

U.S. Warns Airlines Of New Terrorist Tactics

WASHINGTON (AP) — Airlines are being warned by the government that terrorists are considering surgically hiding bombs inside humans to evade airport security. And as a result, travelers may find themselves subjected to more scrutiny when flying in the heart of summer vacation season, especially to the U.S. from abroad.

Bombs-in-the body is not a brand new idea, but recent intelligence indicates a fresh interest in using this method, as people-scanning machines in airports aren't able to detect explosives hidden inside humans. Still, there is no current information that points to a specific plot involving surgically implanted explosives, a U.S. security official said, speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss such sensitive matters.

As airport security has increased since the Sept. 11, 2001, terror attacks, so has the terrorists' creativity in developing methods to get around it. Aviation continues to be a special target, and evidence from Osama bin Laden's compound showed that the al-Qaida leader retained his fascination with attacking airplanes until his death in May.

Last year, it was reported that British officials uncovered intelligence that al-Qaida was seeking to surgically implant bombs inside people, a move some believed was prompted by the use of full-body imaging machines at major airports around the world.

Libya: Rebels Seize 2 Western Mountain Towns

TRIPOLI, Libya (AP) — Rebel fighters in western Libya seized two mountain towns from government troops Wednesday as their counterparts east of the capital Tripoli suffered heavy losses in intense fighting with government troops.

Meanwhile, the embattled regime of Moammar Gadhafi sought to show it remains in control of the country, laying out plans to try rebel leaders for treason in court next week.

In the eastern rebel stronghold of Benghazi, tens of thousands of rebel supporters poured into the city's main square for a rally aimed at sustaining momentum for their nearly five month-old uprising. Fighting began in February when a popular movement against Gadhafi quickly escalated into armed conflict.

The civil war has been largely deadlocked, with the rebels controlling the east and Gadhafi clinging to large parts of western Libya, but unable to retake rebel bridgeheads there. The rebels made some gains Wednesday, taking two more towns in the western Nafusa mountains and pushing further from the port city of Misrata, their main stronghold in the west, toward the town of Zlitan, 12 kilometers to the west.

Gadhafi's forces fired more than 500 rockets at rebel positions near Zlitan, from dawn until after nightfall, said Dr. Ayman Abu Shahma, a physician in Misrata. He said 18 rebel fighters were killed and 30 wounded Wednesday. He said two civilians, including a 12-year-old girl, also were killed when a rocket hit their Misrata house.

President Obama Trades Tweets In Hour-Long Twitter Town Hall

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Barack Obama kicked off his first Twitter town hall with — what else? — a tweet.

Using a laptop set up on a lectern in the East Room of the White House, Obama typed this message: "In order to reduce the deficit, what costs would you cut and what investments would you keep?"

The tweet set the tone for the hour-long town hall focused on jobs and the economy, and hosted by Twitter, the social media service. The White House sees social media as an opportunity for the president to interact with Americans directly, particularly the younger and more tech-savvy part of the electorate, as his re-election campaign ramps up.

Twitter selected the questions for the president from among the thousands of inquiries submitted from people across the country, including Republican House Speaker John Boehner, who

asked Obama, "After embarking on a record spending binge that left us deeper in debt, where are the jobs?"

"This is a slightly skewed question," Obama said of his political rival's inquiry.

DEBT DEBATE

GOP Shows Some Flexibility

Obama Pushing For More Deficit Reductions

BY JIM KUHNHEIN AND ANDREW TAYLOR
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Republicans showed new signs of flexibility to break a budget impasse Wednesday, but the White House raised the ante — pushing for more deficit reduction and taking a pugnacious tone casting the GOP as defenders of corporate tax giveaways.

The repositioning by both sides appeared to open new compromise possibilities a day before President Barack Obama was set to host the bipartisan congressional leadership for new talks on the budget. The secret negotiations were gaining new urgency because they are tied to an Aug. 2 deadline to raise the gov-

ernment's borrowing authority.

First, House Majority Leader Eric Cantor, R-Va., declared he was open to closing tax loopholes that the White House says are wasteful and ineffective and that would generate some money toward reducing deficits over the long term.

Democratic officials, in turn, said President Barack Obama wants far more deficit reduction than the \$2 trillion over 10 years that for weeks has been the target for budget negotiators. Obama in April proposed deficit reduction of \$4 trillion over 12 years and White House spokesman Jay Carney said Wednesday that goal remained "something to aspire to."

But even as White House officials expressed confidence that negotiations ultimately would succeed, Obama took a combative approach ahead of Thursday's meeting.

"The debt ceiling should not be something that is used as a gun against the heads of the

American people to extract tax breaks for corporate jet owners or oil and gas companies that are making billions of dollars," Obama said during a town hall that featured questions posed through the online social network Twitter.

The president was referring to existing tax benefits that allow corporate jets to depreciate faster than commercial jets and to tax subsidies available to energy corporations. Obama has proposed ending both as part of an effort to reduce deficits with new tax revenue.

Obama's remarks — one of his harshest of the budget debate — sounded especially dissonant coming less than two hours after Cantor had indicated Republicans were amenable to some discussions about taxes.

"If the president wants to talk loopholes, we'll be glad to talk loopholes," Cantor said. He added that any revenues raised from closing such loopholes "should be coupled with offsetting tax cuts somewhere else."

Federal Court Orders Immediate Halt To Gay Military Ban

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — A federal appeals court ordered the U.S. government on Wednesday to immediately cease enforcing the ban on openly gay members of the military, a move that could speed the end of the 17-year-old rule.

Congress repealed the policy in December and the Pentagon is already preparing to welcome gay military personnel, said the ruling from a three-judge panel of the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in San Francisco. There's no longer any purpose for a stay the appeals court had placed on a lower court ruling that overturned "don't ask, don't tell," the judges said.

In the meantime, the court order blocks the military from discharging anyone based on sexual orientation, a Pentagon spokesman said, news that brought relief from gay rights advocates who say there are still dozens of gay or lesbian personnel under investigation.

"The ruling...removes all uncertainty — American servicemembers are no longer under threat of discharge as the repeal

implementation process goes forward," said R. Clarke Cooper, Log Cabin Republicans executive director.

The Pentagon will comply with the court order and is taking immediate steps to inform commanders in the field, said spokesman Col. Dave Lapan.

The next step: the official end to "don't ask, don't tell."

Defense officials said the chiefs of the military services are scheduled to submit their recommendations on the repeal to Defense Secretary Leon Panetta on Friday. As soon as the Pentagon certifies that repealing the ban

will have no effect on military readiness, the military has 60 days to implement the repeal.

Officials said they believe the ban could be fully lifted by the end of September. The officials spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss internal deliberations.



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