

Al-Qaida Shuns Militant Group In Syria

CAIRO (AP) — Al-Qaida's central leadership broke with one of its most powerful branch commanders in an apparent attempt to stem the deadly infighting that has erupted in Syria among the militant Islamic factions trying to bring down President Bashar Assad.

More broadly, the announcement Monday appeared to be a move by al-Qaida leader Ayman al-Zawahri to reassert the terror network's prominence in the jihad movement across the Middle East amid the mushrooming of extremist groups during the upheaval of the past three years.

The dispute is between al-Qaida's central leadership and a faction known as the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant.

Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the head of al-Qaida's branch in Iraq, formed the Islamic State last spring to expand his operations into neighboring Syria, defying direct orders by al-Zawahri not to do so. Al-Zawahri named a different group, the Nusra Front, as al-Qaida's branch in Syria.

Now, the break is likely to spark a competition for resources and fighters between the two sides in what has become a civil war within a civil war. The test for al-Zawahri's influence will be whether his decision leads fighters to quit the Islamic State.

Obama Seeks To Hold Dems Together

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Barack Obama is trying to tamp down internal Democratic divisions on issues like trade and energy, as lawmakers in his own party show little reluctance to publicly break with the White House.

Obama met one-on-one Monday with Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, who has sharply opposed the president's proposal to let Congress vote quickly on international trade pacts.

The president also will meet with House Democrats on Tuesday and Senate Democrats on Wednesday, when he's likely to face more pushback on the Keystone XL pipeline and health care, particularly from lawmakers who will face voters in November.

White House officials have tried to dismiss the intra-party divisions, saying they're aware of the election-year pressures driving some Democrats to oppose Obama on high-profile issues.

Heroin Confirmed In Hoffman's Home

NEW YORK (AP) — A law enforcement official says tests have confirmed there was heroin in at least some of the dozens of plastic packets in a New York City apartment where Philip Seymour Hoffman was found dead. Officials are working to determine whether the drug was mixed or tainted with anything else.

An autopsy was being conducted Monday. Police have been investigating Hoffman's death as an apparent overdose. Law enforcement officials said he was found with a needle in his arm.

Two officials said Monday that at least four dozen small packets were found in the apartment. The officials said some packages were stamped with the ace of hearts, others with the ace of spades.

The officials spoke on condition of anonymity because they weren't authorized to talk about the evidence found.

Leno Says Goodbye To 'Tonight' Again

BURBANK, Calif. (AP) — Jay Leno, as affably efficient backstage as he is in front of the camera, avoids waxing poetic about his 22-year "Tonight Show" run that draws to a close Thursday.

Instead, he relies on numbers to tell the story. Leno's tenure is second only to Johnny Carson's 30 years; "Tonight" was No. 1 among viewers when he took it over and will be when he hands it off to Jimmy Fallon; he'll have taped more shows than any predecessor, Carson included, with the final and 4,610th one.

His dry assessment also may stem from a case of déjà vu. After all, he lived through this before when he surrendered "Tonight" in 2009 to Conan O'Brien, only to reclaim it after NBC's messy bobbling of the transition and O'Brien's lackluster ratings.

But this time it's different, Leno contends, offering another hard fact: The older generation has to make way for the younger one.

Britain's Queen Elizabeth II can keep 65-year-old Prince Charles cooling his heels. Leno doesn't have the power to do the same with Fallon, 39. The "Late Night" host is moving the show from its longtime Burbank home, near Johnny Carson Park and off Bob Hope Drive, to his New York birthplace when he debuts as host on Feb. 17.

Nielsen: Super Bowl Seen By 111.5M

NEW YORK (AP) — For the fourth time in five years, the Super Bowl has set a record for the most-watched television event in U.S. history, drawing 111.5 million viewers even though the Seattle Seahawks' 43-8 victory over the Denver Broncos wasn't really competitive.

The ratings record is further evidence of how live events are becoming dependable and valuable properties for broadcast television at a time the audience is fragmenting and ratings for regular entertainment shows continue to fall.

"Big-event television is a great way for people to have a communal event, to talk about it socially and to talk about it as a group," said Bill Wanger, executive vice president for programming and research at Fox Sports. "You see that in the Super Bowl numbers of the past four or five years. They've just gone up to a different level."

The game also set standards for the most-streamed sports event online and, with 24.9 million tweets, the biggest U.S. live TV event on Twitter.

The Seattle victory eclipsed the 111.3 million viewers who watched the 2012 Super Bowl between the New York Giants and New England Patriots, according to the Nielsen company. Until last year's game dipped slightly to 108.7 million, the Super Bowl had set ratings records for the previous three years in a row.

Stock Slide Continues

Dow Jones Tumbles 320 Points On Sluggish U.S. Growth

BY ALEX VEIGA
AP Business Writer

For investors, February is starting off even rougher than January.

U.S. stocks tumbled on Monday, pushing the Dow Jones industrial average down more than 320 points after reports of sluggish U.S. growth added to investor worries about the global economy. It was the biggest one-day decline for the blue-chip index in more than seven months. And the drop followed the Dow's worst January performance since 2009.

The market stumbled from the get-go, with U.S. stocks opening lower after declines in European and Japanese indexes. Then it quickly turned into a slide as a spate of discouraging economic data on everything from manufacturing to auto sales to construction spending poured in.

By late afternoon, the sell-off accelerated further, bringing the Dow down more

than 7 percent for the year. The S&P 500 index was down more than 5 percent for 2014.

Some stock watchers took the market's decline in stride. They considered it a necessary recalibration following the market's record highs at the end of last year.

"It's a bit painful for investors to see the equities markets drop as they have, but this is healthy for this market," said Chris Gaffney, a senior market strategist at EverBank. "We've been almost 2-1/2 years without a 10 percent correction."

All told, the Dow dropped 326.05 points, or 2.1 percent, to close at 15,372.80, its biggest decline since June 20, 2013. The Standard & Poor's 500 index lost 40.70 points, or 2.3 percent, to 1,741.89. The Nasdaq composite dropped 106.92 points, or 2.6 percent, to 3,996.96.

There were signs of worry throughout the market. The VIX index, a measure of

stock market volatility, rose to its highest level since December 2012. Investors shifted into U.S. government bonds, pushing yields lower and extending their sharp decline since the start of the year.

Staffing company Robert Half International declined the most among stocks in the S&P 500 index. CarMax and Pfizer were among the few stocks to eke out gains on the day.

Cold U.S. weather emerged as common problem for the economy last month.

Investors were discouraged Monday by a private survey showing U.S. manufacturing barely expanded last month as frigid temperatures delayed shipments of raw materials and caused some factories to shut down. Construction spending rose modestly in December, slowing from healthy gains a month earlier.



NABIL K. MARK/CENTRE DAILY TIMES/MCT
A Patton Township police officer walks a woman to his vehicle after she slid her car off N. Atherton Street and was stranded on top of a guard rail in State College, Pa. A winter storm in Centre County Monday, caused heavy snowfall and dangerous travel conditions.

First Of A One-Two Winter Punch Socks Eastern US

BY KATHY MATHESON
Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA — A winter storm dumped several inches of wet, heavy snow on parts of the eastern United States on Monday, snarling commutes and Super Bowl fans' trips home, closing schools and government offices, and cutting power.

Fat flakes fell in Philadelphia and New York, creating slushy sidewalks and streets and all but erasing all memory of Sunday's weather in 50s. The storm began moving out of the region Monday afternoon, making way for another system expected to sweep in from the Plains with ice and snow Tuesday evening.

The National Weather Service reported about 8 inches of snow near Frostburg, Md., while parts of southern Ohio and West Virginia got about 10 inches. Totals in the Philadelphia area ranged from 3 to 9 inches; New York saw as much as 7 inches by 3 p.m.

Government offices, courts and schools closed in parts of Connecticut, Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey, Ohio, Pennsylvania and West Virginia; scattered power outages were reported throughout the region. Speed limits were reduced on many major highways.

In New Jersey, Gov. Chris Christie declared a state of emergency with travel conditions hazardous. Nonessential government employees were dismissed early.

By late afternoon, the flight-tracking website FlightAware reported more than 4,300 delayed flights and 1,900 canceled flights nationwide in cities including Philadelphia, Newark, N.J., and New York. Inbound flights to those airports were delayed one to three hours because of snow and ice.

Russ Louderback, of Fishers, Ind., and his 11-year-old son Mason had gone to New York to see the Super Bowl but suffered a triple whammy of bad luck: Their beloved Denver Broncos lost, they got stuck in an hours-long traffic jam leaving the stadium and their 3 p.m. flight home Monday was canceled.

"It was so congested we couldn't get out of

New Jersey, even though we left early because our team lost," said Louderback, 57, a hotel executive.

Arizona Gov. Jan Brewer was among the stranded travelers after her return flight to Phoenix was canceled Monday, a spokesman said. Brewer attended the big game as part of the ceremonial handoff of hosting duties; next year's Super Bowl is in Glendale, Ariz.

Francois Emond, of Alma, Quebec, arrived at Newark Airport at 6 a.m. Monday to find his flight home had been canceled. Wearing a Seahawks championship hat and an ear-to-ear smile, he said he didn't care about the cancellation or the weather in light of Seattle's victory. He planned to spend an extra night at his hotel in New York.

"The night will be very short," Emond said. "When you win a Super Bowl for the first time, the night is very, very short."

In Connecticut, 71-year-old architect Frank Emery described messy conditions outside as he stopped at a coffee shop in New Haven.

"A lot of people must have called in sick after the Super Bowl," he said. "It's not cleaned up as well as usual."

In Philadelphia, the airport experienced weather delays as long as four hours at one point Monday morning. But the flight home for Seahawks fan George Shiley, 50, of Snohomish, Wash., remained on schedule at midday.

Shiley, a Seattle season ticket holder, had won a lottery for Super Bowl tickets. He and his buddy stayed in Philadelphia, about 85 miles southwest of the stadium in East Rutherford, N.J.

"It's been a great trip. I joked that 'It's Always Sunny in Philadelphia' — and it was, until today," said Shiley, referring to the FX sitcom.

At least two deaths and one serious injury were blamed on the storm. In western Kentucky, where the snow began falling Sunday, a 24-year-old man died that night when his car skidded into a snowplow. On Monday, a 73-year-old New York City man was fatally struck by a backhoe that was moving snow.

Web Firms Offer Data On NSA Spy Requests

BY STEPHEN BRAUN AND MICHAEL LIEDTKE
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Freed by a recent legal deal with government lawyers, major technology firms released new data Monday on how often they are ordered to turn over customer information for secret national security investigations — figures that show that the government collected data on thousands of Americans.

The publications disclosed by Google, Microsoft, Yahoo, Facebook, LinkedIn and Tumblr provided expanded details and some vented criticism about the government's handling of customers' Internet data in counter-terrorism and other intelligence-related probes. The figures from 2012 and 2013 showed that companies, such as Google and Microsoft, were compelled by the government to provide information on as many as 10,000 customer accounts in a six-month period. Yahoo complied with government requests for information on more than 40,000 accounts in the same period.

The companies earlier provided limited information about government requests for data, but a new agreement reached last week with the Obama administration allowed the firms to provide a broadened, though still circumscribed, set of figures to the public.

Seeking to reassure customers and business partners alarmed by revelations about the government's massive collection of Internet and computer data, the firms stressed details indicating that only small numbers of their customers were targeted by authorities. Still, even those small numbers showed that thousands of Americans were affected by the government requests approved by judges of the secret Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court.

The data releases by the five major tech firms offered a mix of dispassionate graphics, reassurances and protests, seeking to alleviate customer concerns about government spying while pressuring national security officials about the companies' constitutional concerns. The shifting tone in the releases showed the precarious course that major tech firms have had to navigate in recent months, caught between their public commitments to Internet freedom and their enforced roles as data providers to U.S. spy agencies.

AP: Five Things To Know About The New Farm Bill

BY MARY CLARE JALONICK
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Cuts to food stamps, continued subsidies to farmers and victories for animal rights advocates. The massive, five-year farm bill heading toward final passage this week has broad implications for just about every American, from the foods we eat to what we pay for them.

Support for farmers through the subsidies included in the legislation helps determine the price of food and what is available. And money for food stamps helps the neediest Americans who might otherwise go hungry.

The legislation could reach President Barack Obama this week. The House already has passed the bipartisan measure and the Senate was scheduled to pass the bill Tuesday after the chamber voted to move forward on the legislation Monday evening.

Five things you should know about the farm bill:

WHERE THE MONEY GOES: Most of the bill's almost \$100 billion-a-year price tag goes to the nation's food stamp program, now known as SNAP, or the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. One in seven Americans, or about 47 million people, participates in the program. The legislation cuts food stamps by about \$800 million, or 1 percent, by cracking down on states that seek to boost individual food stamp benefits by giving people small amounts of federal heating assistance that they don't need. Much of the rest of the money goes to farm subsidies and programs to protect environmentally sensitive lands.

SUBSIDIES MAINTAINED: Farmers will continue to receive generous federal

subsidies that help them stay in business in an unpredictable environment, but through revamped programs. The bill eliminates a fixed \$4.5 billion-a-year subsidy called direct payments, which are paid to farmers whether they farm or not. New subsidies would require farmers to incur losses before they could collect from the federal government. The bill would also overhaul dairy and cotton subsidies and transition them into similar insurance-style programs. Most farmers would pick between a program that would pay out when revenue dips or another that pays out when prices drop.

The legislation would also spend about \$570 million more a year on crop insurance, which, on top of subsidies, protects farmers in the event of major losses.

CRACKDOWN ON FOOD STAMP FRAUD: The Agriculture Department has been aggressively tackling food stamp fraud in recent years and the final farm bill will add to that. It would step up efforts to reduce fraud by retailers who sell food stamps, track SNAP trafficking and ensure that people who have died do not receive benefits. The bill would also prohibit lottery winners and convicted murderers and sex offenders from receiving food stamps.

HEMP LAWS RELAXED: The bill would allow farmers to grow hemp, marijuana's non-intoxicating cousin, in 10 states as research projects. Those states already allow the growing of hemp, though federal drug law has blocked actual cultivation in most.

Hemp is often used in rope but has also been used to make clothing, mulch, foods,

creams, soaps and lotions.

VICTORY FOR ANIMAL RIGHTS GROUPS: The No. 1 farm bill priority for animal rights groups was to defeat a House provision that would have blocked an upcoming California law requiring all eggs sold in the state to come from hens that live in larger cages. Livestock groups have fought the state law, which will be a major bur-

den for egg producers in other states who use smaller cages and still want to sell eggs to the lucrative California market. The animal rights groups won, and the provision blocking the California law didn't make it into the final bill.

The animal rights groups also won language that will make it a federal crime to attend an animal fighting event or bring a child to one.

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