

Obama, Cameron Pledge A Unified Effort To Fight Terrorism

BY JOSH LEDERMAN
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — In a show of trans-Atlantic unity, President Barack Obama and British Prime Minister David Cameron pledged a joint effort on Friday to fight domestic terrorism following deadly attacks in France. They also strongly urged the U.S. Congress to hold off on implementing new sanctions on Iran in the midst of nuclear talks.

Cameron's visit to Washington came one week after 17 people were killed in attacks in France, heightening fears in Europe and the United States about the spread of terrorism.

"This is a problem that causes great heartache and tragedy and destruction," Obama said in a joint news conference with Cameron. "But it is one that ultimately we are going to defeat."

The prime minister was blistering in his assessment of those responsible for the attacks, calling them part of a "poisonous, fanatical, death cult."

"We know what we're up against, and we know how we will win," Cameron said. He spoke as British police chiefs announced that the Paris attack on a kosher supermarket and anti-Semitic rhetoric from extremists had led them to study ways to increase protection for the Jewish community.

As Obama and Cameron met at the White House, representatives from their countries were joining negotiating partners for another round of nuclear talks with Iran. Both leaders strenuously urged Congress to avoid ordering new economic sanctions on Iran in the midst of those negotiations, arguing



OLIVIER DOULIERY/ABACA PRESS/TNS
British Prime Minister David Cameron speaks during a joint news conference with President Barack Obama at the East Room of the White House Friday in Washington, D.C.

that doing so could upend the delicate diplomacy.

"Why is it that we would have to take actions that might jeopardize the possibility of getting a deal over the next 60 or 90 days?" asked Obama, who said he would veto legislation if it reached his desk. "What is it precisely that's going to be accomplished?"

Negotiators have set a March deadline for reaching a framework that would address the international concerns about Iran's nuclear program.

Cameron said he had called some senators Friday to make the case for holding off on new penalties.

The prime minister arrived in Washington with a request for Obama to help persuade U.S. technology companies to give governments more access to encrypted communications that terrorists may use to plot attacks. Cameron's policy proposals have stoked

concern on both sides of the Atlantic about the prospect of security efforts encroaching on privacy, particularly in the wake of the 2013 spying disclosures by former NSA contractor Edward Snowden.

"As technology develops, as the world moves on, we should try to avoid the safe havens that would otherwise be created for terrorists to talk," Cameron said.

Obama didn't take a position on Cameron's proposal, but he did say it was important to be able to keep tabs on terrorists who are using social media and the Internet.

"When we have the ability to track that, in a way that is legal, conforms with due process, rule of law and oversight, then that's a capability we have to preserve," Obama said.

American Internet companies, concerned about keeping the trust of individual and commercial customers

around the world, have sharply criticized government eavesdropping programs revealed by Snowden, the former NSA analyst. They have also publicly supported legislation aimed at restricting future surveillance.

In addition, Google, Facebook and other companies have expanded their own encryption programs to protect customers' communications in the wake of the Snowden revelations.

Beyond security issues, Obama and Cameron also discussed the state of the global economy. While U.S. growth is on the rise and unemployment is falling, the White House is concerned that slowing growth in the European Union could have an impact here.

Cameron acknowledged those worries, saying the U.S. and Britain "have to deal with the warning lights flashing in the global economy."

Success Of Obama's New Cuba Policy Depends Partly On Hotel Hand Towels

BY MICHAEL WEISSENSTEIN
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Associated Press

HAVANA — The success of President Barack Obama's new Cuba policy depends partly on hotel hand towels.

Not just hand towels, but working air conditioning, breakfast waffles and the hundreds of other amenities that American tourists will demand when they flood to Cuba in numbers that travel experts expect to double this year, thanks to the loosening of travel restrictions on Friday.

U.S.-based Cuba travel companies say there's simply no more room in the handful of top-end Cuban hotels that meet international standards. That means that if visitors come in numbers as great as expected, they will have to find lodging either in grim, lower-end state facilities or one of the most vibrant parts of Cuba's small, new private business sector: family-run guest houses that offer independent sources of private income to thousands of Cubans.

That scenario is exactly what Obama said he hopes to achieve. When he announced the policy on Dec. 17, the president said that the U.S. wants to be "a partner in making the lives of ordinary Cubans a little bit easier, more free, more prosperous."

The first test of the new

U.S. approach may come down to where new American travelers choose to lay their heads at night.

"A significant increase in U.S. travelers would overwhelm the system and overwhelm the availability of the Cubans to keep tabs and keep controls on these travelers," a U.S. official involved in the execution of the new policy told The Associated Press on Friday. "The hotels aren't going to be able to handle it. You're going to see a spillover into the private sector, which is a good thing."

The official spoke on condition of anonymity due to lack of authorization to speak publicly about the new policy.

Juan Hernandez Rabelo, 65, is taking English lessons three times a week to help him communicate with future clients at Casa Vitrales, an immaculately restored high-end colonial guest house he runs with his son in Old Havana.

"This is going to help our business and the country," Hernandez said of Obama's new policy. "It opens new opportunities for guest houses to absorb a greater number of tourists."

The new Treasury Department rules that went into effect Friday eliminate a burdensome and costly requirement for specially licensed tour groups to obtain federal permits to take U.S. travelers to Cuba on trips with

educational itineraries that needed approval in Washington.

Most U.S. travelers still will be required to go on supervised group trips, but now virtually any U.S. company or organization can offer such trips without the paperwork and inspections that discouraged past expansion of travel to Cuba. Some tour operators, already seeing unprecedented interest in legal travel to Cuba, expect some tourists to simply ignore the restrictions.

Companies that have been organizing travel to Cuba for years say they expect legal travel to Cuba to at least double this year, from a figure of roughly 90,000 American visitors annually over recent years.

And any significant surge, they say, is guaranteed to overwhelm Cuba's travel infrastructure.

"Even with 90,000 Americans going a year it's a nightmare to get the hotel rooms," said Collin Laverty, owner of Cuba Educational Travel. He said his company he's seen booking double over the last three weeks, to about 1,000. He said that he, too, expected Cubans to begin investing in more guest houses that are legitimate lodging options for visiting Americans.

"You've already started to see that," he said. "In the last few years, all of a sudden you've seen people who real-

ize if I invest a little more, increase the water pressure, then you're actually competing with a four-star hotel."

Cuban state authorities say they are confident that the country can handle a surge in tourists and that they have already been getting ready for at least 1 million Americans a year, a number they expect to come after the U.S. embargo is ended by Congress.

"The country has enough hotel capacity to absorb an increase of this magnitude. We've prepared ourselves for that day," said Jose Manuel Bisbe, president of Havanatur, one of Cuba's main state-run tourism companies.

U.S. experts say that may be overly optimistic, particularly because the U.S. ban on pure tourism means the most developed high-end destination, the Varadero beach resort about 80 miles east of Havana, effectively remains off-limits to U.S. visitors. And even Bisbe acknowledged that some of Cuba's current offerings are sub-par.

"In terms of quality of service it's certain that we have a series of problems that we have to solve," he said.

The restrictions on Cuban travel have made the island either a surreptitious destination for young people who go illegally through Canada or Mexico, or an expensive, boutique product for older and better-off Americans.

Earth Warming Like A Broken Record

WASHINGTON (AP) — For the third time in a decade, the globe sizzled to the hottest year on record, federal scientists announced Friday.

Both the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and NASA calculated that in 2014 the world had its hottest year in 135 years of record-keeping. Earlier, the Japanese weather agency and an independent group out of University of California Berkeley also measured 2014 as the hottest on record.

NOAA said 2014 averaged 58.24 degrees Fahrenheit (14.58 degrees Celsius), 1.24 degrees (0.69 degrees Celsius) above the 20th-century average.

But NASA, which calculates temperatures slightly differently, put 2014's average temperature at 58.42 degrees Fahrenheit (14.68 degrees Celsius) which is 1.22 degrees (0.68 degrees Celsius) above the average of the years 1951-1980.

Earth broke NOAA records set in 2010 and 2005. The last time the Earth set an annual NOAA record for cold was in 1911.

Man Accused Of Shooting Three People

COLFAX, Wash. (AP) — A man suspected of fatally shooting three people — including his mother — before leading authorities on a high-speed chase is fighting extradition back to Idaho.

John Lee's decision Friday to not waive the formal extradition process means Idaho Gov. C.L. "Butch" Otter will have to request extradition from Washington Gov. Jay Inslee. Lee faces three counts of first-degree murder and one count of first-degree attempted murder in Idaho.

Lee, 29, carried out the shootings on Jan. 10, authorities say.

"He's not going to waive extradition at this time," defense attorney Steve Martonick said Friday.

The short hearing was held in a packed courtroom that included friends of the victims. Lee, who remains on suicide watch, said little other than to plead not guilty to the eluding charge, the result of the chase that occurred after the slayings. Lee has offered no motive for the killings, Whitman County Prosecutor Denis Tracy said.

Police: Teenage Sweethearts Disappear

LEITCHFIELD, Ky. (AP) — Police say two teenage sweethearts have blazed a trail of crime across the South, leaving in their path a string of stolen vehicles and pilfered checks and stirring concern about their increasingly bold behavior.

The 18-year-old and his 13-year-old girlfriend — who had apparently convinced the boy and his family that she was 19 — have so far eluded capture and are now believed to be cruising around in a stolen truck with two guns.

"There's going to come a time when we're not going to see him as an 18-year-old kid," said Norman Chaffins, sheriff in Grayson County, Kentucky, where the pair disappeared nearly two weeks ago.

"We're going to see him as someone who's stolen three vehicles with two handguns in them, and the outcome is not going to be good for either one of them if they don't turn themselves in."

Dalton Hayes and Cheyenne Phillips vanished Jan. 3 from their small hometown in western Kentucky, the sheriff said. Since then, authorities believe the two have traveled to South Carolina and Georgia.

Visa Waivers Fears To Be Addressed

WASHINGTON (AP) — Homeland Security Secretary Jeh Johnson acknowledged concerns Friday that terrorists might use the visa waiver program to enter the United States, and said his department is taking steps to address weaknesses in the program.

Johnson told an aviation industry luncheon that he doesn't want to discard the program, which makes it easier for Americans to travel to friendly countries and for citizens of those countries to travel to the U.S. "It represents an important element of lawful commerce between and among our international partners," he said.

But he noted that some of those countries also have citizens or legal residents who have left to fight or train with terrorist groups in the Middle East, Asia or Africa, then returned home intent on violence. For example, some citizens or residents of France and Germany have traveled to the Middle East to fight or train with al-Qaida or Islamic State militants. The concern is that those fighters will return to their home countries and from there travel to the U.S.

Huge Crowd Waiting For Pope Francis

TACLOBAN, Philippines (AP) — Pope Francis arrived in the typhoon-hit Philippine city of Tacloban on Saturday, where he was met by a huge crowd drenched from waiting for hours in the rain.

The pope will celebrate a Mass in an open field near the airport, and have lunch with survivors of Typhoon Haiyan, the November 2013 storm that leveled entire villages and left more than 7,300 people dead or missing.

A police official estimated the crowd at 150,000 and said tens of thousands more are lined up outside. Wearing plastic raincoats, the festive crowd clapped in unison to blaring music welcoming the pope, cheering when they heard the pope's plane land.

Villagers hung banners welcoming the pope from the bow of a steel-hulled cargo ship that smashed houses when it was swept in by Haiyan and remains on shore.

"Pope Francis cannot give us houses and jobs, but he can send our prayers to God," said Ernesto Hengzon, 62. "I'm praying for good health and for my children too. I am old and sickly. I'm praying that God will stop these big storms. We cannot take any more of it. We have barely recovered. Many people are still down there."

they are 100 percent safe."

According to a press release issued by the school, if you arrive at the school during a time when the doors are locked, you will need to press the green bell button. This will signify to the office personnel that someone is at the door and need to be buzzed in.

"At the elementary site (at St. Benedict Catholic Church) where we also have Boys and Girls Club (before and after school), the system will be used, as well," Mulhair said. "The academy personnel will have a screen that allows them to see who is trying to enter the school and will be more secure."

To follow Shauna Marlette on Twitter go to www.twitter.com/shauna.marlette. To comment on this story go to www.yankton.net.

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tem at the middle school the week before Christmas break and the one at the elementary facility the week we got back from Christmas break. It helps that the grant we wrote was not extravagant; it covered only what we needed."

He added that receiving a fully funded grant and having local vendors able to do the installation made the process of installing the new security systems run very smooth.

Mulhair said the response to the new system at the school facilities has been positive.

"It is a good inconvenience," he said. "It is not a problem for the kids; When the door is locked for the most part they are already in the building. I think they feel confident knowing that

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to allow same-sex couples to marry.

"The people of every state should remain free to affirm marriage as the union of a man and a woman in their laws," said Austin R. Ni-mocks, senior counsel for the anti-gay marriage group Alliance Defending Freedom.

Same-sex couples can marry in 36 states and the District of Columbia.

That number is nearly double what it was just three months ago, when the justices initially declined to hear gay marriage appeals from five states seeking to preserve their bans on same-sex marriage. The effect of the court's action in October was to make final several pro-gay rights rulings in the lower courts.

Now there are just 14 states in which same-sex couples cannot wed. The court's decision to get involved is another marker of the rapid change that has redefined societal norms in the space of a generation.

The court will be weighing in on major gay rights issues for the fourth time in 27 years. In the first of those, in 1986, the court upheld Georgia's anti-sodomy law in a devastating defeat for gay rights advocates.

But the three subsequent rulings, all written by Justice Anthony Kennedy, were major victories for gay men and lesbians. In its most recent case in 2013, the court struck down part of a federal anti-gay marriage law in a decision that has paved the way for a wave of lower court rulings across the country in favor of same-sex marriage rights.

James Esseks, leader of the American Civil Liberties

Union's same-sex marriage efforts, recalled the first same-sex marriage that came to the court more than 40 years ago from Minnesota. There, the justices dismissed a gay couple's appeal in a single sentence.

"It did not go well because the country wasn't ready yet. But the country is ready for the freedom to marry today," Esseks said.

The court is extending the time it usually allots for argument from an hour to two-and-a-half hours. The justices will consider two related questions. The first is whether the Constitution requires states to issue marriage licenses to same-sex couples. The other is whether states must recognize same-sex marriages performed elsewhere.

The appeals before the court come from gay and lesbian plaintiffs in Kentucky, Michigan, Ohio and Tennessee. The federal appeals