit with historic storms in recent years.

Scientists won't blame a specific event or even a specific seasonal

change on global warming without doing intricate and time-consuming studies. And they say they are just now getting a better picture of the complex intersection of man-made climate change and extreme snowfall.

But when Serreze, Oppenheimer and others look at the last few years of less snow overall, punctuated by big storms, they say this is what they are expecting in the future.

"It fits the pattern that we expect to unfold," Oppenheimer said.

The world is warming so precipitation that would normally fall as snow in the future will likely fall as rain once it gets above the freezing point, said Princeton researcher Sarah Kapnick.

Her study used new computer models to simulate the climate in 60

to 100 years as carbon dioxide levels soar. She found large reductions in snowfall throughout much of the world, especially parts of Canada and the Andes Mountains. In the United States, her models predict about a 50 percent or more drop in annual snowfall amounts along a giant swath of the nation from Maine to Texas and the Pacific Northwest and California's Sierra Nevada mountains.

This is especially important out West where large snowcaps are natural reservoirs for a region's water supply, Kapnick said. And already in the Cascades of the Pacific Northwest and in much of California, the amount of snow still around on April 1 has been declining so that it's down about 20 percent compared to 80 years ago, said Philip Mote, who heads a climate change institute at Oregon State University.

Kapnick says it is snowing about as much as ever in the heart of winter, such as February. But the snow season is getting much shorter, especially in spring and in the northernmost areas, said Rutgers' David Robinson, a co-author of the study on extreme weather that will be published in the *Bulletin of the American Meteorological Society*.

The Rutgers snow lab says this January saw the sixth-widest snow cover in the Northern Hemisphere; the United States had an above-average snow cover for the last few months. But that's a misleading statistic, Robinson said, because even though more ground is covered by snow, it's covered by less snow.

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**Ex-Boyfriend: McCready Left Rehab Too Soon**

HEBER SPRINGS, Ark. (AP) — Mindy McCready threatened suicide after losing custody of her sons earlier this month, yet she was allowed to leave a court-ordered drug rehabilitation program just days before she apparently killed herself at her Arkansas home, her ex-boyfriend said Monday.

Billy McKnight, who was in a long, stormy relationship with McCready and is the father of her oldest child, Zander, said the 37-year-old mother of two stayed in the substance abuse treatment center for about 18 hours before she was allowed to walk free.

McCready died Sunday at her home in Heber Springs, a vacation community about 65 miles north of Little Rock. She was found dead on the front porch, where her longtime boyfriend, musician David Wilson, died last month of a gunshot wound to the head. Authorities are investigating both deaths as suicides but haven't determined an official cause of death.

McCready and Wilson, the father of her youngest son, were recently engaged. He wondered how she was allowed to go free, given all the turmoil in her life.

"That was a big mistake on the part of whoever released her," McKnight said. "She was in a terrible state of mind. She doesn't perform any more. She wasn't working. She has two kids and her fiance was just killed. There's no way she should be out by herself in a lonely house with nothing but booze and pills. That was a really, really bad mistake, and the end result is tragic."

Arkansas courts were closed for the holiday Monday, so local case documents weren't immediately available.

Neighbors reported hearing two shots Sunday afternoon when they called the Cleburne County Sheriff's Office. Authorities found Wilson's dog dead next to McCready's body at the home, where yellow crime-scene tape looped through a grove of pine trees and around the one-story brick house Monday afternoon.



McCready