

Syrian Security Forces Sweep Through City

BEIRUT (AP) — Gunfire and explosions erupted Thursday in the city at the heart of Syria's anti-government uprising as soldiers launched a massive crackdown, witnesses said.

Terrified residents covered inside their homes and used mosque loudspeakers to call for blood donations to help the wounded.

Details about the siege in Homs were sketchy, as most witnesses told The Associated Press they were too scared even to look out their windows. The city has seen some of the most intense violence as the regime tries to stamp out a revolt that has lasted more than four months.

"I can see smoke billowing from the neighborhood," a witness told The Associated Press by telephone from the Bab Sbaa area of Homs, about 100 miles (160 kilometers) from Damascus. Heavy gunfire crackled in the background. "We cannot leave our homes."

Calls for blood donations blared from mosque loudspeakers, raising fears of mass casualties. But the gunfire was too intense for people to collect any victims.

As darkness fell, another resident said the violence had tapered off, with only intermittent cracks of gunfire. He said Syrian soldiers in personnel carriers were leaving the area.

Heat Marches Onward; Warnings In Place

CINCINNATI (AP) — Hot weather that has plagued the Plains for days spread eastward Thursday, blanketing several more states under a sizzling sun that made people sick, shut down summer schools and spurred cities to offer cooling centers and free swimming.

The temperature could soar to 101 in Toledo, Ohio — 2 degrees above a record set in 1930. Combined with the humidity, it could feel as hot as 115 across Ohio.

"It feels very sultry, very uncomfortable, and it's just very dangerous," said Jim Lott, lead forecaster for the National Weather Service office in Wilmington, Ohio.

Government forecasters issued excessive heat warnings for a huge section of the country, from Kansas to Massachusetts, while some southern states were under heat advisories.

Thursday shaped up as the hottest day of a steamy week in Ohio, with temperatures climbing to 97 in the southwestern part of the state. Farther east, the worst of the heat waited for Friday and the weekend.

Doctors Debate Over Alzheimer's Testing

PARIS (AP) — Picture yourself in Barbara Leshner's shoes: 54 years old and fearing you are developing Alzheimer's disease.

"I don't remember if I had a bath," said Leshner, who lives north of Harrisburg, Pa. "It took me two hours to follow a recipe. I drove to my childhood homestead the other week instead of my own home. It's really scary."

Doctors are arguing about whether to test patients for signs of the incurable disease and tell them the results.

The debate raged this past week at the Alzheimer's Association International Conference in France, where research on new methods — easier brain scans, an eye test, a blood test — made it clear there soon may be more such tools available.

Here's why it's an issue: Many people have brain plaques, suggesting they might be developing Alzheimer's even if they don't have any symptoms. This plaque can be seen decades beforehand and does not ensure someone will get the disease. Many also won't live long enough to develop symptoms.

Microsoft Unleashes 'Star Wars'-Themed Xbox

SAN DIEGO (AP) — The Force will be with the Xbox 360.

Microsoft Corp. unveiled a limited edition Xbox 360 console at a Comic-Con panel on Thursday that will be modeled after the character R2-D2, with a wireless gold-colored controller resembling his droid pal C-3PO.

The console will make the character's signature beeping sounds when the white-and-blue console is turned on and the disc tray is opened.

It will also feature a 320-gigabyte hard drive, the largest available for Microsoft's gaming system.

The "Star Wars"-themed console, available later this year, will cost \$449.99 and come with a white Kinect sensor, headset and "Kinect Star Wars," an action-adventure game utilizing the camera-based controller system.

"Kinect Star Wars" developers also confirmed that a pod-racing mode based on "Star Wars: Episode I — The Phantom Menace," would be featured in the game.

Panetta To OK End Of Military Gay Ban

WASHINGTON (AP) — Pentagon chief Leon Panetta has decided to end the ban on gays serving openly in the armed services and certify that repealing the 17-year-old prohibition will not hurt the military's ability to fight, officials said Thursday.

His decision, which was expected, comes two weeks after the chiefs of the military services told Panetta that ending the ban would not affect military readiness. Dismantling the ban fulfills a 2008 campaign promise by President Barack Obama, who helped usher the repeal through Congress and signed it into law late last December.

But the move also drew vehement opposition from some in Congress and initial reluctance from military leaders, who worried that it could cause a backlash and erode troop cohesion on the battlefield.

Defense officials said the announcement will be made Friday afternoon. The officials spoke on condition of anonymity because the decision had not been made public.

President Barack Obama is also expected to certify the change. Repeal of the ban would become effective 60 days after certification, which could open the military to gays by the end of September. The law setting the stage for repeal required the defense secretary to certify to Congress that lifting the ban would not harm military readiness.

Obama, Republicans Meet Anew

BY DAVID ESPO
AP Special Correspondent

WASHINGTON — In secretive endgame negotiations, President Barack Obama and House Republican leaders reached anew on Thursday for an elusive "grand bargain" deal to cut deficits by \$4 trillion or more and prevent a threatened Aug. 2 government default, officials said.

House Speaker John Boehner declared that his rank and file generally stood ready to compromise in order to reach an agreement as a way of "getting our economy going again and growing jobs." Obama, in a newspaper opinion piece, said the talks provided an "opportunity to do something big and meaningful."

Still, 12 days before the default deadline, officials stressed that no compromise appeared imminent. And new hope of one ran instantly into old resistance: from Republicans opposed to higher taxes and Democrats loath to cut Medicare and other benefit programs.

In a measure of concern among Democrats, party leaders spent nearly two hours meeting with Obama at the White House late Thursday.

While talks on a major, long-term agreement continued, a fresh, shorter-term backup plan appeared to be gaining momentum. Under discussion among some House Republicans, that proposal would cut spending by \$1 trillion or slightly more immediately and raise the debt limit by a similar amount — enough

to postpone a final reckoning until early in 2012.

Both sides maneuvered for political advantage and for leverage in negotiations about which little was publicly known.

"At the end of the day, we have a responsibility to act," said Boehner of GOP lawmakers.

Across the Capitol, however, Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid blamed some of the same Republicans — "tea party extremists," he called them — of blocking a deal.

The sometimes-conflicting information underscored the frenzied final days before a threatened default, when the Treasury would no longer be able to pay all its bills in full and the economy could go into a tailspin as interest rates spiked.

Some Democrats confided they were worried Obama would sign off on an agreement that cuts benefit programs without raising tax revenue, and they peppered Budget Director Jack Lew — in a closed-door meeting in the Senate — with questions about the high-level negotiations.

In an opinion piece in USA Today posted Thursday evening, Obama restated his call for achieving deficit reduction through "historic" amounts of spending cuts but also through "fundamental tax reform."

It was a stance Reid pointedly emphasized Thursday.

"My caucus agrees with that — and hope the president sticks with that, and I'm confi-

dent he will," the Nevada Democrat said.

One official said the White House had notified Democratic congressional leaders Wednesday night that Obama and the House leaders appeared to be closing in on a deal said to include \$3 trillion in spending cuts but only a promise of higher revenues to be realized through a comprehensive overhaul of the tax code.

Boehner walked a difficult line of his own, not wanting to anger conservatives who hoped — despite every appearance to the contrary — that they could push far deeper cuts through the Senate in the next few days.

"There is no deal. No deal publicly, no deal privately, there is absolutely no deal," he told conservative talk show radio host Rush Limbaugh.

"We're not close to a deal," said Jay Carney, the White House press secretary.

Another Democratic official said that in fact progress had been made, but Boehner's office declined to say as much.

"While we are keeping the lines of communication open, there is no 'deal' and no progress to report," said spokesman Michael Steel.

The government's debt stands at a record \$14.3 trillion and has been growing by more than \$1 trillion a year. Obama's request for an increase prompted Boehner to say months ago that any rise must be accompanied by spending cuts of at least the same amount.

Greece Gets Massive New Bailout

BY GABRIELE STEINHAUSER
AP Business Writer

BRUSSELS — Eurozone leaders on Thursday agreed to a sweeping deal that will grant Greece a massive new bailout — but likely make it the first euro country to default — and radically reshape the currency union's rescue fund, allowing it to act pre-emptively when crises build up.

The deal resolves a political deadlock between Europe's top economic authorities over how to save Greece that had investors worried the debt crisis would spin out of control. Faced with the danger of big economies like Italy becoming unstable, the officials sought to outdo expectations at an emergency meeting in Brussels.

The eurozone countries and the International Monetary Fund will give Greece a second bailout worth (euro) 109 billion (\$155 billion), on top of the (euro) 110 billion granted a year ago.

Banks and other private in-

vestors will contribute some (euro) 50 billion (\$71 billion) to the rescue package until 2014 by either rolling over Greek bonds that they hold, swapping them for new ones with lower interest rates or selling the bonds back to Greece at a low price.

"For the first time since the beginning of this crisis, we can say that the politics and the markets are coming together," said European Commission President Jose Manuel Barroso.

Initial reaction from markets and analysts to Thursday's deal was cautiously positive. The euro, which had rallied sharply on expectation of the deal, rose further to gain 1.2 percent against the dollar.

The "summit conclusions surprise by their size and range," Marie Diron, senior economic adviser to the Ernst & Young, said in a note. "The measures imply significant private sector involvement and very large further support from the EU. All politically acceptable measures are being used."

The deal on involving private creditors is widely expected to be considered a "selective default" by the ratings agencies, making Greece the first euro country to ever be in default — if likely only for a short period of time.

Because of that, the eurozone will back up any new Greek bonds issued to the banks with guarantees. Those guarantees are necessary because Greek banks use Greek government debt as collateral for emergency support from the European Central Bank. Those bonds would no longer work as collateral if hit with a default rating, meaning Greek banks would lose the ECB support and quickly collapse.

In the case of bond rollovers or swaps, the new Greek bonds issued to the banks would have long maturities of up to 30 years and low interest rates, according to the Institute of International Finance, the group representing the private sector creditors. French President Nicolas Sarkozy estimated the rates would average 4.5 percent.

Murdoch's Testimony Contradicted

BY RAPHAEL G. SATTER
AND JILL LAWLESS
Associated Press

LONDON — James Murdoch's former legal adviser and a former editor contested the testimony he gave to British lawmakers, saying Thursday he was told years ago about an email that suggested the rot at his Sunday tabloid was far more widespread than previously claimed.

Their statement could deal a blow to the credibility of Rupert Murdoch's son as the family struggles to limit the damage from a phone-hacking scandal that has already cost the media empire one of its British tabloids, two top executives and a billion-dollar bid for control of a satellite broadcaster.

Meanwhile Scotland Yard, which is still reeling from allegations that it turned a blind eye to the scandal, was asked to investigate another explosive claim: That journalists bribed officers to locate people by tracking their cell phone signals.

The practice is known as "ping-

ing" because of the way cell phone signals bounce off relay towers as they try to find reception. Jenny Jones, a member of the board that oversees the Metropolitan Police Authority, called for the inquiry into the alleged payoffs by journalists at Murdoch's now-defunct *News of the World*.

James Murdoch, in a grilling by lawmakers on Tuesday, batted away claims that he knew the full extent of the illegal espionage at the *News of the World* when he approved a massive payout in 2008 to soccer players' association chief Gordon Taylor, one of the phone hacking victims.

Murdoch's *News International* had long maintained that the eavesdropping was limited to a single rogue reporter, Clive Goodman, and the private investigator he was working with to break into voice mails of members of the royal household.

But an email uncovered during legal proceedings seemed to cast doubt on that claim. It contained a transcript of an illegally obtained conversation, drawn up by

a junior reporter and marked "for Neville" — an apparent reference to the *News of the World's* chief reporter, Neville Thurlbeck.

Because it seemed to implicate others in the hacking, the email had the potential to blow a hole through *News International's* fiercely held contention that one reporter alone had engaged in hacking. If Murdoch knew about the email — and was aware of its implication — it would lend weight to the suggestion that he'd approved the payoff in an effort to bury the scandal.

Murdoch told lawmakers he was not aware of the email at the time, but in a statement late Thursday, former *News International* legal manager Tom Crone and former *News of the World* editor Colin Myler contradicted him.

"We would like to point out that James Murdoch's recollection of what he was told when agreeing to settle the Gordon Taylor litigation was mistaken," they said. "In fact, we did inform him of the 'for Neville' email which had been produced to us by Gordon Taylor's lawyers."

Economy's Slump Likely To Continue

BY CHRISTOPHER S. RUGABER
AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON — The economy's spring slump appears to be extending into the summer, according to a slew of mixed data released Thursday.

Layoffs are rising. Manufacturing activity in the Northeast expanded only slightly in July after contracting in June. Economic growth is projected to pick up this fall, but not enough to give businesses confidence to hire and speed the recovery.

The economy could lapse even further if Congress and the Obama administration fail to reach an agreement on raising the nation's borrowing limit in the coming week.

But for the moment, traders on Wall Street don't seem worried. Stocks soared Thursday on news that European governments were moving toward agreement on an aid package for Greece. The Dow Jones industrial average closed 152 points up for the day.

Economists are less optimistic. They are forecasting a third straight month of feeble hiring in July, based on the latest round of data. Expectations are the economy added somewhere in the range of 50,000 to 100,000 net new jobs this month.

That's not enough to keep up with population growth and far below what is needed to lower the unemployment rate, which was 9.2 percent last month.

"We're going to see improvement, but right now nothing's improved yet," said Joshua Dennerlein, an economist at Bank of America Merrill Lynch.

Applications for unemployment benefits rose last week to a seasonally adjusted 418,000, the Labor Department said. They have now topped 400,000 for 15 straight weeks. Applications had fallen in February to 375,000, a level that signals healthy job growth.

OBITUARIES

Jacqueline Berry
TRIPP — Funeral services for Jacqueline "Jackie" Berry, 21, of Tripp will be held at 10 a.m. on Monday, July 25 at Emmaus Lutheran Church in Tripp with Rev. Richard Weeman officiating. Interment will follow in Gracehill Cemetery, Tripp. Visitation will be held on Sunday from 3-7 p.m. at the Goglin Funeral Home in Tripp. Visitation will resume on Monday at 8:30 a.m. until the time of service at the church. Jackie died on Monday, July 18, 2011 in Columbia, Missouri. Online condolences may be sent at www.goglinfh.com.

Patricia Dizona
Patricia Dizona, 61, of Yankton passed away on Thursday, July 21, 2011 at Sister James Care Center in Yankton.
Arrangements are pending with Kober Funeral Home in Vermillion.

Lowell Gregoire
KANSAS — Lowell Gregoire passed away on Sunday, July 17, 2011 in Kansas. He was born on December 18, 1926 in Clay County, South Dakota to parents Ernest & Ida (Larson) Gregoire of Lodi.
He attended Clay County rural

schools and Vermillion High School. During his senior year he enlisted in the Army because of World War II. He spent his working life at Beechcraft Air Manufacturing in Wichita, Kansas, and his retirement in Florida and Sioux Falls. Interment will be in South Dakota.
He is survived by three sons: Doug, Jeff and Dennis and their families, his sister Gloria, brother Ernest, Jr., and special friends Wendell and Ruby Turner. He was preceded in death by his parents, his wife Joanne (Hyink), son Tim, sister Ilene, brother Ellsworth and little brother Buddy.

Alberta Hinseth
IRENE — Alberta Lucille Hinseth, 88, of Irene, passed away Wednesday, July 20, 2011 at the Good Samaritan Nursing Home in Centerville. Arrangements are pending with the Hansen Funeral Home in Irene.

Harold Green
Harold Dale Green age 85 of Yankton, passed away Thursday, July 21, 2011 at the Avera Sister James Care Center, Yankton. Memorial services will be at 2p.m.,

Monday, at the United Church of Christ (Congregational), Yankton with Rev. Joe Schulte officiating. Visitations will be from 6-8 p.m., Sunday, at the Opsahl-Kostel Funeral Home and Crematory. Visi-

tations will resume one hour prior to the services at the church. Military rites and burial of Dale's cremated remains will be in the Black Hills National Cemetery, Sturgis, at a later date.

Prayers of Thanks

The family of Sylvan O'Sharty" Jiricek would like to thank all of our family members and friends for their love and support in this difficult time. The memories, cards, memorials, flowers, plants, and prayers mean so much to us.

We want to give special thanks to Pastor Ron Johnson of the First United Methodist Church for helping us through this tough time, and for his beautiful funeral service. We would also like to thank the Ernest-Bowyer VFW Post #791 Honor Guard for performing the military graveside rites, the Ladies Auxiliary for providing and serving the lunch, the South Dakota Patriot Guard Riders, the SDARNG from Sioux Falls, and the American Legion of Wagner. Special thanks to the Avera Yankton Care Center for all of the care they provided to Sylvan while he resided there. We appreciate everything the staff did for Sylvan and LaVelle. We also thank the Opsahl-Kostel Funeral Home in Yankton for all their support and guidance in this difficult time. A special thanks goes to Kevin Opsahl for riding with the SD Patriot Guard Riders.

**LaVelle Jiricek
Linda (Elton) Wek & Family
Leslie (Lester) Thompson & Family**

IN REMEMBRANCE

Joe and Dian Bergman Memorial Service

11:00 AM, Saturday
Knights of Columbus Hall
Hartington



WINTZ & RAY
FUNERAL HOME
and Cremation Service, Inc.
605-665-3644



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FUNERAL HOME INC.
Hartington, Coleridge, Crofton
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