

Somali Man Recalls Horrors Of Jail, Rape, Death

DADAAB, Kenya (AP) — When al-Qaida-linked militants learned that Ahmedhashim Mawlid Abdi and his family were planning to flee Somalia's famine, they threw the 40-year-old father of seven in jail for two days.

Over the next 17 days, as they made their escape, a gang of gunmen robbed them of the little food they had, Abdi's pregnant wife was raped in front of him, and his 7-year-old son died of starvation and disease. They were even attacked by a lion.

When they finally made it to the Dagahaley refugee camp in neighboring Kenya, their struggles were far from over. Food rations in the overcrowded camp are "just enough to survive on," Abdi said. And the future is uncertain.

As Somalia's famine unfolds in the middle of a war zone, some 2.2 million people are in peril in an area controlled by the al-Qaida-linked al-Shabab that is inaccessible to aid groups.

In an extended interview conducted in Somali with The Associated Press, Abdi describes the drought-ravaged region he and his family escaped and the plight facing him and tens of thousands of other refugees in camps in Kenya and Ethiopia.

Egypt's Muslims Dominate Cairo Protest

CAIRO (AP) — Tens of thousands of ultraconservative Muslims in long beards, robes and prayer caps thronged Cairo's central Tahrir Square in a massive show of force Friday, calling for the implementation of strict Islamic laws and sparring with liberal activists over their visions for a post-revolution Egypt.

It was the first rally with religious overtones in Egypt, and one of the largest, since the uprising that forced President Hosni Mubarak to step down in mid-February. The strong showing by the Islamists demonstrated their powerful organizational abilities, which will likely help them in parliamentary elections later this year.

"Islamic. Islamic. Not Western or Eastern. No liberal or secular," chants of Salafis, who follow a strict form of Islam, echoed through the square. Others shouted: "With our soul and blood we defend you Islam."

They unfurled an Egyptian flag, removing the central emblem of an eagle and replacing the Islamic slogan: "There is no god but God and Muhammad is his prophet," similar to the insignia on the Saudi flag.

The youth activists who have been at the helm of mass protests calling for faster change from the country's interim military rulers withdrew from the rally soon after Friday prayers, accusing the Islamists of violating an agreement to avoid divisive issues.

Spanish Prime Minister Calls Early Elections

MADRID (AP) — Spanish Prime Minister Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero on Friday announced early general elections in November, scheduling the race four months earlier than anticipated to give his Socialist Party a better chance to stay in power amid growing outrage over the nation's economic woes.

Zapatero set the election date for Nov. 20 even though he was not required to call elections until March and had resisted repeated calls by the conservative opposition for early polling.

"I want a new government to take control of the economy from January 1st next year," said Zapatero, who announced earlier this year he would not seek a third term.

"It is convenient to hold elections this fall so a new government can take charge of the economy in 2012, fresh from the balloting," he said.

The early elections are expected to help the Socialist Party candidate, Alfredo Perez Rubalcaba, Zapatero's former Interior Minister. While the Socialists have trailed Popular Party candidate Mariano Rajoy, a poll released Wednesday suggested they are closing the gap.

Judge Orders Release Of Nixon Testimony

WASHINGTON (AP) — Thirty-six years after Richard Nixon testified to a grand jury about the Watergate break-in that drove him from office, a federal judge on Friday ordered the secret transcript made public.

But the 297 pages of testimony won't be available immediately, because the government gets time to decide whether to appeal.

The Obama administration opposed the transcript's release, chiefly to protect the privacy of people discussed during the ex-president's testimony who are still alive.

Nevertheless, U.S. District Judge Royce Lamberth agreed with historians who sued for release of the documents that the historical significance outweighs arguments for secrecy, because the investigations are long over and Nixon has been dead 17 years.

Nixon was interviewed behind closed doors near his California home for 11 hours over two days in June 1975, 10 months after resigning the presidency. Two grand jurors were flown in and the transcript was read to the rest of the panel sitting back in Washington. It was the first time a former U.S. president testified before a grand jury — Bill Clinton became the first sitting president to do so during the Monica Lewinsky investigation.

Search Continues For Missing Wyo. Deputy

CHEYENNE, Wyo. (AP) — An official says the deputy who disappeared after swimming into a swollen eastern Wyoming river was trying to save a girl who had jumped in because she was upset with her boyfriend.

The search continues for the 29-year-old Converse County deputy, Bryan Gross, a newlywed.

Undersheriff Don Schoenleber says Gross and several others swam into the North Platte River in the town of Douglas at about 5 p.m. Thursday.

They were trying to help a girl who had jumped in near a bridge. Other emergency workers recovered the girl about a mile downstream and took her to a hospital.

Schoenleber declined to identify the girl.

Douglas city administrator Steve Henning says the girl was 14 years old and was in town for a 4-H fair. He says she jumped in the river because she was "distraught with her boyfriend."

Huge Pot Bust Made In Northern Calif.

UKIAH, Calif. (AP) — Law enforcement officials said Friday they struck a major blow against illegal marijuana cultivation on public lands in the heart of Northern California pot country.

The two-week operation to purge the Mendocino National Forest of illicit pot gardens uprooted 460,000 pot plants and led to more than 100 arrests, U.S. Attorney Melinda Haag said.

About 1,500 pounds of processed marijuana, 27 guns and 11 vehicles were also seized.

The 900,000-acre forest — larger than Rhode Island — spans six counties in a region of mountains and forests known as the Emerald Triangle for its high concentration of pot farms. Agents raided more than 50 gardens teeming with trash, irrigation pipes and chemicals that damage forestland and waterways, authorities said.

"The Mendocino National Forest is under attack by drug traffickers," Haag said.

The operation was part of an annual summer effort to eradicate marijuana from public lands across the state. Six sheriff's departments, the state anti-narcotics bureau and at least a half-dozen federal agencies took part in the effort in the forest.

Recession Risks Up Amid Slow Growth

BY PAUL WISEMAN
AND CHRISTOPHER S. RUGABER
AP Economics Writers

WASHINGTON — The economy is at risk of slipping into another recession.

It nearly stalled in the first six months of the year, the government reported Friday. Economic growth was feeble in the second quarter and practically non-existent in the first.

The new picture of an economy far weaker than most analysts had expected suddenly made a second recession a more serious threat — and the threat will rise if Congress can't reach a deal to raise the government's debt limit.

"The only question now is, how much weaker could things get?" says Nariman Behravesh, chief economist at IHS Global Insight.

In April, May and June, the economy grew at a 1.3 percent annual rate, below expectations. And the government changed its growth figure for January, February and March to 0.4 percent, far below the previous estimate of 1.9 percent.

Combined, the first half of the year amounts to the worst six-month performance since the Great Recession officially ended in June 2009.

Over the past year, the gross domestic product — the total output of goods and services in the United States, and the broadest measure of the economy's health — recorded actual growth of 1.6 percent.

Since 1950, year-to-year growth has dipped below 2 percent 12 times. Ten of those times, the economy was already in recession or soon fell into one, says Mark Vitner, senior economist at Wells Fargo Securities.

Normal economic growth is closer to 3 percent.

High gasoline prices leave people with less money to spend on other goods and services. And not all spending on gas contributes to the U.S. economy because some of the money goes to oil-producing countries. GDP figures are also inflation-adjusted, so spending \$1 more for a gallon doesn't mean \$1 of additional help to the economy.

Manufacturing disruptions from the Japan earthquake, cuts in state and local government and tighter household budgets have weighed down the economy, too.

Add to those problems the uncertainty fanned by the political stalemate in Washington, with Republicans refusing to raise the federal government's \$14.3 trillion borrowing limit unless Democrats agree to deep federal spending cuts on the GOP's terms.

Without an agreement, the Treasury Department says, the government won't have enough money to pay all its bills after Tuesday. It will have to cut spending by about 40 percent and choose which programs and beneficiaries receive money and which don't.

The dismal second-quarter report led economists to reduce their estimates for growth in the second half of the year. Capital Economics, which had expected the economy to grow 2.5 percent this year, now says 2 percent looks more likely.

Joel Naroff of Naroff Economic Advisors says he's waiting until the debt-limit deadline passes to revise his economic forecasts for the rest of 2011. He knows he'll scale back his estimates.

He just doesn't know how much.

If a deal isn't reached for another month, Naroff estimates there's an 80 to 90 percent chance that the spending cuts would tip the economy into recession. Even if there is a deal, it would likely trigger significant spending cuts that would slow growth, at least in the short run.

"You kick the federal government, and the economy is going to be doubled over in pain," Naroff says.

Federal Reserve Chairman Ben Bernanke and other economists have warned Congress against cutting too much too soon because the economy remains so fragile.

The economy needs to expand so it can create jobs for a growing population. It must grow at a 2.5 percent annual rate to keep the unemployment rate from rising and at a 5 percent rate to bring unemployment down significantly.

In a Twitter message, economist Justin Wolfers of the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School said he thinks there's a 40 percent chance the economy has already been in a recession for the past four months.

Normally, when the economy is this weak, the government spends more and the Federal Reserve aggressively tries to stimulate growth. But President Barack Obama's \$862 billion stimulus package of spending programs and tax cuts ran out last year — and won't be revived by a Congress focused on cutting government debt.

And the Federal Reserve last month ended a \$600 billion bond-buying program designed to jolt the economy by lowering long-term interest rates and lifting stock prices.

Moody's: U.S. Should Retain Top Credit Rating

BY MARTIN CRUTSINGER
AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON — Moody's Investors Service said late Friday that the United States should be able to keep its triple-A credit rating as long as Washington works out a deal that lets it continue to pay bondholders.

The credit rating agency said it thinks that even if the nation's \$14.3 trillion borrowing limit isn't raised by Tuesday's deadline, the government would give priority to making interest payments on its debt and thereby avoid a default.

Moody's had warned July 13 that the country's credit rating was in danger of being downgraded because of the stalemate in Congress over raising the debt limit.

In its statement Friday, however, Moody's said that based on its current review it would likely rate the U.S. debt as triple-A but with a negative outlook. That would mean that there is a possibility of a downgrade in the future.

"If there were a default on a Treasury debt obligation, a downgrade would likely follow, even if the default were swiftly cured and investors suffered no permanent losses," Moody's said in its new report.

Credit rating agencies assess the riskiness of debt issued by

companies and governments.

The three major agencies — Moody's, Standard & Poor's and Fitch Ratings — have all raised warnings in recent months that they might downgrade the U.S. government's triple-A rating.

Such a downgrade would send shockwaves through the financial system. The government has had the highest credit rating for nearly a century.

That rating has allowed the United States to pay the lowest interest rates possible to finance Treasury debt.

Sherry Cooper, chief economist at BMO Financial Group, said the decision by Moody's to back away from its threatened downgrade was "great news" and would probably make a potential downgrade by S&P less of a threat as well.

"What is really important is that the likelihood of a Treasury default has fallen sharply as the prospects of a debt-ceiling hike in the next few days has increased," Cooper said. "The U.S. is now more likely to retain its Moody's triple-A rating as long as it does not default."

In its new report, Moody's said that it would consider the government in default only if it missed an interest or principal payment on its debt, not if the government had to delay payments in such areas as federal employee salaries, Social Secu-

Top credit

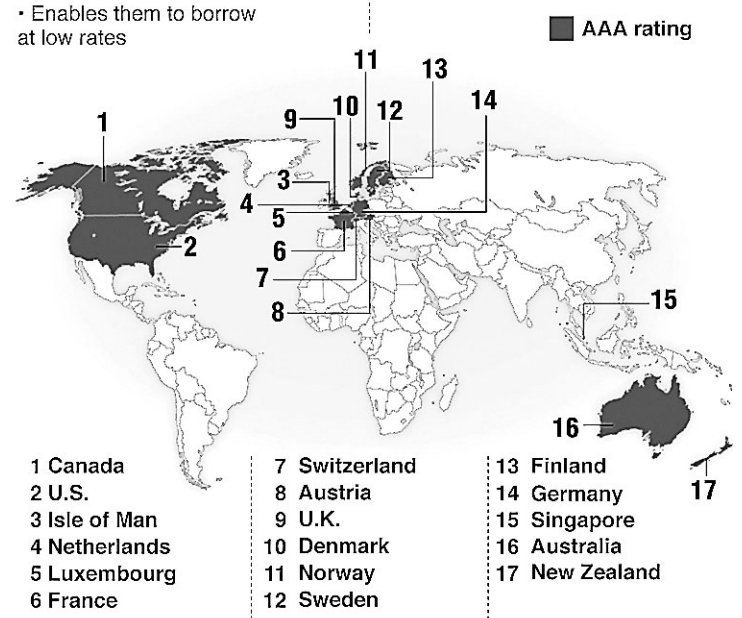
Only 17 countries can boast AAA ratings on their sovereign debt from both Moody's and Standard & Poor's.

What AAA means

- Given to nations whose bonds are thought to be safe, governments stable
- Enables them to borrow at low rates

Threat to U.S.

- U.S. is at risk of losing its rating due to the congressional battle over raising the debt limit



Source: Moody's, Standard & Poor's, CNN

© 2011 MCT

ry or bills from vendors.

"If the debt limit is not raised before Aug. 2, we believe that the Treasury would give priority to debt service payments and could thus postpone a potential default

for a number of days," Moody's said. "Revenues would be more than adequate for some period of time to meet those payments, although other outlays would be severely reduced as a result."

Witnesses: Commander Killed By Fellow Libya Rebels

BY RAMI AL-SHAHEIBI
AND HADEEL AL-SHALCHI
Associated Press

BENHAZI, Libya — The Libyan rebels' military commander was killed by his comrades while in custody after he was arrested by the opposition's leadership on suspicion of treason, witnesses said Friday, in a sign of disarray that posed a major setback for the movement battling Moammar Gadhafi.

The slaying of Abdel-Fattah Younis raised fear and uncertainty in Benghazi, the de facto rebel capital. Thousands marched behind his coffin, wrapped in the rebels' tricolor flag, to the graveyard for his burial, chanting that he was a martyr "beloved by God." Troops fired a military salute as the coffin arrived, and angry and grieving supporters fired wildly into the air with automatic weapons.

At the graveside, Younis' son,

Ashraf, broke down, crying and screaming as they lowered the body into the ground and — in a startling and risky display in a city that was the first to shed Gadhafi's rule nearly six months ago — pleaded hysterically for the return of the Libyan leader to bring stability.

"We want Moammar to come back! We want the green flag back!" he shouted at the crowd, referring to Gadhafi's national banner.

Younis' slaying appeared to shake both the rebels' leadership body, the National Transitional Council, and its Western allies, who have heavily backed the rebels controlling most of eastern Libya.

Two weeks ago, 32 nations including the U.S. made a major commitment by formally recognizing the opposition as the country's legitimate government — a significant boost after many allies hesitated in part because

the rebels, a mix of tribes and factions, were largely an unknown quantity.

Those Western worries will likely be deepened if Younis' slaying opens major splits among the fractious rebels. Divisions would also weaken the opposition's campaign to oust Gadhafi, which has largely stalled in a deadlock despite the four-month-old NATO bombing campaign against regime forces.

In Washington, State Department spokesman Mark Toner said the circumstances of Younis' death remained unclear, but he pressed the opposition to shore up any cracks in their front against Gadhafi.

"What's important is that they work both diligently and trans-

parently to ensure the unity of the Libyan opposition," Toner said.

Younis' body was found Thursday, dumped outside Benghazi, along with the bodies of two colonels who were his top aides. They had been shot and their bodies burned.

Younis was Gadhafi's interior minister until he defected to the rebellion early in the uprising, which began in February, bringing his forces into the opposition ranks. His move raised hopes among rebels and Western allies that the uprising could succeed in forcing out the country's ruler of more than four decades. But some rebels remained deeply suspicious that he retained loyalties to Gadhafi.

FREE ESTIMATES CLEANING & REPAIRS

AFFORDABLE GUTTERS

6" SEAMLESS RAIN GUTTERS
RESIDENTIAL & COMMERCIAL GUTTERING

CALL 605-215-7248

Yankton Transmission Specialists

• Transmissions • Drive Lines
• Transfer Cases • Differentials

2409 East Highway 50
2 Year / 24,000 Guarantee (605) 665-1175

DREAMING OF AN UPGRADE?
WE'RE THE ONE.™

4.25% APR*

AUTO LOANS

*For loans of at least \$5,000 on model years 2006 or newer when using auto-deduct from a FNBSD account. Approval and rate subject to credit qualifications. Limited time offer.

1 First National Bank South Dakota

332 Broadway | 665-9611 | www.fnbsd | Member FDIC

Celebrating 20 Years of Caring!

All your childcare needs from infant to age 12 at one convenient location.

KOLOR ME KIDS

- New pre-school program offered in the daycare setting
- Delicious homemade meals and snacks
- Convenient hours, plus transportation to and from school

For More Information Call Lynette 661-1806 or Shelly 665-7755
E-mail: kolormekids@iw.net

daycare • learning centers