

House Votes To Undo Obama Immigration Actions

BY ERICA WERNER
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Shunning a White House veto threat and opposition within their own party, House Republicans approved legislation Wednesday to overturn President Barack Obama's key immigration policies and expose hundreds of thousands of younger immigrants to expulsion from the U.S.

The 236-191 vote came on a broad bill that would provide \$39.7 billion to finance the Homeland Security Department through the rest of the budget year, legislation that lawmakers of both parties said was sorely needed to pay for counterterrorism, cybersecurity and other priorities at a moment when the Paris terror attacks have underscored dire threats.

Democrats accused Republicans of putting that money at risk by attaching veto-bait amendments on immigration, and some Republicans voiced the same concern. But House GOP leaders and most of their rank and file accused Obama in turn of reckless and unconstitutional actions on immigration that had to be answered.

"This executive overreach is an affront to the rule of law and to the Constitution itself," said House Speaker John Boehner of Ohio. "The people made clear that they wanted more accountability from this president, and by our votes here today we will heed their will and we will keep our oath to protect and defend the Constitution."

But Rep. Linda Sanchez, D-Calif., who chairs the Congressional Hispanic Caucus, said the Republicans were simply pandering to the far right.

"Shame on Republicans for attacking the Latino community," Sanchez said. "Republicans are consciously targeting millions of families who work hard, contribute to our communities and are just trying to give their children a chance at the American dream."

One of the immigration amendments, approved 237-190, would undo executive actions that Obama announced in November to provide temporary deportation relief and work permits to some 4 million immigrants in the country illegally, mostly people who



Obama

have children who are citizens or legal permanent residents. The amendment also would cancel earlier directives to immigration agents aimed at giving them discretion in focusing deportations on criminals.

A second amendment would delete Obama's 2012 policy that's granted work permits and stays of deportation to more than 600,000 immigrants who arrived in the U.S. illegally as children under age 16. That measure passed narrowly, 218-209, as 26 of the more moderate Republicans, some representing large Hispanic populations, joined Democrats in opposition.

The underlying bill passed on a mostly party line vote, with 10 Republicans voting "no" and two Democrats voting "yes."

But even with Republicans in control of the Senate, the bill faces tough sledding there. Republicans are six votes shy of the 60-vote majority needed to advance most legislation, and some GOP senators have argued that the Homeland Security bill shouldn't be the vehicle for a contentious debate on immigration.

Within the House GOP, too, there's frustration from some centrist lawmakers that two weeks into a new session of Congress, with a bigger party majority in the House, the most conservative lawmakers are still calling the shots, successfully pushing leaders for a vote to undo the 2012 policy dealing with younger immigrants known as "Dreamers."

"If we were just specifically dealing with the November overreach of the president, you'd have Democrats who'd be voting with us on that piece of it but we've gone well beyond that," said Rep. Jeff Denham, R-Calif. "We're passing a bill for political reasons, a bill that has no ability to pass the Senate."

Before leaving town for a two-day retreat in Hershey, Pennsylvania, Republicans also steered the House to approval of legislation to ease the landmark Dodd-Frank law, which aimed to rein in banks and Wall Street. The new

legislation would give U.S. banks two extra years to ensure that their holdings of certain complex and risky securities don't put them out of compliance with a new banking rule. The Dodd-Frank changes, approved 271-154, also face an Obama veto threat.

Given the growing importance of Latino voters, Wednesday's immigration votes could end up raising questions in the 2016 presidential election for the eventual GOP nominee. Potential candidates weren't touching the issue Wednesday. Requests for comments from former Florida Gov. Jeb Bush and former GOP nominee Mitt Romney went unanswered. At an event in Manchester, New Hampshire, Sen. Rand Paul of Kentucky refused to say if he would back his House colleagues' efforts.

Democrats, on the other hand, were eager to weigh in.

Rep. Luis Gutierrez of Illinois warned Republicans they were igniting "the mobilization of an immigrant community throughout this nation that will be the death knell to the future of your party."

Wednesday's votes were set in motion late last year, after Obama infuriated Republicans by announcing executive moves on immigration not long after the GOP swept the midterm elections. Republicans passed full-year spending bills for most of the government but kept the Homeland Security Department on a short leash in order to revisit the issue when they would be in full control of Congress.

Yet given Obama's veto pen and Senate rules granting significant rights to the minority party, it's not clear that the GOP has much more leverage now than it did before. House and Senate Republican leaders have ruled out a government shutdown or any disruption to Homeland Security funding, so it appears likely that once the House bill is rejected by the Senate or vetoed by the president, the House will have to accept a version with less contentious language on immigration.

Current Homeland Security funding expires at the end of February, so House leaders have given themselves more than a month to find a solution. It's expected to be a topic of debate at the Hershey retreat.

Secret Service Execs Reassigned

WASHINGTON (AP) — Four of the highest-ranking Secret Service executives have been reassigned following a series of security mishaps and scathing reports questioning leadership within the agency, the Secret Service said Wednesday.

The agency's assistant directors for investigations, protective operations, technology and public affairs have all been reassigned within the Secret Service.

"Change is necessary to gain a fresh perspective on how we conduct business," Acting Director Joseph P. Clancy said. "I am certain any of our senior executives will be productive and valued assets either in other positions at the Secret Service or the department."

The four officials are: Dale Pupillo, who led protective operations; Paul Morrissey, who oversaw the agency's investigative mission; Jane Murphy, who was governmental and public affairs chief; and Mark Copanzzi, who headed up technology and the tools for mission support. Details of their new posts were not released Wednesday.

Two American's Climb El Capitan

YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK, Calif. (AP) — A pair of Americans completed what had long been considered the world's most difficult rock climb Wednesday, using only their hands and feet to scale a 3,000-foot vertical wall on El Capitan, the forbidding granite pedestal in Yosemite National Park that has beckoned adventurers for more than half a century.

Tommy Caldwell and Kevin Jorgeson became the first to free-climb the rock formation's Dawn Wall, a feat that many had considered impossible. They used ropes and safety harnesses to catch themselves in case of a fall, but relied entirely on their own strength and dexterity to ascend by grasping cracks as thin as razor blades and as small as dimes.

The effort took 19 days as the two dealt with constant falls and injuries. But their success completes a years-long dream that bordered on obsession for the men.

Caldwell was the first to finish Wednesday afternoon. He waited on a ledge for Jorgeson, who caught up minutes later. The two embraced before Jorgeson pumped his arms in the air and clapped his hands above his head. Then they sat down for a few moments, gathered their gear, changed clothes and hiked to the nearby summit.

Ohio Man Charged With Plotting Attack

CINCINNATI (AP) — A man who plotted to attack the U.S. Capitol and kill government officials inside it and spoke of his desire to support the Islamic State militant group was arrested on Wednesday, the FBI said.

A criminal complaint filed in U.S. District Court in Ohio charges Christopher Lee Cornell with attempting to kill officers and employees of the United States.

Cornell, also known as Raheel Mahrus Ubaydah, was arrested as he took control of a firearm during an undercover FBI operation in southwestern Ohio, the FBI said. The public was never in danger in the investigation, said John Barrios, acting special agent in charge of the FBI's Cincinnati division.

A phone message and an email were left Wednesday for attorney Karen Savir, a federal public defender listed in court records as Cornell's attorney. A working phone number could not be found for Cornell's family members.

The complaint alleges that an FBI informant began supplying agents with information about Cornell last year. The informant and Cornell, who's 20 and lives in Green Township, first began communicating through Twitter in August and then through an instant messaging platform separate from Twitter, according to the complaint.

Study: It Would Cost \$18B To Divert Missouri River To Irrigate Kansas Farms

BY HEATHER HOLLINGSWORTH
Associated Press

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — Building a 360-mile aqueduct to reroute water from the Missouri River to irrigate crops in western Kansas where underwater stores are being exhausted would cost \$18 billion and require an additional \$1 billion each year to operate, a new draft report shows.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers estimates that building an aqueduct to transport excess water from the river would take 20 years and cost \$12.2 billion, plus \$5.8 billion in interest. The estimate doesn't include the costs of permits or restoring habitat lost as a result of the project, which could boost the cost "significantly higher," said John Grothaus, chief of the water planning section for the corps' Kansas City district.

The proposed concrete-lined canal and 15 pump stations would start near White Cloud, along the Nebraska border, and end near Utica. A similar 1982 analysis, undertaken at the request of Congress, estimated construction would cost \$3.7 billion and interest \$4.2 billion.

"Nothing materialized, and it looks like they kicked the can down the road at the very least," Grothaus said.

The Kansas Water Office posted a draft summary, which included the corps' findings, online this month and will present the complete analysis Jan. 29 to an advisory entity called the Kansas Water Authority. A state committee tasked with updating the 1982 analysis asked for the study because water levels are declining in the Ogallala Aquifer, a vast network of underground water locked in the porous limestone deep below the surface in the High Plains region of the U.S., stretching from Wyoming

and South Dakota to the Texas and Oklahoma panhandle regions. It is the primary source of fresh water for the entire area.

Kansas Gov. Sam Brownback has said that Ogallala's storage could be nearly 70 percent spent in 50 years if no changes.

"This is a lot of money," said Kansas Senate Natural Resources Committee Chairman Larry Powell. He estimated that, with the report showing that water from the aqueduct would cost farmers \$450 per-acre foot in today's dollars, it would cost upward of \$90,000 to irrigate 100 acres of corn.

At that price, he asked, "is it going to be feasible to raise corn to feed cattle? It might not be."

The project already has received some pushback, with Missouri Gov. Jay Nixon calling it "ill-advised" in a November 2013 letter to Brownback. Nixon spokesman Scott Holste said in an email Wednesday that the governor's position remained the same.

Earl Lewis, assistant director of the Kansas Water Office, said, he didn't know the chances for the project being pursued and acknowledged that concerns had been raised.

"Anytime you talk about a significant amount of water and you are talking about moving water from one place to another, you are going to create some controversy," Lewis said. "Even the study of looking at it, there is controversy being created with it right now."

But he said that in Western states where water-transfer projects have been completed, the benefits are "significant." The aqueduct, he said, "becomes a policy question. What do we want to see happen in the future? And how do we want to see it happen?"

Paris Gunman's Safe House Could Hold Clues To 4th Attacker

BY JOHN-THOR DAHLBURG
Associated Press

PARIS — Amedy Coulibaly, the gunman who killed four hostages at a Paris kosher supermarket, rented a small suburban house the week before and filled it with an impressive arsenal of late-model weapons, police said Wednesday.

A published report said a search of the house has enabled police to identify a potential fourth attacker as investigators follow the money and supply systems for the three known killers, all of whom died in police raids. Police told The Associated Press as many as six members of the same radical Islamic terror cell may be at large.

"We have put our finger on some extremely dangerous people, men and women," French police union spokesman Christophe Crepin said. "We are really in a war."

Of special interest is the small attached house on a quiet street in the town of Gentilly south of Paris that Coulibaly rented about two weeks ago. French police officials refused to say what has been discovered inside the dwelling, but the newspaper Le Parisien reported detectives from the Paris Criminal Brigade and a special police anti-terrorism unit seized a scooter there that allowed them to identify "a fourth man" who acted as Coulibaly's accomplice.

The newspaper did not identify the man by name, but said he may have shot and seriously wounded a jogger in nearby Fontenay-aux-Roses on Jan. 7, the same day two

friends of Coulibaly, brothers Cherif and Said Kouachi, killed 12 people at the offices of *Charlie Hebdo*.

"The fourth man," who has a lengthy criminal record, may have been involved in that attack, the newspaper reported, adding that he may have already escaped to Syria.

When an AP reporter visited the Gentilly house this week, neighbors said they had noticed nothing out of the ordinary, with one saying the muscular, 5-foot-5 (165 cm) Coulibaly had been a regular at the local weight room.

Officials said the attackers accumulated a veritable arsenal that included three late-model Kalashnikov assault rifles, a rocket-propelled grenade launcher, a machine pistol, smoke grenades and bombs, fragmentation grenades, handgrips and industrial explosives.

In addition to the weapons, investigators are painstakingly following the money trail. Former drug-dealing associates of Coulibaly told AP he was selling marijuana and hashish in the Paris suburbs as recently as a month ago. Multiple French news accounts have said the Kouachi brothers sold knockoff sporting goods made in China.

Crepin said police believe the killers didn't have the resources to bankroll the terrorist operation on their own. Not only was there the cost of weapons, ammunition and equipment to cover, he said, but also money needed to rent suspected hideouts like the one in Gentilly and to pay their living expenses.

"We're dealing with a

well-organized mafia-like structure," Crepin said.

However, Peter Neumann, director of the International Center for the Study of Radicalization, King's College London, said that in keeping with the guidelines laid down in an influential handbook for jihadis published in 2004, he believes the Paris attacks were self-financed.

"They could use credit-card fraud ... even stealing from people," Neumann said. "Their attitude is the whole of society (in Europe) is rotten infidels." A regional French newspaper has unearthed one additional revenue source: a loan for 6,000 euros (around \$7,000) that Coulibaly obtained Dec. 4 from a consumer-lending company headquartered in northern France. In a video made public after all three terrorists had been shot dead by police, Coulibaly said he'd given the brothers several thousand euros so they could buy gear.

But two U.S. intelligence officials cast doubt on that account on Wednesday, saying they doubt that the Islamic State-affiliated Coulibaly coordinated in advance with the Kouachi brothers, who said they were acting on behalf of al-Qaeda in Yemen.

Al-Qaida in Yemen claimed responsibility for the brothers' attack on Wednesday, but it had been unclear which brother had made that connection. On Wednesday, the U.S. officials said Cherif Kouachi is believed to have gone to train in Yemen in 2011 but used his brother Said's ID. The officials spoke only on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to be quoted discussing a matter under investigation.

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