

Jordan Launches New Strikes On IS

BY KARIN LAUB AND MOHAMMED DARAGHMEH
Associated Press

AMMAN, Jordan — Dozens of Jordanian fighter jets bombed Islamic State training centers and weapons storage sites Thursday, intensifying attacks after the militants burned to death a captured Jordanian pilot.

As part of the new campaign, Jordan is also attacking targets in Iraq, said Foreign Minister Nasser Judeh. Up to now, Jordan had struck IS targets in Syria, but not Iraq, as part of a U.S.-led military coalition.

"We said we are going to take this all the way, we are going to go after them wherever they are and we're doing that," Judeh told Fox News.

Asked if Jordan was now carrying out attacks in both countries, he said: "That's right. Today more Syria than Iraq, but like I said it's an ongoing effort."

"They're in Iraq and they are in Syria and therefore you have to target them wherever they are," he added.

The militant group controls about one-third of each Syria and Iraq, both neighbors of Jordan. In September, Jordan joined the U.S.-led military alliance that has been carrying out air strikes against the militants.

The Jordanian military said dozens of fighter jets were involved in Thursday's strikes on training centers and weapons storage sites. State TV showed footage



ROY GUTMAN/MCCLATCHY/TNS
Youthful members of Jordan's Al Assaf tribe burn a "Wanted Dead" poster of Islamic State leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi at a rally in Amman, Jordan.

of the attacks, including fighter jets taking off from an air base and bombs setting of large balls of fire and smoke after impact. It showed Jordanian troops scribble messages in chalk on the missiles. "For you, the enemies of Islam," read one message.

The military's statement, read on state TV, was entitled, "This is the beginning and you will get to know the Jordanians" — an apparent warning to IS. It said the strikes will continue "until we eliminate them."

Jordan's King Abdullah II was paying a condolence visit to the family of the pilot, Lt. Muath al-Kaseasbeh, in southern Jordan

when the fighter jets roared overhead.

The king pointed upward, toward the planes, as he sat next to the pilot's father, Safi al-Kaseasbeh.

Al-Kaseasbeh told the assembled mourners that the planes had returned from strikes over Raqqa, the de facto capital of the militants' self-declared caliphate. His son had been captured near Raqqa when his F-16 fighter plane went down in December.

Earlier this week, Islamic State displayed the video of the killing of the pilot on outdoor screens in Raqqa, to chants of "God is Great" from some in the audience, according to another video posted by the militants.

Also Thursday, Jordan released an influential jihadi cleric, Abu Mohammed al-Maqdesi, who was detained in October after speaking out against Jordan's participation in the anti-IS coalition, according to his lawyer, Moussa al-Abdallat.

Jordan's Islamic militants are split between supporters of Islamic State and Jabhat al-Nusra, the branch of al-Qaida in Syria.

Last year, al-Maqdesi had criticized Islamic State militants for attacking fellow Muslims. However, after Jordan joined the military coalition, he called on his website for Muslim unity against a "crusader war," a reference to coalition airstrikes.

U.S. To Move Rescue Aircraft Closer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The gruesome killing of a Jordanian pilot who had crashed in Islamic State territory laid bare a problem of the U.S.-led coalition — there's no sure way to rescue an airman who's down behind enemy lines. Now, in response, the U.S. has moved search-and-rescue aircraft closer to the battlefield, defense officials said Thursday.

U.S. pilots are flying missions over Syria daily from bases in the region, including from Qatar, and partner nations, including Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Bahrain, are flying less often. The United Arab Emirates suspended its participation in airstrikes in December after the Jordanian pilot was captured, but it may reconsider after having given its aircrews extra training, two officials said.

The risk of capture is unavoidable in air combat missions anywhere. The danger is arguably greater for pilots flying over Syria with no U.S. troops nearby, even though the Islamic State has a very limited ability to shoot down planes.

The importance of finding the pilot before he is captured was highlighted by the video showing Islamic State militants burning Jordanian Lt. Muath al-Kaseasbeh alive in a cage.

The U.S. has flown nearly 900 combat missions over Iraq since last August and more than 900 over Syria since September — not to mention hundreds of reconnaissance and other support missions — without a single loss. Coalition pilots have flown more than 350 airstrike missions over Iraq and 80 or more over Syria, with al-Kaseasbeh the only casualty so far.

Germany, France Push Ukraine Plan

KIEV, Ukraine (AP) — Carrying a peace plan that reportedly incorporates proposals from Russia, the leaders of Germany and France met Thursday with Ukrainian Petro Poroshenko in a hastily arranged mission to bring an end to the accelerated fighting in the east of the country.

The trip by German Chancellor Angela Merkel and French President Francois Hollande, who will follow by meeting Russian President Vladimir Putin on Friday in Moscow, came as concerns rose about whether the U.S. would grant lethal aid to Ukraine and as NATO formed a quick-reaction force of 5,000 soldiers in response to Russia's increased military muscle-flexing.

The meeting with Poroshenko ended late Thursday and Hollande and Merkel left the presidential offices without comment. Details of their plan remained unclear, although Poroshenko said at the start of the meeting that it raised hopes for calling a quick cease-fire.

The high-level diplomacy came as resurgent fighting killed eight more people in eastern Ukraine and fueled fears the conflict is threatening Europe's overall security. More than 5,300 people have been killed since the fighting started in April.

The fighting in eastern Ukraine between Russia-backed separatist rebels and Ukrainian forces has intensified sharply over the past two weeks. Russia vehemently denies that it is providing equipment or troops for the insurgents, but U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry sharply rejected that denial.

Calif. Allows Waste Dumping In Aquifers

BAKERSFIELD, Calif. (AP) — Regulators in California, the country's third-largest oil-producing state, have authorized oil companies to inject production fluids and waste into what are now federally protected aquifers more than 2,500 times, risking contamination of underground water supplies that could be used for drinking water or irrigation, state records show.

While the permits go back decades, an Associated Press analysis found that nearly half of those injection wells — 46 percent — were approved or began injections in the last four years under Gov. Jerry Brown, who has pushed state oil and gas regulators to speed up the permitting process. That happened despite growing warnings from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency since 2011 that state regulators were out of compliance with federal laws meant to protect underground drinking-water stores from oilfield contamination.

In California, "we need a big course correction. We need to get the system back in compliance," said Jared Blumenfeld, regional administrator for the EPA. "Californians expect their water is not being polluted by oil producers ... This poses that very real danger."

The injections are convenient for oil companies because drilling brings up 13 gallons of wastewater for every gallon of petroleum. And one of the easiest disposal methods is simply to send that waste back underground.

The federal government is now demanding that state officials do more to find and deal with any contamination and end oilfield injection in all aquifers set aside for families and farms.

GOP Govs. Bash Washington, Visit Often

WASHINGTON (AP) — As they begin to shape their prospective bids for president, a group of ambitious Republican governors is eager to seize on voters' contempt for that most dirty of political words: "Washington."

"As much as I like coming here, I love going home even more," Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker said during a recent speech delivered just a block from the White House.

Yet those same governors, even as they profess to loathe the nation's capital, have become regular visitors. They come to woo veteran policy advisers, experienced operatives and savvy donors who would serve as the backbone of their nascent White House campaigns. At least four potential candidates — Walker, Indiana Gov. Mike Pence, Louisiana Gov. Bobby Jindal and former Texas Gov. Rick Perry — have been in town in the past week alone.

"If you want to participate at the federal level, you have to be here in Washington," said Adam Brandon, executive vice president of libertarian-leaning lobbying group FreedomWorks.

Pence's visit started this week with a closed-door fundraiser for the Republican Governors Association and private meetings with former colleagues in Congress. He then went on to job Washington while testifying before a House committee.

2 Dead In Murder-Suicide At U Of South Carolina

BY JEFFREY COLLINS
Associated Press

COLUMBIA, S.C. — Two people died Thursday in an apparent murder-suicide inside a building on the University of South Carolina's campus in busy downtown Columbia.

The shooting happened around 1 p.m. Thursday as students were changing classes. Even as police cars with sirens blaring rushed to the new School of Public Health and the university sent out an alert that everyone should stay inside, people were walking around the sprawling campus.

State Law Enforcement Division spokesman Thom Berry said the shooting was "very isolated" but he wouldn't say who was involved, whether it was a student, professor or someone else.

One of Columbia's main streets was closed, causing massive traffic problems. Security was increased at the Statehouse about two blocks away. The university didn't



TIM DOMINICK/THE STATE/TNS
People react to the announcement in a press conference that there was a murder-suicide at the Arnold School of Public Health on the University of South Carolina campus Thursday, in Columbia, S.C.

cancel classes, but planned a candlelight vigil and extended counseling hours.

By the time the sun set, the increased security was gone and roads were reopened. A number of officers remained at the public health building, many of them crime scene technicians.

Berry refused to release

the names of the dead or their relationship. He also wouldn't specify where the shooting took place beyond a room in the building, not saying if it was an office or a classroom.

The university said little about the shooting other than its emergency alerts.

Student Hayden Dunn, a senior from Myrtle Beach,

said he was in the building about 1 p.m., getting in an elevator to change classes, when a police officer also got inside. Dunn said the officer asked whether anyone had heard gunshots, but they hadn't. Dunn said he went to class, then an alarm sounded minutes later, and people rushed outside. Another officer told him shots had been fired, he said.

"Otherwise, you wouldn't have known anything happened," Dunn said.

Workers and others fled the building after police told them to evacuate and they went inside other buildings wherever they could, said Barbara Reager, an administrative assistant who works nearby.

"They had no time to get their keys, to pick up their purses," Reager said by phone.

The university texted alerts and also interrupted programming on its cable system to warn students and others to stay inside.

Dems Hold Hearing To Update Education Law

BY KIMBERLY HEFLING
AP Education Writer

WASHINGTON — House Democratic lawmakers are clawing to get their views heard as Congress moves ahead on revising the much-maligned No Child Left Behind education law and its annual school testing requirements.

They crowded into a small Capitol Hill hearing room Thursday for their own forum on changing the law in protest of Republicans' handling of the issue. Votes on a GOP bill are anticipated soon.

The bill "shows that poor, minority and disabled children are not a priority for my colleagues on the other side of the aisle," said Rep. Marcia Fudge, D-Ohio.

Some worried about a provision in the bill to let federal dollars follow a low-income student to a different public school, saying they fear it will hurt schools with a high concentration of poor students. "How do you think we can best get that message out?" said Rep. Susan Davis, D-Calif.

The No Child Left Behind law, signed by President George W. Bush in 2002, was intended to close substantial achievement gaps between the academic performance of minority and low income students and their more affluent peers. It mandated that students in grades three to eight be tested annually in reading and math and be tested again once in high school.

Schools that didn't show annual growth faced consequences, and every student was to be proficient by 2014.

GOP Rep. John Boehner of Ohio, now the House speaker, sponsored the legislation with the late Sen. Edward Kennedy, D-Mass., and other senior lawmakers, and Congress sent it to Bush with overwhelming bipartisan support.

The law's annual testing requirements, Common Core standards and school choice are all controversial issues wrapped up in the debate. Both sides heartily agree that the landmark law needs to be fixed, but tensions are high over the level of federal involvement in fixing schools.

Complicating the matter, allegiances don't clearly fall along party lines. While more conservative Republicans would like to essentially eliminate the federal role in education, GOP-friendly business groups side support a strong federal role, as do civil rights groups that traditionally align with Democrats. At the same time, teachers' unions, which also tend to align with Democrats, argue the Obama administration has placed too much of emphasis on testing.

Deciding that the goal of proficiency for every student by 2014 was unattainable, the Obama administration in 2012 started granting waivers to states. The waivers allow states to avoid some of the more stringent requirements of the law if

they met conditions such as adopting meaningful teacher evaluation systems and college- and career-ready standards like the Common Core. The standards spell out what skills students in each grade should master in reading and math.

Widespread disagreement over how to change the law has kept Congress from getting a bill to President Barack Obama.

Republicans congressional leaders who now control both the House and Senate say they hope to pass a bill this year. That's left House Democrats complaining things are moving too fast.

Rep. John Kline, R-Minn., the chairman of the House Education and the Workforce Committee, released a bill to update the law similar to one passed by the House in 2013 without one Democrat on board, and scheduled a Feb. 11 committee meeting to consider it. The bill maintains testing requirements, but it strips the federal government of much of its authority — including limiting the education secretary's role in "coercing" standards. A vote is expected in late February.

Kline said the committee has had more than a dozen hearings over the last four years. "Americans have waited long enough for reforms that will fix a broken education system," he said.

Like Sen. Lamar Alexander, the chairman of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee,

Kline has expressed concern that a strong federal role in education stifles education advancement and innovation in states.

But Rep. Bobby Scott, D-Va., the newly appointed senior Democrat on the House committee, accused House Republicans of a "hasty, partisan push" to rewrite the law and he organized the forum with a panel of education experts.

Education Secretary Arne Duncan said in a statement that Kline's bill would "turn back the clock on growth."

Much of the discussion in the Senate has focused on whether federal testing mandates should continue.

Alexander has said he's willing to listen to both sides and he's hopeful he can get a bill out of his committee by the end of the month. But there have been signs of dissent. The committee's senior Democrat, Sen. Patty Murray came out this week against allowing federal money to follow students, an idea also included in a draft bill circulated by Alexander.

"We have to have a bipartisan result. Otherwise we won't have a law," Alexander said Wednesday.

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Thank You

The family of **Don Boyd** would like to thank everyone for their support, food, donations, calls, and flowers during this difficult time. Thank you to the staff at ASHH ICU and 4th floor for the care in his final days. Thank you to Pastor Ron Johnson for your thoughts and prayers and beautiful celebration of life for Dad. Thank you to the FUMC women for the lunch served after the funeral. We would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to Wintz & Ray Funeral Home for the beautiful services, guidance and support given to our families.

*Tony & Maria Boyd & family
Dave & Dana Hoxeng & family
Louie & Cindy Johnson & family
Jeff & Amy Johnson & family*