

# Obama Proposes 'Precision Medicine' To End One-Size-Fits-All

BY LAURAN NEERGAARD  
AP Medical Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Barack Obama is calling for an investment to move away from one-size-fits-all-medicine, toward an approach that tailors treatment to your genes.

The White House said Friday that Obama will ask Congress for \$215 million for what he's calling a precision medicine initiative. The ambitious goal: Scientists will assemble databases of about a million volunteers to study their genetics — and other factors such as their environments and the microbes that live in their bodies — to learn how to individualize care.

As Obama put it in his State of the Union address, he wants the U.S. "to lead a new era of medicine, one that delivers the right treatment at the right time."

Also called personalized medicine, this is a hot but challenging field in medical research. It's yielded some early results.

For example, it's becoming more common for patients with certain cancers to undergo molecular testing in choosing which drug is their best match. People with a rare form of cystic fibrosis now can choose a drug designed specifically to target the genetic defect causing their illness. Some medical centers, such as the Mayo Clinic, have opened "individualized medicine clinics."

But only recently has the cost of ge-



OLIVIER DOULIERY/ABACA PRESS/TNS  
U.S. President Barack Obama speaks at a event to promote a new health care program by approving \$215 million for a Precision Medicine Initiative designed to help doctors tailor treatments to the individual characteristics of their patients in the East Room of the White House Friday in Washington, D.C.

nomics sequencing dropped enough, and the computer power of medicine increased, to make it possible for large-scale pursuit of the approach, said Dr. Francis Collins, director of the National Institutes of Health, which will lead the initiative.

The hope is to "harness the power of science to find individualized health solutions," Collins said.

In the short term, precision medicine holds the most promise for cancer because scientists already know a lot about the molecular signatures of different tumors, Collins said.

Details of the initiative still are being worked out, but the NIH plans to use some large genomic studies already under way as well as new volunteers, he said.

# Bomb Blast At Shiite Muslim Mosque In Pakistan Kills At Least 56

BY REBECCA SANTANA AND ZARAR KHAN  
Associated Press

ISLAMABAD — A bomb blast ripped through a Shiite mosque in southern Pakistan as worshippers gathered for Friday prayers, killing at least 56 people and wounding dozens more, in the deadliest act of anti-Shiite violence in two years.

The attack compounds Pakistan's security challenge to contain a surge in militancy following last month's killing of 150 people, mostly children, at a Peshawar school.

The militant Sunni group Jundallah claimed responsibility for Friday's bombing in the city of Shikarpur in Sindh province, 500 kilometers (310 miles) north of the port city of Karachi.

That area of Pakistan has suffered comparatively little violence in contrast to the northwestern tribal areas bordering Afghanistan and in Karachi. Friday's bloodshed raised fears that extremists could be gaining a foothold in the region.

Hadi Baksh Zardari, the deputy commissioner of Shikarpur district, said 56 had died and 31 were hospitalized. Dr. Shaukat Ali Memon, director of the hospital in Shikarpur, appealed on Pakistan's state television for residents to donate blood.

Pakistani television



showed residents and worshippers frantically ferrying the dead and wounded to the hospital. Local media reported that parts of the roof had collapsed on the worshippers, and some people had been trapped inside.

Amid the chaos following the explosion, victims were shuttled to the hospital on motorcycles and rickshaws, according to hospital official Imtiaz Hussain.

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif condemned the violence and called it a suicide bombing, but Zardari and other officials said they were still investigating the cause.

"Explosive experts and police are still debating whether it was a planted bomb or a suicide attack due to conflicting evidence on either side," Zardari said.

Jundallah spokesman Fahad Mahsud claimed re-

sponsibility for the attack in a telephone call to The Associated Press, but gave no details about how it was committed. The militant group previously has claimed responsibility for attacks on Shiites and other religious minorities, including a 2013 double suicide bombing of an Anglican church in Peshawar that killed 85 people.

Many Sunni extremists do not consider Shiites, who represent 10 percent to 20 percent of Pakistan's population, to be true Muslims. Sunni militants in Pakistan have bombed Shiite mosques, killed Shiite pilgrims traveling to neighboring Iran and assassinated Shiite religious figures and community leaders.

Friday's death toll was the worst against Shiites since January 2013, when a bomb in the neighboring province of Baluchistan killed 81 people in a Shiite area of Quetta. Human rights groups have faulted the government and security services for failing to protect Shiites adequately or pursuing those responsible with sufficient effort.

While Karachi has been the site of repeated bombings blamed on militant groups such as the Pakistani Taliban, much of the rest of Sindh province has been much more peaceful — but experts warn this could be changing rapidly.

An American think tank,

the United States Institute of Peace, reported earlier this week that sectarian groups targeting Shiites are building a power base in the traditionally harmonious north.

"The province is at a tipping point. Extremist groups are increasingly active in the central and northern districts, disrupting the pluralistic culture that has long defined the province," the report found.

In July 2013, suicide bombers and gunmen attacked a compound in Sukkur that houses government agencies including the regional offices of the military's powerful spy agency, the Inter-Services Intelligence, killing three people and wounding dozens more.

The attack Friday comes less than two months after the Peshawar school attack by the Pakistani Taliban shocked the country and spurred the government and military to step up their campaign against militants. The military has been hammering militants in the country's northwest, and the prime minister suspended a moratorium on the death penalty in cases related to terrorism.

Military courts also are being given responsibility for handling terrorism-related cases in a bid to speed up prosecutions. Terrorism cases often have stalled in civilian courts because of weak investigations and the intimidation of witnesses and judges, experts say.

## Romney Bows Out Of 2016 Campaign

WASHINGTON (AP) — Mitt Romney ended his roller-coaster return to presidential politics on Friday, declaring his party would be better served by the "next generation of Republican leaders" and concluding his unlikely comeback as suddenly as it began.

Aides said it was a deeply personal and even painful decision for the 2012 Republican presidential nominee. He insisted he could win the next election if he ran, but his announcement followed a three-week fact-finding effort that revealed significant resistance to a third campaign.

"I believe that one of our next generation of Republican leaders, one who may not be as well-known as I am today, one who has not yet taken their message across the country, one who is just getting started, may well emerge as being better able to defeat the Democrat nominee," Romney told supporters on a conference call. "In fact, I expect and hope that to be the case."

The remark was both a recognition of his own limitations and an indirect swipe at the man who created the urgency behind Romney's brief flirtation with a third presidential campaign. That is former Florida Gov. Jeb Bush, the son and brother of former presidents, who is speeding toward a campaign of his own.

Bush and New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie would have served as Romney's most likely rivals for the support of the GOP establishment, and both men felt an immediate impact. The announcement sparked a rush of activity by Romney loyalists — operatives and donors alike — suddenly freed to support another White House hopeful as the crowded 2016 field begins to take shape.

## 'Suge' Knight Arrested In Hit-And-Run

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Marion "Suge" Knight, the impresario of gangster rap, has long been a perpetrator and victim of the violent life he promoted in song.

On Friday, he was portrayed as both. Sheriff's deputies booked the former hip-hop music mogul on suspicion of murder after they said he hit and killed a man with his pickup truck, seriously injured another and then fled. His lawyer said he was an innocent victim who accidentally ran over his friend as he tried to escape a group of attacking thugs.

The incident was the latest in a long line of brushes with death and the law for the 49-year-old founder of Death Row Records, one of the genre's leading labels.

Knight started the label that helped solidify West Coast rap with Dr. Dre, who had been a member of the legendary group N.W.A. The label also launched the career of Snoop Dogg and had Tupac Shakur in the last months of his life.

## Jordan Waits To See If Hostage Alive

TOKYO (AP) — The fates of a Japanese journalist and Jordanian military pilot were unknown Friday, a day after the latest purported deadline for a possible prisoner swap passed with no further word from the Islamic State group holding them captive.

Jordan has said it will only release an al-Qaida prisoner, Sajida al-Rishawi, from death row if it gets proof the pilot, Lt. Muath al-Kaseasbeh, is alive and so far has received no such evidence from the hostage-takers.

At the same time, the government is under domestic pressure to win the release of al-Kaseasbeh, the first foreign pilot to be captured by Islamic State militants since a U.S.-led military coalition began carrying out air strikes against IS-controlled areas of Iraq and Syria in September. Jordan is part of the coalition.

In the pilot's home village of Ay in the southern Karak district, several dozen protesters called for his release and chanted against Jordan's role in the alliance against Islamic State. "The sons of Jordan must not be sacrificed for America," read a banner.

Former Jordanian Foreign Minister Marwan Muasher said that the Jordanian government faces only bad options in the hostage crisis. The pilot was captured in December, after his F-16 fighter plane went down over an IS-controlled area of Syria.

## White House Grapples With Terrorism

WASHINGTON (AP) — Twice this month, the White House has publicly grappled with the politically fraught language of terrorism.

In the days after a deadly terror spree in Paris, President Barack Obama was criticized for purposely avoiding calling the attacks an example of "Islamic extremism," settling for the more generic "violent extremism." This week, the White House struggled to explain why the administration sometimes classifies the Afghan Taliban as a terrorist organization — and sometimes does not.

The rhetorical wrangling underscores the extent to which a president who pledged to end to his predecessor's war on terror is still navigating how to explain the threats that persist to the American public, while also being mindful of the impact his words can have abroad.

"They do believe that the part of the roots of terrorism comes from the way the United States acts and talks and is perceived globally," said Trevor McCrisken, a professor at Britain's University of Warwick who has studied Obama's foreign policy rhetoric.

The early January attacks on a French satirical newspaper and kosher deli put a fresh spotlight on what Obama's supporters see as his appropriately careful language and his critics see as overly cautious.

# US Economy Slowed The Final Quarter

BY MARTIN CRUTSINGER  
AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON — The U.S. economy slowed in the final three months of 2014, but a burst in consumer spending and the prospect of continued low energy prices are bolstering confidence that growth will strengthen this year.

The economy, as measured by the gross domestic product, grew at a 2.6 percent annual rate in the October-December period, the government said Friday. That was down from a sizzling 5 percent gain in the previous quarter.

Though business investment, government spending and trade weakened, consumers signaled rising confidence by stepping up their spending at the fastest rate in nearly nine years. Thanks to steady job growth, tumbling oil prices and signs that pay may finally be picking up, Americans appear poised to keep the economy expanding at a solid pace. On Friday, the University of Michigan reported that its index of sentiment showed that U.S. consumers are more confident than they have been since January 2004.

Also Friday, the government said wages and benefits are ticking up, a sign that

steady job gains may be compelling employers to pay a bit more. An index that measures pay and benefits rose 2.2 percent in 2014, up slightly from 2 percent in 2013 and ahead of inflation, which rose 1.3 percent.

Though the overall GDP figure for last quarter was mildly underwhelming, many of the components of the report were consistent with an economy that's outpacing others around the world and is on course to post solid growth this year.

Paul Ashworth, chief U.S. economist at Capital Economics, said the fourth quarter's slowdown is "nothing to worry about."

Ashworth noted that the result was heavily influenced by a swing in the volatile defense spending category. He pointed to the acceleration in consumer spending as more indicative of where the economy is headed.

"With the collapse in energy prices increasing households' purchasing power, we expect strong consumption growth to continue driving GDP growth in the first half of this year," Ashworth said.

For 2014 overall, the economy grew a moderate 2.4 percent. The year began on a sour note as a brutal winter sent the economy into reverse. GDP dropped at a 2.1 percent annual rate in the first quarter. But the economy rebounded, with growth averaging a 4.1 percent annual rate over the next three quarters.

Many analysts expect growth above 3 percent this year. That would mark a significant acceleration after a prolonged period of weakness. Since the recession ended in 2009, the economy's expansion has averaged 2.2 percent a year, far below the gains typical after a deep recession.

In the October-December period, consumer spending — which accounts for roughly 70 percent of the economy — grew at a 4.3 percent rate, up from 3.2 percent in the third quarter. It was the best gain for consumer spending since the first three months of 2006.

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