

## New Video Game Explores Syrian Civil War

BEIRUT (AP) — A new video game based on Syria's civil war challenges players to make the hard choices facing the country's rebels. Is it better to negotiate peace with the regime of President Bashar Assad, for example, or dispatch jihadist fighters to kill pro-government thugs?

The British designer of "Endgame: Syria" says he hopes the game will inform people who might otherwise remain ignorant about the conflict.

Views differ, however, on the appropriateness of using a video game to discuss a complex crisis that has killed more than 60,000 people since March 2011. Computer giant Apple has refused to distribute the game and some observers consider the mere idea insulting. Others love it, and one fan from inside Syria has suggested changes to make the game better mirror the actual war.

The dispute comes amid wider arguments about violent video games since last month's shooting in Newtown, Conn., that left 20 children and six adults dead. This week, the National Rifle Association revised the recommended age for a new shooting game after criticisms by liberal groups.

Tomas Rawlings, who designed the Syria game, said he got the idea while watching TV pundits debate the possible consequences of directly arming Syria's rebels, which Western nations have declined to do. He said he thought a game could explore such questions by allowing players to make choices and see their consequences.

## Subway Faces Criticism Over 11-inch Sandwich

NEW YORK (AP) — What's in an inch? Apparently, enough missing meat, cheese and tomatoes to cause an uproar.

Subway, the world's largest fast food chain with 38,000 locations, is facing widespread criticism after a man who appears to be from Australia posted a photo on the company's Facebook page of one of its footlong sandwiches next to a tape measure that shows the sub is just 11 inches.

More than 100,000 people have "liked" or commented on the photo, which had the caption "Subway pls respond." Lookalike pictures popped up elsewhere on Facebook. And *The New York Post* conducted its own investigation that found that four out of seven footlong sandwiches that it measured were shy of the 12 inches that makes a foot.

The original photo was no longer visible by Thursday afternoon on Subway's Facebook page, which has 19.8 million fans. A spokesman for Subway, which is based in Milford, Conn., said Subway did not remove it.

Subway also said that the length of its sandwiches may vary slightly when its bread, which is baked at each Subway location, is not made to the chain's exact specifications.

## U.S. Housing Construction Surges In December

WASHINGTON (AP) — U.S. builders started work on homes in December at the fastest pace in 4 1/2 years and finished 2012 as their best year for residential construction since the early stages of the housing crisis.

The Commerce Department said Thursday that builders broke ground on houses and apartments last month at a seasonally adjusted annual rate of 954,000. That's 12.1 percent higher than November's annual rate. And it is nearly double the recession low reached in April 2009.

Construction increased last month for both single-family homes and apartments. And the pace in which builders requested permits to start more homes ticked up to a 4 1/2 year high.

For the year, builders started work on 780,000 homes. That's still roughly half of the annual number of starts consistent with healthier markets. But it is an increase of 28.1 percent from 2011. And it is the most since 2008 — shortly after the housing market began to collapse in late 2006 and 2007.

Steady hiring, record-low mortgage rates and a tight supply of new and previously occupied homes available for sale have helped boost sales and prices in most markets. That has persuaded builders to start more homes, which adds to economic growth and hiring.

## Obama To Focus On Renewable Energy, Climate

WASHINGTON (AP) — The White House says tackling climate change and enhancing energy security will be among President Barack Obama's top priorities in his second term.

Obama will have to do that work with new heads of the agencies responsible for the environment. Interior Secretary Ken Salazar, Environmental Protection chief Lisa Jackson and Jane Lubchenco, head of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, all have announced they are leaving. Energy Secretary Steven Chu is expected to follow his colleagues out the door in coming weeks.

The White House says no decisions have been made on replacements for any of the energy or environment jobs, but says Obama's priorities will remain unchanged, including a focus on renewable energy sources such as wind and solar and expanded production of oil and natural gas.

## Taxpayers Will Ease Banks' Costs In Deal

WASHINGTON (AP) — Consumer advocates have complained that U.S. mortgage lenders are getting off easy in a deal to settle charges that they wrongfully foreclosed on many homeowners.

Now it turns out the deal is even sweeter for the lenders than it appears: Taxpayers will subsidize them for the money they're ponying up.

The Internal Revenue Service regards the lenders' compensation to homeowners as a cost incurred in the course of doing business. Result: It's fully tax-deductible.

Critics argue that big banks that were bailed out by taxpayers during the financial crisis are again being favored over the victims of their mortgage abuses.

"The government is abetting the behavior by not preventing the deduction," said Sen. Charles Grassley, R-Iowa. "The taxpayers end up subsidizing the Wall Street banks after the headlines of a big-dollar settlement die down. That's unfair to taxpayers."

Under the deal, 12 mortgage lenders will pay more than \$9 billion to compensate hundreds of thousands of people whose homes were seized improperly, a result of abuses such as "robo-signing." That's when banks automatically approved foreclosures without properly reviewing documents.

Regulators reached agreement this week with Goldman Sachs and Morgan Stanley. Last week, the regulators settled with 10 other lenders: Bank of America, JPMorgan Chase, Wells Fargo, Citigroup, MetLife Bank, PNC Financial Services, Sovereign, SunTrust, U.S. Bank and Aurora. The settlements will help eliminate huge potential liabilities for the banks.

Many consumer advocates argued that regulators settled for too low a price by letting banks avoid full responsibility for wrongful foreclosures that victimized families.

That price the banks will pay will be further eased by the tax-deductibility of their settlement costs. Companies can deduct those costs against federal taxes as long as they are compensating private individuals to remedy a wrong. By contrast, a fine or other financial penalty is not tax-deductible.

## Al-Qaida in North Africa

*Al-Qaida in the Islamist Maghreb (AQIM) is the jihadist group responsible for seizing hostages at an Algerian natural gas facility and, along with other Islamist groups, is fighting French forces for the control of northern Mali. A look at AQIM's history:*

**1998** First formed as faction of the Armed Islamic Group, then Algeria's largest terror group

**2006** Officially joins al-Qaida with main goal of attacking Western targets

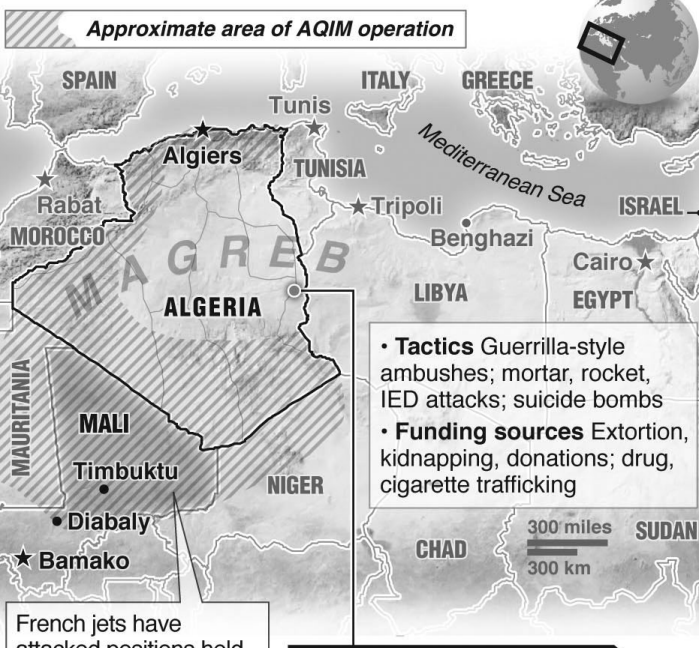
**Early 2007** Renames itself AQIM; uses improvised explosive devices to attack foreign energy workers in Algeria

**July 2007** AQIM suicide bomb attack on barracks kills eight

**Dec. 2007** Car bomb attack on U.N. office in Algiers kills 37

**Feb. 2008** Attacks Israeli Embassy in Mauritania

**May 2009** Says it has killed British hostage after negotiations fail; later, claims it killed U.S. citizen in Mauritania over missionary work



**July 2010** Joint French-Mauritanian raid on AQIM camp disrupts its activities

**June 2011** AQIM kills two French hostages during failed rescue mission

**2012** AQIM aids secular and Islamist rebels to seize northern Mali; area now a base for AQIM training, recruitment; Islamic sharia law enforced; hundreds

of thousands of Malians flee

**2013** French forces join Malian troops to stop advancing rebels; AQIM raids Algerian gas facility to avenge Algeria allowing French military to use its airspace

Source: National Counterterrorism Center, Council on Foreign Relations  
Graphic: Judy Treible, Robert Dorrell

© 2013 MCT

## Boeing Plans To Carry On With 787 Production

BY JOSHUA FREED

AP Business Writer

Boeing plans to keep building its flagship jetliner while engineers try to solve battery problems that have grounded most of the 787 fleet.

It's not clear how long the investigation — or the fix — will take. But it won't be cheap for Boeing or for the airlines that had sought the prestige of flying the world's most sophisticated passenger plane — a marvel of aviation technology that right now can't even leave the tarmac, let alone cross continents and oceans.

Boeing's newest jet was grounded worldwide Thursday after one suffered a battery fire and another had to make an emergency landing because pilots smelled something burning. Airlines and regulators canceled all Dreamliner flights.

The groundings were a sign of how seriously regulators take any threat of an in-flight fire. National Transportation Safety Board photos of the battery container from a Jan. 7 fire on a Japan Airlines plane showed a blue box with black smudges and blackened

wiring and batteries inside.

LOT Polish Airlines suffered the highest-profile embarrassment of any of Boeing's customers late Wednesday, just as it was showing off new service between Warsaw and Chicago.

The plane's captain learned of the FAA grounding order while making the inaugural flight from Warsaw to Chicago. The airline canceled the return trip — and a ceremony at O'Hare Airport that was to include airline officials and Mayor Rahm Emanuel. Passengers who were eager to ride the airline's first flight back to Warsaw had to look for a hotel room instead.

Bartek Pshyborvski was supposed to be on the canceled flight to Warsaw. Quoting from the sign behind the LOT ticket counter, he said: "It's funny to read 'First European airline to fly Boeing 787 Dreamliner.' Oops. Big oops."

The airline said Thursday that it may seek compensation from Boeing for the grounding of its two 787s.

Boeing currently builds five 787s per month. It hasn't delivered any since Jan. 3, before the plane started experiencing a spate

of problems that also included fuel and oil leaks, a cracked cockpit window and a computer glitch that erroneously indicated a brake problem.

Boeing spokeswoman Lori Gunter said no deliveries had been scheduled during that time. She declined to discuss planned deliveries.

Regardless of delivery schedules, it's cheaper for Boeing to build the planes and then go back and fix them than it is to shut down production.

All Nippon Airways said its 18th 787 is due at the end of this month, but it won't take delivery until 787 flights resume.

The FAA grounding was a stunning setback for Boeing. The plane has been in the works since 2003, a time when modern jetliners were built of aluminum and powered many of their internal systems with incoming air from outside the plane. Boeing engineers figured they could get better fuel efficiency by making the plane out of carbon composites, a sort of lightweight, high-tech plastic. And they used electricity rather than air because it saved space and weight.

## Poll: Most See Damage If U.S. Debt Limit Not Raised

BY ALAN FRAMJENNIFER AND AGIESTA

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Most Americans think jarring economic problems will erupt if lawmakers fail to increase the government's borrowing limit. Yet they're torn over how or even whether to raise it, leaning toward Republican demands that any boost be accompanied by spending cuts.

According to an Associated Press-GfK poll, 53 percent say that if the debt limit is not extended and the U.S. defaults, the country will face a major economic crisis. An additional 27 percent say such a crisis would be somewhat likely, while just 17 percent largely dismiss the prospects of such damage.

Separately, Republican officials said Wednesday that GOP lawmakers may seek a short-term extension of the debt limit, thus avoiding a default as early as next

month by the U.S. Treasury while they try to negotiate spending cuts with President Barack Obama over the next few months. "The worst thing for the economy is for this Congress and this administration to do nothing to get our debt and deficits under control," said Rep. Paul Ryan, the party's 2012 vice presidential candidate who is chairman of the House Budget Committee.

The poll's findings echo many economists' warnings that failure to raise the debt ceiling and the resulting, unprecedented federal default would risk wounding the world economy because many interest rates are pegged to the trustworthiness of the U.S. to pay its debts. Obama and many Republicans agree with that, though some GOP lawmakers eager to force Obama to accept spending cuts have downplayed a default's impact.

When asked which political

path to follow, 39 percent of poll respondents support the insistence by House Speaker John Boehner, R-Ohio, and Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., that deep spending cuts be attached to any measure increasing the debt ceiling. That's more than the 30 percent who back Obama's demand that borrowing authority be raised quickly and not entwined with a bitter fight over trimming the budget.

An additional 21 percent oppose boosting the debt ceiling at all.

The survey was conducted as the two parties gird for a debt-limit battle that is likely to dominate the next two months in the capital. The fight is sure to under-

score partisan differences over how to curb federal deficits that have surpassed \$1 trillion for four straight years. Obama insists that besides spending cuts there should be more tax increases on the wealthy, which the GOP opposes.

While saying he will refuse to negotiate on the debt ceiling, Obama has said he will bargain separately on finding ways to reduce the annual federal deficit.

Despite the majority in the survey who fear severe economic problems if the debt limit is not raised, in a separate question only about 3 in 10 supported the general idea of increasing the ceiling. Four in 10 opposed it, with the rest expressing neutral feelings.

## 50th Anniversary Celebration



Mr. & Mrs. Bob Baker

Mr. and Mrs. Bob and Sally Baker, Scotland, SD, will celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary on January 26th, 2013.

Their family requests a card shower. Greetings may be sent to 41728 292nd St. Scotland, SD, 57059.

Sally Heffernan and Bob Baker were married January 26, 1963, in Rock Valley, IA.

They have four children: Carol (Dave) Girodat; Barb (the late Kevin) Goldammer; Bruce Baker; Dave (Janine) Baker.

The couple has nine grandchildren.

## 50th Anniversary Celebration



Mr. & Mrs. Darrell Edelman

Mr. and Mrs. Darrell and Jeanene Edelman will celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary January 26, 2013.

Jeanene (Kutielek) and Darrell Edelman were married on January 26, 1963, in Tabors, SD.

Their children and grandchildren request a card shower.

Cards may be sent to: 28474 431 Avenue Menno, SD 57045

The couple has three children, ten grandchildren, and three great-grandchildren.

WHEN EXCELLENCE IS THE EXPECTATION, REGAL IS THE DEFINITIVE CHOICE.



25% OFF  
Gallons

Benjamin Moore®  
Paints

Yankton Paint & Decorating

406 Broadway • Yankton • 665-5032  
www.yanktonpaintanddecorating.com