

Hostages' Families Plea For Their Lives

AMMAN, Jordan (AP) — The father of a Jordanian fighter pilot and the wife of a Japanese journalist held by the Islamic State group pleaded for their loved ones' lives after a possible prisoner swap wasn't carried out by a deadline of sunset Thursday.

The extremists had demanded that Jordan release a female al-Qaida prisoner from death row, and they purportedly threatened in an audio message to kill the airman if she was not freed by the deadline.

After a showdown in the Middle East, there was no word on the fate of Lt. Muath al-Kaseasbeh and journalist Kenji Goto, and the families' agonizing wait dragged on.

"We received no assurances from anyone that he is alive," Jawdat al-Kaseasbeh, a brother of the pilot, told The Associated Press. "We have no clue about where the negotiations stand now. We are waiting, just waiting."

The possibility of a swap was raised Wednesday when Jordan said it was willing to trade Sajida al-Rishawi, the al-Qaida prisoner, for the pilot.

Gas Truck Explosion Wrecks Hospital

MEXICO CITY (AP) — Injured and bleeding, mothers carrying infants fled from a maternity hospital shattered by a powerful gas explosion Thursday, and rescuers swung sledgehammers to break through fallen concrete hunting for others who might be trapped.

At least two people were killed and more than 60 injured, Mexico City Mayor Miguel Angel Mancera said at a news conference. The known dead were a woman and a child. Officials earlier said at least four people had been killed.

About 75 percent of the hospital collapsed, officials said, and the priority was to continue digging in search of any trapped survivors. Authorities said they had confirmed that none of the children registered in the hospital were missing, but said it was possible that others who had come for appointments could be trapped.

The city's health secretary, Armando Ahued, said the adult victim was a 25-year-old woman and the child was a newborn, between 2 and 3 weeks old. He said 21 babies were injured, and seven of those and seven adults were in serious condition after being rushed to other hospitals.

Thirty-five-year-old Felicitas Hernandez wept as she frantically questioned people outside the wrecked building, hoping for word of her month-old baby, who had been hospitalized since birth with respiratory problems.

Militants Attack Egypt Security Forces

EL-ARISH, Egypt (AP) — Militants struck more than a dozen army and police targets in the restive Sinai Peninsula with simultaneous attacks involving a car bomb and mortar rounds on Thursday, killing at least 26 security officers.

An Army spokesman immediately blamed former Islamist President Mohammed Morsi's Muslim Brotherhood of orchestrating the attack, which killed 25 Army soldiers and one policeman.

The wide-ranging attacks late Thursday required a previously unseen level of coordination. At least one car bomb was set off outside a military base, while mortars were simultaneously fired at the base, toppling some buildings and leaving soldiers buried under the debris, officials said.

Other attacks included mortar rounds fired at a hotel, a police club and more than a dozen checkpoints, officials said.

The militants struck the Northern Sinai provincial capital el-Arish, the nearby town of Sheik Zuwayid and the town of Rafah bordering Gaza.

Obama Calls For Spending Surge

BY JOSH LEDERMAN
AND ANDREW TAYLOR
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Declaring an end to "mindless austerity," President Barack Obama called for a surge in government spending Thursday, and asked Congress to throw out the sweeping budget cuts both parties agreed to four years ago when deficits were spiraling out of control.

Obama's proposed \$74 billion in added spending — about 7 percent — would be split about evenly between defense programs and the domestic side of the budget. Although he's sought before to reverse the "sequester" spending cuts, Obama's pitch in this year's budget comes with the added oomph of an improving economy and big recent declines in federal deficits.

Taking a defiant tone, Obama vowed not to stand on the sidelines as he laid out his opening offer to Congress during remarks in Philadelphia, where House Democrats were gathered for their annual retreat.

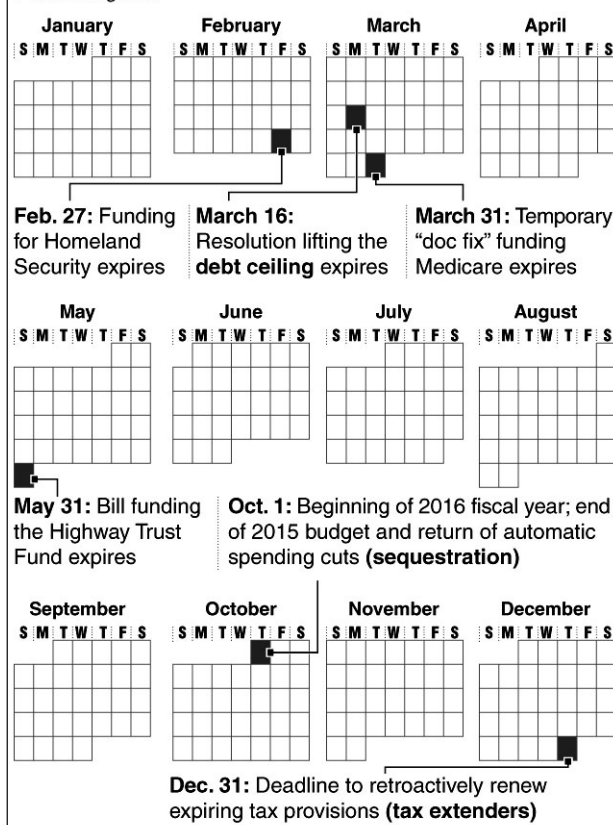
"We need to stand up and go on offensive and not be defensive about what we believe in," Obama said. Mocking Republicans for their leaders' newfound interest in poverty and the middle class, he questioned whether they would back it up with substance when it mattered.

Republicans promise to produce a balanced budget blueprint this spring even as they worry about Pentagon spending. The Senate's No. 2 Republican, John Cornyn of Texas, dismissed the Obama proposals as "happy talk." And Sen. Pat Toomey of Pennsylvania chided the president for "abandoning spending discipline."

GOP lawmakers are focused primarily on reversing restraints on military spending, while Democrats and Obama are seeking new domestic dollars for education, research, health care and infrastructure. Republicans argue that spending more in so many areas would undo the hard-fought reductions in the

Federal budget deadlines

Here's a look at some of the upcoming fiscal deadlines for the 114th Congress.



Graphic: Tribune News Service
Source: Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget

country's annual deficit. They also oppose many of the tax hikes Obama has proposed to pay for the increased spending.

Neither party has tender feelings for the sequester, which cut bluntly across the entire federal budget and was originally designed more as a threat than as an actual spending plan. With the economy gaining steam while deficits decline, both parties have signaled they want to roll some of the cuts back. A bipartisan deal struck previously softened the blow by about a third for the 2014 and 2015 budget years.

Both parties are generally inclined to boost spending for the military, which is wrestling with threats from terrorism and extremist groups and has been strained by budget limits and two long wars. "At what point do we, the institution and our nation, lose our soldiers' trust?" asked Gen. Ray-

mond Odierno, the Army chief of staff, at a Senate hearing Wednesday.

Yet among congressional Republicans, there's no unanimity about where more Pentagon funds should come from — a division within the GOP that Obama appeared eager to exploit.

Some House Republicans want to cut domestic agency budgets to free money for the military — an approach that failed badly for Republicans two years ago. Some are eyeing cuts to so-called mandatory programs such as Social Security and Medicare, while others want to ignore the spending restraints altogether.

"Whatever it takes within reason to get this problem fixed is what I'm willing to do," said Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., adding that he would be willing to consider more tax revenue "just to get the damn thing done."

The budget constraints

stem from the hard-fought budget and debt bill of August 2011 that both parties negotiated and Obama signed into law. The threat of across-the-board cuts to virtually every federal agency was supposed to force Democrats and Republicans to compromise on smarter, less onerous spending cuts, but the measure kicked in when a supercommittee failed to reach an overall fiscal deal.

The White House said Obama's budget would be "fully paid for" by cutting inefficient programs and closing tax loopholes — particularly a trust fund provision the White House has been eyeing. Spokesman Josh Earnest said that and a few other tax tweaks would not only pay for Obama's increased spending but also offset middle-class tax cuts the president wants to create or expand.

At the same time, Earnest was quick to concede, "No president has ever put forward a budget with the expectation that Congress is going to pass it in its current form."

Details of what Obama will ask for in his budget began to trickle out ahead of the budget's formal release Monday. The Interior Department announced Obama would seek \$1 billion for Native American schools, while Vice President Joe Biden said the budget would call for another \$1 billion in aid for Central American nations.

At the Pentagon, Obama's increases would help pay for next-generation F-35 fighter jets, for ships and submarines and for long-range Air Force tankers. On the domestic side, Obama has proposed two free years of community college and new or expanded tax credits for child care and spouses who both work.

In his meeting with House Democrats, Obama also insisted that Republicans must not be allowed to use a funding bill for the Homeland Security Department to try to quash his executive actions on immigration. The White House has called that approach a "dangerous view" that would risk national security.

Yellowstone Oil Spills Fuel Arguments Over Keystone Line

BY MATTHEW BROWN
Associated Press

BILLINGS, Mont. — Oil pipeline accidents have become increasingly frequent in the U.S. as Congress presses the Obama administration to approve the Keystone XL pipeline — a project that would pass near the spot where 30,000 gallons of crude spilled into Montana's Yellowstone River earlier this month.

The Montana pipeline breach temporarily fouled a city's water supply and emerged as the latest in a string of spills to highlight ongoing problems with maintenance of the nation's 61,000 miles of crude oil pipelines.

An Associated Press review of government records shows accident numbers growing steadily since 2009, reversing a decade-long decline.

After the U.S. Senate voted 62-36 Thursday to approve Keystone, Democratic Sen. Maria Cantwell of Washington state cited the increase in spills in calling for President Barack Obama veto the measure. Yet in the politically charged de-

bate over Keystone, its detractors aren't the only ones seizing on the Yellowstone spill. So are lawmakers who support the project.

North Dakota Democrat Sen. Heidi Heitkamp said building it was preferable to using older pipelines such as the one in the Yellowstone spill, which was installed in 1967.

"To the extent that we have problems with spills, it's with aging infrastructure," Heitkamp said. "Keystone is going to be state-of-the-art."

U.S. Department of Transportation records show at least 73 pipeline-related accidents in 2014 — an 87 percent increase over 2009. Because of a lag in reporting by companies, the 2014 figure still could rise.

The tally includes accidents in which someone was killed or hospitalized, five or more barrels of oil were released, a fire or explosion occurred, or costs from the accident topped \$50,000.

The increase came as surging domestic oil production boosted crude shipments by pipeline by about 20 percent, to 8.3 billion barrels annually, between 2009 and

2013, the most recent year available.

Meanwhile, pipes that were put in the ground decades ago are wearing out, said Rebecca Craven, program director for the advocacy group Pipeline Safety Trust.

Almost half the pipeline-related accidents since 2009 involved lines or equipment installed more than 40 years ago, according to records on more than 250 accidents that were reviewed by The AP and included age information.

Pipeline industry representatives say the increase in accidents is less straightforward than the federal data suggest.

An industry examination of crude oil and other hazardous-liquid accidents in 2013 showed that in two-thirds of cases, the spill did not leave the responsible company's property, said John Stoodly, vice president of the Association of Oil Pipe Lines. Most of the accidents involved fewer than five barrels, or 210 gallons.

The recent Montana spill was the second in less than four years on the Yellowstone, a largely untamed river that flows from Yellow-

stone National Park and across the breadth of Montana before feeding into the Missouri River in North Dakota.

The accident happened after a 120-foot section of Bridger Pipeline LLC's Poplar Pipeline became exposed beneath the river, increasing its vulnerability to underwater debris.

The 12-inch steel line had been at least 8 feet beneath the river as recently as 2011, when a survey was performed in response to an earlier Exxon Mobil pipeline break beneath the Yellowstone.

For Keystone, project sponsor TransCanada plans to drill the 36-inch pipeline dozens of feet beneath major rivers to protect it from floodwaters or other outside forces.

Keystone's critics say no pipeline is entirely safe.

"You know what they say about pipelines? There's only two kinds: The ones that are leaking, and the ones that are going to leak," said Dena Hoff, a farmer and rancher whose property fronts the Yellowstone at the site of the Poplar Pipeline spill.

Keystone would move up to 830,000 barrels of oil a day. A break in the line could dwarf the recent Montana accident, on a line with a capacity of just 42,000 barrels daily.

TransCanada says Keystone would be buried deeply enough — at least 25 feet beneath the Yellowstone — to avoid even a 500-year flood event, Keystone spokesman Shawn Howard said. Precautions at 13 other major water crossings would be similar.

Yet even with the latest technologies, protecting pipelines beneath rivers presents challenges.

In 2011, days after flooding across the Northern Plains broke the Exxon pipe, U.S. Geological Survey researchers found "scour holes" as deep as 53 feet along the Missouri River.

While engineers have equations they can use to forecast locations where floodwaters may eat away at a river bottom, the USGS' Brenda Densmore said the dynamic nature of rivers can make them unpredictable.

"It's nature," Densmore said. "Is it going to follow the equation? I don't know for sure."

Hay

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to some of the largest growers in the United States," she said. "Besides the producers, we have exporters, brokers and distributors."

The Freeburgs have visited 49 states — Alaska is the exception — in the course of their work. They have traveled the continental United States by car, providing them with a bird's-eye view of the people and land that produce hay and other crops.

The nation's hay supply is used for a variety of purposes, Amy said.

"The vast majority of hay is grown on the west side of the Mississippi River," she said. "We have so much of our hay that moves for feed to the east side of the United States. The hay goes for beef and dairy, the horse industry and also for zoos."

The Freeburgs ship nearly all of their hay to the eastern United States because most of the hay headed west goes for export, Amy said.

In that respect, the National Hay Association focuses its efforts on

promoting foreign trade, she said.

"One of the major markets is in Asia," she said. "They are feeding more livestock in Japan and China, but they don't have the acres for growing forages."

Hay exporters have run into a problem with Asian shipments, as labor issues have created a logjam, Amy said.

"The longshoremen don't have a contract on the West Coast, which really slows things down," she said. "For the exporters, that's detrimental to their business. It really diminishes the rate at which they can come and go."

The NHA isn't a lobbying organization, but it does work with the U.S. Department of Agriculture on international market development, Amy said.

As a couple, the Freeburgs are no stranger to foreign markets. Gary spoke in Australia on behalf of the forage industry, and they were part of the South Dakota Ag and Rural Leadership delegation that traveled to Europe.

As part of their support for the hay industry, the Freeburgs have signed up as part of a 10-person team staffing the NHA booth at every World Dairy Expo

since 1990. The five-day event is held in early October in Madison, Wisconsin.

"We have 60,000 people who come by the booth (during the course of the expo), and we see people from all over the country," Amy said. "It's sort of like old home days. You see everyone back. We see people from Wisconsin, Iowa, Illinois, Minnesota, Indiana, Pennsylvania and other states. And we have international visitors who inquire about hay."

Overall, she foresees a bright future for agriculture. She pointed to the push for growth in the South Dakota's dairy production and the cultivation of other new markets.

In addition, Freeburg Hay appears on track for another generation as sons Jory and

John have joined the operation.

"When the rest of the country takes a hit and is floundering, ag does better and stays on more of an even keel," Amy said. "The world has more people all the time, and you have to feed those people."

To learn more about the National Hay Association, visit online at www.national-hay.org.

To contact the Freeburgs, visit online at www.freeburghay.com, call their office at (605) 267-4426 or email freeburghay@iw.net.

You can follow Randy Dockendorf on Twitter at twitter.com/RDockendorf. Discuss this story at www.yankton.net.

Thank You!
Emil Beran and his family would like to thank all those who sent cards or other expressions of congratulations for Emil's 100th birthday. Thanks also to all those who joined us to help celebrate his special day. Your thoughtfulness was greatly appreciated.
~Emil Beran and family

Thank You
Dear friends and family:
We are eternally grateful for the outpouring of sympathy, prayers and support that has been given to our family the past few weeks since we lost our daughter and granddaughter, Hali. The response to an event such as this truly reinforces why it is so great to live and work here. There is no substitute for the great, caring people in Crofton, Yankton, Bloomfield and the surrounding communities. We will never be able to repay all who responded in our time of need. Please know your presence was noticed, kind words were heard and the hugs and prayers were felt. Special thanks to Wendell and Delores Strom and Laurie Bailey for taking care of our home and chores. We would also like to extend a heartfelt thank you to Greg Brockhaus and Brockhaus Funeral Homes, Rev Ron Johnson and our church family at First United Methodist in Yankton for your comfort and professionalism during this time. Thanks also to First United Methodist Church in Bloomfield for providing food and warmth for fellowship following the grave side services. We are truly grateful to have so many friends and relatives to garner strength from now and always. May God Bless and keep you all.
Todd, Jill, Elijah and Hannah Strom,
Barb Strom, Mary Hanson

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