

Al-Qaida May Have Ties To Paris Gunmen

CAIRO (AP) — The al-Qaida offshoot that masterminded the bloody rampage in France has been the most active of the terror network's branches in trying to strike in the West.

Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula said Friday it directed the attack against the French satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo in Paris "as revenge for the honor" of Islam's Prophet Muhammad.

The strike would be the Yemen-based branch's first successful strike outside its home territory — and a triumph for its trademark double-strategy of waging jihad in Yemen to build its strength to strike abroad.

At least one of the two brothers involved in the attack on the weekly traveled to Yemen in 2011 and either received training from or fought alongside the group, authorities say. A U.S. intelligence assessment described to the Associated Press shows that 34-year-old Said Kouachi was trained in preparation to return home and carry out an attack.

Formed in 2009 as a merger between the terror group's Yemeni and Saudi branches, AQAP has been blamed for a string of unsuccessful bomb plots against American targets.

US Issues Worldwide Travel Alert

WASHINGTON (AP) — The United States has issued a global travel warning after recent terror attacks in France, Australia and Canada.

The alert comes hours after French police killed three hostage-takers in a pair of incidents. Two of the men are believed responsible for Wednesday's attack on a satirical magazine in Paris. Twelve people were killed in that assault, France's deadliest terror incident in decades.

The State Department's warning says attacks against Americans are becoming increasingly prevalent. It also cites an increased risk of reprisals against U.S. and Western targets for the U.S.-led intervention against Islamic State militants in Syria and Iraq.

The warning also cited last month's hostage standoff at a Sydney cafe and the October killing of a soldier near Canada's parliament.

Obama Proposes 2 Free Years Of College

KNOXVILLE, Tenn. (AP) — President Barack Obama on Friday proposed to bring the cost of two years of community college "down to zero" for all Americans, an ambitious nationwide plan based on a popular Tennessee program signed into law by that state's Republican governor.

However, the idea and its \$60 billion federal price tag over 10 years would have to make the grade with a Republican Congress that is showing little appetite for big new spending programs. Obama, who plans to push the issue in his Jan. 20 State of the Union address, argued that providing educational opportunity and creating a more skilled U.S. workforce shouldn't be a partisan issue.

"Community college should be free for those willing to work for it because, in America, a quality education should not be a privilege that is reserved for a few," he said in a speech at Pellissippi State Community College. He said a high school diploma is no longer enough for American workers to compete in the global economy and that a college degree is "the surest ticket to the middle class."

The White House estimated that 9 million students could eventually participate and save an average of \$3,800 in tuition per year if they attend fulltime. Students would qualify if they attend at least half-time, maintain a 2.5 grade point average and make progress toward completing a degree or certificate program. Participating schools would have to meet certain academic requirements.

At North Lake College, part of the Dallas County Community College system, student Courtney Banks said such a program would help her and also allow others to enroll in classes.

Report: 2014 Great Year For US Hiring

WASHINGTON (AP) — A healthy month of hiring in December capped the best year for U.S. job growth since 1999, demonstrating that employers are more confident than they've been since the Great Recession began.

Nearly 3 million jobs were added in 2014, and continued solid hiring is expected to propel the economy this year to its fastest growth in a decade. The gains are putting further distance between the strengthening American economy and struggling nations overseas.

"Last year was a truly breakout year for the labor market," said James Marple, an economist at TD Securities.

French Security Forces Kill Gunmen, End Terror Rampage

BY LORI HINNANT AND ELAINE GANLEY

Associated Press

PARIS — With explosions and gunfire, security forces Friday ended three days of terror around Paris, killing the two al-Qaida-linked brothers who staged a murderous rampage at a satirical newspaper and an accomplice who seized hostages at a kosher supermarket to try to help the brothers escape.

The worst terrorist violence France has seen in decades killed at least 20 people, including the three gunmen. A fourth suspect — the common law wife of the market attacker — was still at large and believed to be armed.

Al-Qaida's branch in Yemen said it directed the attack against the publication Charlie Hebdo to avenge the honor of the Prophet Muhammad, a frequent target of the weekly's satire.

The brothers were not unknown to authorities: One had a terrorism-related conviction for ties to a network sending fighters to battle American forces in Iraq, and both were on the U.S. no-fly list, according to a U.S. official.

President Francois Hollande urged his nation to remain united and vigilant, and the city shut down a famed Jewish neighborhood amid fears of more violence.

"The threats facing France are not finished," Hollande said. "We are a free people who cave to no pressure."

The drama, which played out on live TV and social media, began with the brothers Said and Cherif Kouachi methodically massacring 12 people Wednesday at the Charlie Hebdo offices, stopping to shoot a wounded police officer in the head before escaping by car.

On Thursday, a gunman police identified as Amedy Coulibaly shot a policewoman to death south of Paris, although authorities were not sure at first if it was related to the Charlie Hebdo shootings.

It all ended at dusk Friday with near-simultaneous raids in two locations: a printing plant in the town of Dammartin-en-Goele, northeast of Paris, where the Kouachis were holed up, and the Paris supermarket where Coulibaly killed four hostages and threatened more violence unless the police let the Kouachis go.

As scores of black-clad security forces surrounded both sites, booming explosions, heavy gunfire and dense smoke heralded the news that the twin sieges finally had ended.

The three gunmen were dead — but the authorities also discovered four dead hostages at the market. Sixteen hostages were freed, one from



PANORAMIC/ZUMA PRESS/TNS

French police have stormed a kosher supermarket in Paris with the hostage taker reported as dead on Friday in Paris. Explosions and gunfire could be heard at a supermarket in eastern Paris, at Porte de Vincennes, where several hostages were held. Reports suggest a gunman there was linked to the Charlie Hebdo suspects. After the operation started, several hostages could be seen leaving the supermarket. Police told French media that four hostages in the supermarket had been killed prior to security forces storming the site.

the printing plant and 15 others from the store.

The attackers had ties both to each other and to terrorist activities that reached back years and extended from Paris to al-Qaida in Yemen. They epitomized Western authorities' greatest fear: Islamic radicals who trained abroad and came home to stage attacks.

After the killings at the Charlie Hebdo offices, Cherif Kouachi, 32, and his 34-year-old brother Said led police on a chase around northeastern France, robbing a gas station and stealing a car before ending up at the printing plant in Dammartin-en-Goele, near Charles de Gaulle airport. One of the brothers was wounded in the neck at one point during a shootout with police after he commandeered a car, Paris Prosecutor Francois Molins said.

Authorities said the brothers temporarily took a man hostage at the plant but let him go, and a second man was later discovered to have been hiding inside the building.

A member of the al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula gave a statement in English to The Associated Press saying the group's leadership "directed the operations and they have chosen their target carefully."

The attack was in line with warnings from the late al-Qaida leader Osama bin Laden to the West about "the consequences of the persistence in the blasphemy against Muslim sanctities," the member said, speaking on condition of anonymity because the group's regulations do not permit him to give his name.

The brothers were cornered there for much of the

day before the explosions and gunfire rang out in the twilight and a police SWAT team clambered onto the roof.

"They said they want to die as martyrs," Yves Albarello, a local lawmaker inside the command post, told French television station i-Tele.

At the kosher grocery near the Porte de Vincennes neighborhood of the capital, the gunman burst in shooting just a few hours before the Jewish Sabbath began, declaring "You know who I am," the official recounted.

The attack came before sundown when the store would have been crowded with shoppers, and Hollande called it "a terrifying anti-Semitic act."

Coulibaly killed the four people in the market shortly after entering, Molins said.

Several people wounded in the grocery store were able to flee and get medical care, the official said.

About 100 students were locked down in nearby schools and the highway ringing Paris was closed.

The mayor's office also shut down all shops along Rosiers Street in the city's famed Marais neighborhood in the heart of the tourist district. Hours before the Jewish Sabbath, the street is usually crowded with shoppers. The street is also only a kilometer (half-mile) from Charlie Hebdo's offices.

Charles de Gaulle airport, not far from the standoff in Dammartin-en-Goele, briefly closed two runways to arrivals, and Hollande held a series of crisis meetings with his security team throughout the day.

Police released a photo of Coulibaly and his wife, Hayat

Boumeddiene, described as an accomplice.

Authorities increasingly grew to see links between the attackers after they discovered that Boumeddiene and the companion of the Kouachi brothers had exchanged about 500 phone calls, Molins said.

He added that several people have been given preliminary charges in the investigation. They include relatives of the three gunmen.

Minutes before police stormed both sites, Coulibaly had threatened more violence if authorities launched an assault on the two brothers, a police official said. A group of people holed up in the supermarket's freezer — apparently unbeknownst to the gunman.

BFM also said it spoke with Coulibaly, who said he and the Kouachis were coordinating their actions, and that he was with the militant Islamic State group. The organizations are normally rivals.

The TV station said Coulibaly didn't hang up properly after the phone call and that this allowed police to hear him saying a final prayer before his death, perhaps suggesting that this prompted the police raid.

In the final assault, phalanxes of security forces converged on the store entrance behind a flash from a stun grenade — and fired inside. Frenzied civilians — one of them carrying a toddler — scurried out under escort by helmeted police in body armor.

Police said Coulibaly had been a co-suspect with Cherif Kouachi in a court case involving terrorism that never made it to trial.

Football

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the season when the Coyotes played the Ducks in Eugene.

"We thought going into that game that they were one of the premier teams in the United States," Glenn said. "They went the distance pretty much — they lost one game, but they were extremely fast at every position. They were the most mobile football team I've ever seen."

USD lost the game 62-13. Smith said he was a bit more skeptical of the Ducks' chances at first.

I went out to two games this year — I watched them play Wyoming and Arizona — and Arizona beat them," he said. "I've got good friends out there and we all talked about (how) they have problems, they aren't going to win very many more games, they've got offensive line problems, they can't defend anybody and they

might not win very many more games. Well here they are, some months later — didn't lose a game, got on a roll and playing in the championship. It's kind of amazing. We're all pretty upset about our prognostication, but excited for what they've done."

Smith said he will be at Monday night's game.

Glenn added that he believes Ducks quarterback Marcus Mariota helps give the team a huge edge.

"After the game, it didn't surprise me they were that good," he said. "The quarterback won the Heisman Trophy. You've got the right guy driving the car — he's taxi-tested, he's had his hand held to the fire and he's responded every year. ... I would have to say, based on what's going on with both teams' quarterbacks, that the advantage would go a little bit to Oregon."

The Oregon teams of Smith's playing days, which never finished with more than four wins, were a far cry from the contender they are today.

"We weren't very good," Smith said. "We had great de-

fense, and our offense couldn't score anything. I played two-thirds of the games and we couldn't score any points because we didn't have the players — but we could defend them."

But one of the biggest differences this year is the addition of a four-team playoff format at the Division I Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS) level that replaces the Bowl Championship Series (BCS). The new format ditches the BCS' computer-based system in favor of a committee that selects and seeds the top four teams in the FBS. In its inaugural year, the committee selected Alabama, Ohio State, Florida State and Oregon and utilized the Rose Bowl and Sugar Bowl as playoff games.

Glenn said while the playoff format is a step forward, it's still not perfect yet.

"I'm all for it — they need a tournament — but I think they're going to have to expand the tournament at some point," he said. "Whether it's eight, 12 or 16 (teams), I don't know, but they will expand it in time. And I think if you get some more teams in there from different

parts of the country, you'll see a lot of fan interest and name a truer champion every year they add more teams."

Not everyone is sold on the new format, however.

"I don't like it," Smith said. "I think they're playing too many games. Every time they play a game now, three or four guys get hurt very seriously. Those kids should get an education and I don't know how they can get an education in football or basketball with how many games they play. ... I think it's all about money and that bothers me. The NCAA penalizes (players) that want to get a little money, but they want to get all of the money."

He added that the best football teams in the country are a bit more clear-cut than some people think.

"They're talking about going to eight teams and 16 teams, there's always going to be somebody left out and somebody who's going to be unhappy they didn't get in," he said. "If you're a football fan, you could look at teams and kind of know who's the best team in the country. Any given

day, that's going to change — I thought Alabama was the best team in the country and that was proven wrong on that day. I still think they're the best team in the country, but on that day, they weren't. I don't need a playoff to tell me who I think the best team is."

Glenn said, from experience, the playoff format brings a whole new element to the college game.

"I come from the levels of Division II and I-AA — which is now Division I FCS," he said. "I've been involved with six or eight playoffs and, man, it's got a terrific atmosphere. Last person out of town, turn out the lights; it's do or die; it's really a crescendo for the teams that are in the playoffs and fighting for their lives to stay alive and win the national championship."

Smith said even in his playing days nearly 50 years ago, controversy was still present at a time when national champs were largely decided by a poll of The Associated Press.

"There's always been a controversy on who's (number) one and two," he said. "Some-

times they had co-champions, but at the end of most years, I think there was a clear-cut number one. Not everybody agreed, but most everybody agreed that's the best team, they're undefeated, they beat everybody and that's fine with me."

Glenn said that the format's prevalence at other levels of football is even more proof that the playoff system is a viable method.

"It's really fabulous if you're involved with it and playing every weekend and going up against the best teams from other parts of the country," he said. "You don't have anybody sitting back with a computer or thinking that the SEC is better than the Big 12 or the Big Ten's better. You play it out and get a true champion. ... This is what college football needed. We've proven it at every level, now they're going to prove it at their level."

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Pipeline

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own review.

"We shouldn't be debating it, we should be building it," said House Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy of California. On the House floor, he read aloud a passage of the administration's veto threat that objected to authorizing the project "despite uncertainty due to ongoing litigation in Nebraska."

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, following the court's decision, renewed his call for Obama to reconsider his promise to veto the measure.

"Today's ruling provides the

perfect opportunity for the president to change his unproductive posture on this jobs project and reverse his veto threat," McConnell said. "The president now has every reason to sign it."

But a White House spokesman said the court's decision changed nothing.

"Regardless of the Nebraska ruling today, the House bill still conflicts with longstanding executive branch procedures regarding the authority of the president and prevents the thorough consideration of complex issues that could bear on U.S. national interests, and if presented to the president, he will veto the bill," said deputy press secretary Eric Schultz.

The House vote marked the 10th time the chamber has voted on legislation to advance the Keystone XL pipeline, an \$8

billion project that would carry tar sands oil from Canada to Gulf Coast refineries along a proposed 1,179-mile route through Montana, South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas and Oklahoma.

Strong as the vote was, it fell short of the two-thirds majority that would be needed to override a presidential veto. And the Senate, though newly controlled by the Republicans, is also likely to fall short of that threshold. The Senate is expected to clear a test vote on an identical bill on Monday.

The proposed pipeline is at the center of a major political fight. Environmental groups have waged protests, including arrests, in an effort to halt what they view as an environmentally destructive project that would unravel the progress the administration has made to

combat climate change. They called on the White House to reject TransCanada Corp.'s permit request outright on Friday after the Nebraska court decision didn't go their way.

The Nebraska Supreme Court let stand a 2012 state law that allows the governor to empower Calgary-based TransCanada to force eastern Nebraska landowners to sell their property for the project.

If the decision had gone the other way, the State Department, which is in charge of evaluating the pipeline's environmental risks, may have had to do additional analysis. A State Department spokeswoman said Friday it would now move forward with its review by seeking comment from eight federal agencies about whether the pipeline is in the national interest.

"No matter the route, as long as the pipeline is carrying tar sands oil it is a global warming disaster and fails the president's climate test," said May Boeve, executive director of 350.org, an advocacy group that has orchestrated many of the protests against the project. "It's time for President Obama to build on his veto threat and reject Keystone XL outright."

Republicans argued on Friday that the pipeline was a jobs creator and critical infrastructure that could further wean the U.S. off Middle East oil. Pointing to a State Department review that found the pipeline would not exacerbate global warming because the oil would otherwise be transported by other means, they said it was a safer and more environmentally sound way to transport

oil.

"The president has been hiding behind the Nebraska court case to block this critical jobs project," said Rep. Fred Upton of Michigan, the top Republican on the House Energy and Commerce Committee. "With that contrived roadblock cleared, the White House is now out of excuses and out of time."

Democrats, meanwhile, kept up their criticism of the project.

Rep. Frank Pallone, D-N.J., the top Democrat on the Energy committee, said building the pipeline would increase reliance on Canadian tar sands oil and reverse the strides Obama has made to reduce pollution blamed for global warming.