

Ukraine

Russian Moves Raise The Stakes

Ukraine's New Leaders Vow To Prevent Breakup

BY DALTON BENNETT
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Associated Press

SIMFEROPOL, Ukraine — Masked gunmen stormed parliament in Ukraine's strategic Crimea region Thursday as Russian fighter jets scrambled to patrol borders, the stirrings of a potentially dangerous confrontation reminiscent of Cold War brinkmanship.

While a newly formed government led by a pro-Western technocrat in Kiev pledged to prevent any national breakup, there were mixed signals in Moscow: Russia granted shelter to Ukraine's fugitive president, Viktor Yanukovich, while pledging to respect Ukraine's territorial integrity.

Yanukovich was said to be holed up in a luxury government retreat and to have scheduled a news conference Friday near the Ukrainian border.

As gunmen wearing unmarked camouflage uniforms erected a sign reading "Crimea is Russia" in the provincial capital, Ukraine's interim prime minister declared the Black Sea territory "has been and will be a part of Ukraine."

The escalating conflict sent Ukraine's finances plummeting further, prompting Western leaders to prepare an emergency financial package.

Yanukovich, whose abandonment of closer ties to Europe in favor of a bailout loan from Russia set off three months of protests, finally fled by helicopter last week as his allies deserted him. The humiliating exit was a severe blow to Russian President Vladimir Putin, who had been celebrating his signature Olympics even as Ukraine's drama came to a head. The Russian leader has long dreamed of pulling Ukraine — a country of 46 million people considered the cradle of Russian



SERGEI L. LOIKO/LOS ANGELES TIMES/MCT
Opposition leader Arseny Yatsenyuk was endorsed by parliament as Ukraine's new prime minister on Thursday.

civilization — closer into Moscow's orbit.

For Ukraine's neighbors, the specter of Ukraine breaking up evoked memories of centuries of bloody conflict.

"Regional conflicts begin this way," said Polish Foreign Minister Radoslaw Sikorski, calling the confrontation "a very dangerous game."

Russia has pledged to respect Ukraine's territorial integrity. But the dispatch of Russian fighter jets Thursday to patrol borders and drills by some 150,000 Russian troops — almost the entirety of its force in the western part of the country — signaled strong determination not to lose Ukraine to the West.

Thursday's dramatic developments posed an immediate challenge to Ukraine's new authorities as they named an interim government for the country, whose population is divided in loyalties between Russia and the West. Crimea, which was seized by Russian forces in the 18th century under

Catherine the Great, was once the crown jewel in Russian and then Soviet empires.

It only became part of Ukraine in 1954 when Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev transferred jurisdiction from Russia — a move that was a mere formality until the 1991 Soviet collapse meant Crimea landed in an independent Ukraine.

In the capital, Kiev, the new prime minister said Ukraine's future lies in the European Union, but with friendly relations with Russia.

Arseny Yatsenyuk, named Thursday in a boisterous parliamentary session, now faces the difficult task of restoring stability in a country that is not only deeply divided politically but on the verge of financial collapse. The 39-year-old served as economy minister, foreign minister and parliamentary speaker before Yanukovich took office in 2010, and is widely viewed as a technocratic reformer who enjoys the support of the U.S.

Senate Blocks Dems' Bill Boosting Vets' Benefits

WASHINGTON (AP) — A divided Senate on Thursday derailed Democratic legislation that would have provided \$21 billion for medical, education and job-training benefits for the nation's veterans. The bill fell victim to election-year disputes over spending and fresh penalties against Iran.

Each party covets the allegiance of the country's 22 million veterans and their families, and each party blamed the other for turning the effort into a chess match aimed at forcing politically embarrassing votes.

Republicans used a procedural move to block the bill after Senate Veterans Affairs Committee Chairman Bernie Sanders, I-Vt., chided GOP lawmakers about their priorities.

"I personally, I have to say this honestly, have a hard time understanding how anyone could vote for tax breaks for billionaires, for millionaires, for large corporations and then say we don't have the resources to protect our veterans," said Sanders, the measure's chief author.

Democrats noted that more than two dozen veterans groups supported the legislation. But Republicans said they still favor helping veterans while also wanting to be prudent about federal spending.

"We're not going to be intimidated on this," said Sen. Jeff Sessions of Alabama, top Republican on the Senate Budget Committee. "We're going to do the right things for the veterans of America."

The fight over priorities demonstrated again the bitter divisions that have restrained the legislative process in recent years. Efforts to address immigration, a tax overhaul and job creation all seem likely to go nowhere this year.

Republicans criticized how most of Sanders' bill was paid for — with unspent money from the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iraq and the winding down of American military involvement in Afghanistan. The GOP says those are not real savings because no one expected those dollars to be spent as those wars ended.

Republicans also objected to provisions making more veterans without service-connected injuries eligible for treatment at Department of Veterans Affairs facilities. They said that would swamp an already overburdened system.

New Food Labels Aim To Make Healthy Shopping Easy

BY MARY CLARE JALONICK
AND DARLENE SUPERVILLE
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Ice cream lovers beware: The government knows you're unlikely to stop after half a cup.

New nutrition labels proposed Thursday for many popular foods, including ice cream, aim to more accurately reflect what people actually eat. And the proposal would make calorie counts on labels more prominent, too, reflecting that nutritionists now focus more on calories than fat.

For the first time, labels also would be required to list any sugars that are added by manufacturers.

In one example of the change, the estimated serving size for ice cream would jump from a half cup to a cup, so the calorie listing on the label would double as well.

The idea behind the change, the first overhaul of the labels in two decades, isn't that the government thinks people should be eating twice as much; it's that they should understand how many calories are in what they already are eating. The Food and Drug Administration says that, by law, serving sizes must be based on actual consumption, not some ideal.

"Our guiding principle here is very simple, that you as a parent and a consumer should be able to walk into your local grocery store, pick up an item off the shelf and be able to tell whether it's good for your family," said first lady Michelle Obama, who joined the FDA in announcing the proposed changes at the White House.

Mrs. Obama made the announcement as part of her Let's Move initiative to combat child obesity, which is marking its fourth anniversary. On Tuesday, she announced new Agriculture Department rules that would reduce marketing of less-healthy foods in schools.

The new labels would be less cluttered. FDA Commissioner Margaret Hamburg called them "a more user-friendly version."

But they are probably several years away. The FDA will take comments on the proposal for 90 days, and a final rule could take another year. Once it's final, the agency has proposed giving industry two years to comply.

The agency projects food companies will have to pay around \$2 billion to revise labels. Companies have resisted some of the changes in the past, including listing added sugars, but the industry is so far withholding criticism.

Pamela Bailey of the Grocery Manufacturers Association,

New food labels

The Food and Drug Administration is proposing changes to nutrition labels, the first major updates since early 1990s.

Old label	One of the proposed labels
<p>Nutrition Facts Serving Size 1/2 cup (125g) Amount Per Serving Calories 200 Total Fat 10g Saturated Fat 5g Cholesterol 20mg Sodium 470mg Total Carbohydrate 31g Dietary Fiber 0g Sugars 5g Proteins 5g Vitamin A 4% Vitamin C 2% Calcium 20% Iron 4%</p>	<p>Nutrition Facts 8 servings per container Serving size 2/3 cup (55g) Amount per 2/3 cup Calories 230 % DV* 12% Total Fat 8g 5% Saturated Fat 8g Trans Fat 0g 0% Cholesterol 0mg 7% Sodium 160mg 12% Total Carbs 37g 14% Dietary Fiber 4g Sugars 1g Added Sugars 0g Protein 3g 10% Vitamin D 2mcg 20% Calcium 260mg 45% Iron 8mg 5% Potassium 235mg</p>
<p>1 Serving portion more prominent</p> <p>2 Calories in large bold text</p> <p>3 Daily percentages placed first</p> <p>4 Added sugars shown</p> <p>5 Vitamins A, C removed; vitamin D, potassium added</p>	

Serving sizes adjusted
Single serving sizes will be more realistic to reflect how much people typically eat at one time

Current 4 servings serving size 200 calories	Proposed 2 servings serving size 400 calories
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Source: U.S. Food and Drug Administration
Graphic: Melina Yingling

tion, the industry group that represents the nation's largest food companies, called the proposal a "thoughtful review."

It is still not yet clear what the final labels will look like. The FDA offered two labels in its proposal — one that looks similar to the current version but is shorter and clearer and another that groups the nutrients into a "quick facts" category for things like fat, carbohydrates, sugars and proteins.

There also would be an "avoid too much" category for saturated fats, trans fats, cholesterol, sodium and added sugar, and a "get enough" section with vitamin D, potassium, calcium, iron and fiber. Potassium and vitamin D are would be additions, based on current thinking that Americans aren't getting enough of those nutrients. Vitamin C and vitamin A listings are no longer required.

Both versions list calories above all of those nutrients in large, bold type.

Serving sizes have long been misleading, with many single-serving packages listing themselves as multiple servings, so the calorie count appears lower.

Under the proposed rules, both 12-ounce and 20-ounce sodas would be considered one serving, and many foods that are often eaten in one sitting — a bag of chips, a can of soup or a frozen entree, for example — would either be newly listed as a single serving or would list nutrient information both by serving and by container.

The inclusion of added sugars to the label was one of the biggest revisions. Nutrition advocates have long asked for that line on the label because it's impossible for consumers to know how much sugar in an item is naturally occurring, like that in fruit and dairy products, and how much is added by the manufacturer. Think an apple vs. apple sauce, which comes in sweetened and unsweetened varieties.

Sen. Cruz Blasts GOP Leaders

WASHINGTON (AP) — The sniping between establishment Republicans and tea partiers resumed Thursday as Texas Sen. Ted Cruz refused to endorse his state's senior senator in next week's Republican primary.

Sen. John Cornyn, the Senate's second-ranking Republican leader, faces tea party-backed Rep. Steve Stockman in Tuesday's election. Cruz declined to tell reporters how he plans to vote.

"I am not supporting any of the senators from my party or their opponents" in this year's primaries, Cruz said, adding that he might change his mind later.

Cruz, a tea party favorite and potential 2016 presidential candidate, has infuriated fellow Republicans by forcing uncomfortable votes on issues such as the debt, and by raising money for conservative groups trying to defeat veteran Republicans, including Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell of Kentucky.

Cruz's comments are especially notable because he is a vice chairman of the GOP committee tasked with winning Senate elections. He criticized the committee's track record and policy of virtually always backing incumbents.

Dems Look To Capitalize On GOP Split

PHOENIX (AP) — Gov. Jan Brewer's veto of a bill allowing businesses to refuse service to gays exposed a fracture within the Republican Party between social conservatives and the GOP's pro-business wing, a split that Democrats hope to turn into a midterm election campaign issue.

The Republican governor has made job creation and business expansion the centerpiece of her administration, and she was more than willing to disregard the wishes of social conservatives amid protests from major corporations such as American Airlines and Apple Inc. As a result, the GOP base was left dispirited, and opponents of gay marriage are struggling to find their footing after significant losses in the courts and statehouses.

"It's leading people to say: 'We're not sure where the Republican party is on something as basic as economic freedom,'" said Dan Holler, a spokesman for Heritage Action, a conservative group in Washington, D.C., that argued the proposal was aimed simply at allowing people to run businesses as they saw fit. "There certainly is a risk, especially as you head into the midterm elections, when the turnout of your base is essential."

Brewer vetoed the measure Wednesday night after Republicans ranging from Mitt Romney to her state's two U.S. Senators urged her to reject the measure, which emerged from the GOP-controlled state Legislature. The bill was designed to give added protection from lawsuits to people who assert their religious beliefs in refusing service to gays or others who offend their beliefs. Opponents called it an open attack on gays that invited discrimination.

Gay marriage is increasingly popular nationwide, and the Democratic Party already has been claiming that measures like the Arizona bill are a throwback to pre-civil rights era Jim Crow laws.

VP Biden Urges Dems Not To Apologize

WASHINGTON (AP) — Vice President Joe Biden on Thursday told Democrats to stop apologizing for their policies and go on offense as party leaders try to overcome pessimism about prospects for the November election.

At a Democratic National Committee gathering, Biden said he and President Barack Obama have an obligation to raise money and campaign for the party's candidates. He said he has signed up to participate in more than 120 races and that Obama has given him permission to participate in every campaign where he can be helpful.

"I am so tired about hearing about the demise of the Democratic Party. Give me a break," Biden said. "My central message to you is look: I think we should not apologize for a single thing."

In his pep talk to state chairmen, the vice president tried to portray the party as starting on solid ground as campaigning gears up.

"There is no Republican Party," Biden said, accusing the GOP of masquerading as conservative while actually espousing anti-government views that he said Americans reject.

Teen Survives Cancer, Then Studies It

WASHINGTON (AP) — First the teenager survived a rare cancer. Then she wanted to study it, spurring a study that helped scientists find a weird gene flaw that might play a role in how the tumor strikes.

Age 18 is pretty young to be listed as an author of a study in the prestigious journal Science. But the industrious high school student's efforts are bringing new attention to this mysterious disease.

"It's crazy that I've been able to do this," said Elana Simon of New York City, describing her idea to study the extremely rare form of liver cancer that mostly hits adolescents and young adults.

Making that idea work required a lot of help from real scientists: Her father, who runs a cellular biophysics lab at the Rockefeller University; her surgeon at Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center; and gene specialists at the New York Genome Center. A second survivor of this cancer, who the journal said didn't want to be identified, also co-authored the study.

Together, the team reported Thursday that they uncovered an oddity: A break in genetic material that left the "head" of one gene fused to the "body" of another. That results in an abnormal protein that forms inside the tumors but not in normal liver tissue, suggesting it might fuel cancer growth, the researchers wrote. They've found the evidence in all 15 of the tumors tested so far.

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