

NATION/WORLD DIGEST

Plane Crashes In Pakistan, Killing 152

ISLAMABAD (AP) — A passenger jet that officials suspect veered off course in monsoon rains and thick clouds crashed into hills overlooking Pakistan's capital Wednesday, killing all 152 people on board and scattering body parts and twisted metal far and wide.

The Airblue jet's crash was the deadliest ever in Pakistan, and just the latest tragedy to jolt a country that has suffered numerous deaths in recent years due to al-Qaida and Taliban attacks. At least two U.S. citizens were on the plane, which carried mostly Pakistanis.

The plane left the southern city of Karachi at 7:45 a.m. for a two-hour flight to Islamabad and was trying to land when it lost contact with the control tower, said Pervez George, a civil aviation official. Airblue is a private airline based in Karachi, Pakistan's largest city.

The aircraft, an Airbus A321, crashed some 15 kilometers from the airport, scorching a wide stretch of the Margalla Hills, including a section behind Faisal Mosque, one of Islamabad's most prominent landmarks. Twisted metal wreckage hung from trees and lay scattered across the ground. Smoke rose from the scene as helicopters hovered.

The exact cause of the crash was not immediately clear, and rescue workers were seeking the "black box" flight data recorder amid the wreckage. But Defense Minister Chaudhry Ahmed Mukhtar said the government did not suspect terrorism.

NYC Bedbugs Spreading Like Never Before

NEW YORK (AP) — One of every 15 New Yorkers battled bedbugs last year, officials said Wednesday as they announced a plan to fight the spreading infestation, including a public-awareness campaign and a top entomologist to head the effort.

The bloodsucking pests, which are not known to spread disease but can cause great mental anguish with their persistent and fast-growing infestations, have rapidly multiplied throughout New York and many other U.S. cities in recent years.

Health officials and pest control specialists nationwide report surges in sightings, bites and complaints. The Environmental Protection Agency hosted its first-ever bedbug summit last year.

In New York City, the pests have been discovered in theaters, clothing stores, office buildings, housing projects and posh apartments.

The stigma of having bedbugs — whose bites leave itchy red welts — and the elusive nature of the pests make it impossible to fully understand the problem, experts say.

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Jury Begins Weighing Blagojevich Case

BY DON BABWIN
AND MICHAEL TARM
Associated Press Writers

CHICAGO — Rod Blagojevich's fate was in the hands of jurors Wednesday as they began deciding whether the impeached Illinois governor tried to sell an appointment to President Barack Obama's former Senate seat and schemed to use his political power for personal gain.

Jurors, weighing evidence against the second Illinois governor in a row to be charged with corruption, received lengthy instructions from the judge on how their deliberations should be conducted. Prosecutors loaded two carts of exhibits they introduced at the trial that a marshal would wheel into the jury room.

"I'm not expecting" a speedy verdict, Judge James B. Zagel said before jurors entered the courtroom.

After jurors left to begin their work, Blagojevich appeared relaxed. He cupped his hand over his mouth and said to someone in the spectator's section, "Say a prayer." One elderly spectator walked over and hugged him, also handing him a piece of candy.

He and his co-defendant brother, Robert Blagojevich, have rarely been seen speaking to each other during the trial. But they stood shoulder to shoulder in front of Zagel to say they both wanted to be exempt from having to come to court each time jurors have a question for the judge. The judge granted it.

During the trial, prosecutors portrayed Blagojevich as a greedy, smart political schemer determined to use his power to enrich himself throughout his administration, and who saw the opportunity to appoint Obama's successor as the chance of a lifetime to get a lucrative and well-paying job in the administration.

By contrast, Blagojevich's own attorney characterized him as an insecure bumbler who

talked too much and had terrible judgment about who to trust — but never did anything to enrich himself.

Jurors ended the first day of deliberations and left around 5 p.m. Wednesday, courtroom deputy Donald Walker said. He said they'll deliberate 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. on weekdays.

In more than an hour of dry legal language, and without any of the passion that the attorneys displayed in their closing arguments, Zagel not only explained the charges to the jury and what factors they were to consider but laid out the hurdles they must overcome to reach a verdict.

For example, an instruction that the jury was allowed to make "reasonable inferences" sounded mundane. But it also the crux of prosecutors' argument that, even if Blagojevich didn't come right out and ask for money in exchange for signing a bill or approving state aid, they could conclude that was exactly what he was doing.

Zagel also explained that it is not illegal to accept a campaign contribution even if the contributor is doing business with the state or believes that a contribution will help business in the future — something that Blagojevich's attorneys have been saying throughout the trial.

U.S.: Drills Sent 'Clear Message' To N. Korea

BY JEAN H. LEE
Associated Press Writer

SEOUL, South Korea — For four days, U.S. and South Korean troops fired artillery into the skies and dropped anti-submarine bombs on underwater targets — dramatic exercises meant to warn North Korea not to strike again.

The South Korean military said the show of force, which ended Wednesday, succeeded in sending a pointed warning to North Korea four months after the deadly sinking of a South Korean warship.

Indeed, the shiny armada of destroyers and stealth fighter jets — led by a nuclear-powered supercarrier that at 97,000 tons is one of the world's largest — appeared to have muted the regime.

After days of threatening to wage a powerful nuclear strike in response to the drills, North Korea issued a feeble call Wednesday for the U.S. to drop its "hostile policy" against Pyongyang.

However, some analysts say it's too early to claim success against the unpredictable North.

Jeung Young-tae of the government-funded Korea Institute for National Unification in Seoul said the drills could provide just the excuse the regime needs to carry out another act of nuclear defiance: a nuclear test.

South Korea and U.S. officials said no unusual military activity has been detected this week in the North, and that the drills demonstrated the allies' firepower.

"These defensive, combined training exercises are designed to send a clear message to North Korea that its aggressive behavior must stop," Gen. Walter L. Sharp, the top U.S. military commander in South Korea, said in a statement issued Thursday. The two countries "are committed to enhancing our combined defensive capabilities."

Rear Adm. Kim Kyung-sik of the South Korean Joint Chiefs of Staff told reporters Wednesday that the U.S. and South Korea showed off some "impressive firepower" and demonstrated the allies' solidarity.

Another round of joint exercises is due to take place in August.

However, the military parade of 20 warships, 200 aircraft and 8,000 U.S. and South Korean soldiers may reinforce Pyongyang's resolve to keep building its nuclear program, some analysts said.

The Korean peninsula technically remains in a state of war because the 1950-53 Korean conflict ended with an armistice, not a peace treaty.

Decades later, the two Koreas are divided by one of the world's most heavily fortified borders,

and the U.S. keeps 28,500 troops in the South.

North Korea cites the U.S. troops and Washington's insistence on maintaining a "nuclear umbrella" in the region as key motives behind its drive to build atomic weapons.

Pyeongyang is believed to have enough weaponized plutonium to build at least a half-dozen bombs, and last year admitted to enriching uranium, which would give it a second way to make nuclear bombs.

What North Korea needs now is to keep testing its weapons, and hard-line moves like the joint military drills could provide the regime with an excuse to stage an atomic test, Jeung said.

"I think the time for a third nuclear test is getting closer," he said, noting that it is a "necessary" next step if the North wants to improve its nuclear weaponry.

North Korea has tested two atomic weapons underground, in 2006 and in 2009, and has test-fired a long-range missile built to strike the western U.S.

Analyst Paik Hak-soon of the Sejong Institute near Seoul said both a nuclear test and test-fire of a long-range missile could be in the cards.

"North Korea considers the joint drills in the East Sea a security threat," he said. "It wouldn't be hard for North Korea to find

an excuse to weaponize its nuclear program."

One analyst doubted that the impoverished North is preparing more provocations, with China — its main benefactor and traditional ally — likely urging North Korea to return to nuclear disarmament talks instead.

North Korea walked away from the six-nation disarmament-for-aid talks last year.

"North Korea has talked about retaliation based on its 'nuclear deterrent,' but it has to think about its relations with China and its international isolation," said Baek Seung-joo of the state-run Korea Institute for Defense Analyses in Seoul.

"North Korea displayed a hard-line stance but it may only be a face-saving measure," he said. "It's likely that North Korea and China are discussing resuming the six-party talks now."

A senior Chinese envoy, Assistant Foreign Minister Hu Zhengyue, was in North Korea on Wednesday with a delegation from Beijing, China's state-run Xinhua News Agency said.

In the midst of the military show on the East Sea, with helicopters dropping sonar buoys, F-18 fighters embarking on bombing runs and destroyers firing at unmanned aerial drones, the U.S. and the two Koreas marked the day 57 years ago this week that a truce ended the Korean War.

Authorities Await Turns In Polygamist Cases

BY JENNIFER DOBNER
Associated Press Writer

SALT LAKE CITY — A Utah Supreme Court decision that overturns polygamous church leader Warren Jeffs' 2007 criminal conviction won't automatically make him a free man. Even if Utah doesn't retry him, Texas and federal prosecutors are waiting to move forward with their own cases.

Justices on Tuesday unanimously said Jeffs should get a new trial because state attorneys overreached in their argument that performing the marriage of a 14-year-old girl to her 19-year-old cousin amounted to facilitating a rape.

Utah officials now have two weeks to seek a rehearing before the state's high court and then a month to decide if they'll retry the 54-year-old head of the Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints on charges of first-degree felony rape as an accomplice.

A judge Wednesday set an Aug. 18 date for a hearing on a motion from Jeffs' defense attorneys seeking a "speedy trial before a jury of his peers."

Meanwhile, authorities in Texas are trying to get Jeffs sent there to face charges in connection with his own alleged marriages to underage girls in 2005. A federal indictment stemming from Jeffs' stint as a fugitive on the FBI's Ten Most Wanted list is also pending.

"He would not go free," said Melodie Rydahl, spokeswoman for the U.S. attorney's office in Utah. Any federal prosecution would likely come after cases in Utah and Texas are resolved, Rydahl said, but in the hours after the

ruling, it was unclear just how the states would proceed.

"We're going to take a look at this case anew and do a legal analysis of the ruling," Deputy Washington County Attorney Brian Filter said. "We're going to talk to the victim and to law enforcement. What we've done from the beginning is tried to seek justice in the case, and that's what we're going to continue to do. Where that takes us, I don't know."

In 2007, a jury convicted Jeffs on two counts of rape as an accomplice for his role in the 2001 spiritual marriage of Elissa Wall and Allen Steed.

Jeffs performed the marriage ceremony in a Caliente, Nev.,

motel and later counseled Wall to be obedient and give her "mind, body and soul" to her husband to make her marriage work.

The Associated Press does not typically name victims of alleged sexual assault, but Wall has frequently spoken publicly about the case.

During the trial and later in her book, "Stolen Innocence," Wall said she objected to the marriage and was forced into sexual relations with her husband.

Prosecutors argued that Jeffs' abuse of his religious authority made him guilty of accomplice rape.

But in its ruling, Utah's high court said 5th District Judge

James Shumate improperly rejected defense-proposed jury instructions that would have required the panel to determine that Jeffs intended for a rape to occur when he conducted the marriage.

The court also said state attorneys were wrong to equate Jeffs' actions and role as a religious leader with Steed's alleged act. Steed was charged with rape the day after Jeffs' conviction, but the case has never been resolved.

Jeffs' defense attorney Wally Bugden said the state was so invested in bringing down "an unpopular religious figure" that it relied on the wrong legal theories.

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Christopher A. Hathaway, MD, Ph.D graduated from the University of South Dakota School of Medicine and completed his residency in Urology at the Medical College of Georgia. He joins Dr. Joseph Boudreau in practice at Yankton Urological Surgery, Prof., L.L.C.



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