

# Romney Goes To Europe, Causes Stir

BY KASIE HUNT  
AND DAVID STRINGER  
Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney caused a stir in Britain on Thursday by questioning whether the country is prepared to host the Olympic Games without a hitch and scheduling a fundraiser with the former head of a troubled bank.

The former Massachusetts governor visited with British political leaders as part of a larger effort to show he has what it takes to represent the U.S. on the world stage. But instead of high-lighting ties with the America's staunchest ally, Romney may have embarrassed the Brits instead.

British Prime Minister David Cameron offered a blunt retort to Romney and other doubters, saying they will "see beyond doubt that Britain can deliver."

The stir came on the first full day of Romney's first international tour as the GOP's presumptive presidential nominee. With the U.S. still fighting one war and facing foreign policy challenges across the globe, Romney is seeking to convince American voters that he's prepared to serve as commander and chief, despite limited foreign policy experience.

He will visit three allies — England, Israel and Poland — in the coming days while appearing Friday at the Olympic opening ceremonies to help remind voters of his personal Olympic experience. Romney led the 2002 Winter Games in Salt Lake City, Utah, and used the games to launch his political career.

But his foreign trip got off to a shaky start.

Romney openly doubted



STEPHEN SIMPSON/LONDON NEWS PICTURES/ZUMA PRESS/MCT  
**Republican presidential nominee Mitt Romney enters No. 10 Downing Street, Thursday, July 26, 2012, in London as he visited with British political leaders while trying to show he has what it takes to represent America on the world stage.**

whether Britain could handle the games, saying it was unclear whether issues that have dogged the final preparations could be overcome.

"It's hard to know just how well it will turn out," Romney told NBC News in an interview on Wednesday, two days before the opening ceremonies.

He later met with Cameron and they discussed the Olympic Games as well as alliances in

Afghanistan and Syria, among other countries.

Romney declined to answer questions on whether the West should do more to intervene in Syria, suggesting that he didn't "want to describe foreign policy positions I may have while I'm on foreign soil."

Earlier Thursday, Romney and Cameron seemed to address each other through the media after Romney doubted Britain's

preparedness for the Olympics. Romney suggested it's impossible for any Olympic Games to go off without a hitch; Cameron said Romney and others would soon see that England is up to the challenge.

Romney backed off his initial comment after meeting with Cameron.

"I expect the games to be highly successful," Romney declared after the meeting.

At the same time, Romney faced scrutiny for a London fundraiser Thursday night that's expected to attract employees of Barclays, which has been in the spotlight after becoming the first bank to admit its employees were involved in manipulating a key market index.

Last month, U.S. and British agencies fined Barclays a total of \$453 million. In the wake of that shock, chief executive Bob Diamond resigned. Diamond had been scheduled to attend the fundraiser at the Mandarin Oriental hotel in the tony Knightsbridge district, but has pulled out. He already had sent Romney a check for \$2,500.

Romney sought to steer the conversation away from the controversies.

"The world is a tumultuous and dangerous place," Romney said Thursday. "And certainly in many of the regions around the world we have great interests in having a common effort in seeing greater peace and prosperity."

As he met with British leaders past and present, the Republican also praised "the unique relationship that exists between our nations, our commitment to common values, our commitment to peace in the world and a desire to see a stronger and growing economy."

## Syrian Defector Wants To Help Unify Opposition

BY ELIZABETH A. KENNEDY  
Associated Press

BEIRUT — Syria's most prominent defector offered himself up Thursday as a figure to unite the fractious opposition, saying he failed to persuade his former friend, President Bashar Assad, to end a bloody crackdown that has killed thousands of Syrians.

The remarks by Manaf Tlass, a Syrian brigadier general until he abandoned the regime this month, were published in a Saudi newspaper just as opposition factions gathered in Qatar to try to agree on a transitional leadership if Assad's regime falls.

Some opposition members are deeply skeptical of Tlass, believing he's far too close to the regime and nothing more than a fair-weather friend.

Mahmoud Othman, a member of the opposition Syrian National Council, said Tlass would simply "bring back the regime with a different image."

"Those who recently defected from the regime must not take part in leading the transitional period," Othman told The Associated Press from Istanbul, where he is based. "After the transitional period, the Syrian people will choose whomever they want through the ballots."

Tlass, a commander in the powerful Republican Guard and the son of a former defense minister, defected in early July. Although the regime has remained largely intact over the course of the 17-month-old uprising, the pace of defections appears to be picking up.

"I will try to help as much as I

can to unite all the honorable people inside and outside Syria to put together a roadmap to get us out of this crisis, whether there is a role for me or not," he told the Al-Sharq Al-Awsat daily in an interview.

He said he was in Saudi Arabia — a key financial backer of the rebellion — to assess what kind of assistance the oil-rich nation could give to help create a new Syria. He said he does not see a future for Syria with Assad at the helm.

On Thursday, Turkey's Foreign Ministry announced a surprise visit by Tlass. He was to attend a dinner with Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu, who has been an outspoken Assad critic.

In the three weeks since his defection he has spoken publicly only twice, both times to Saudi-

controlled media.

Tlass, once a personal friend of Assad, told Al-Sharq Al-Awsat that the regime has many good people without blood on their hands and that the country's institutions should be preserved. He said he tried to persuade the president not to listen to his inner circle of security advisers who were all counseling for a harsh crackdown on the uprising.

Tlass said he defected when he realized the regime could not be deterred from its single-minded pursuit of crushing the opposition.

"Sometimes in a friendship you advise a friend many times, and then you discover that you aren't having any impact, so you decide to distance yourself," he said.

On Wednesday, he said the fire department was called to a small grass fire along Highway 50 near the Thursday blazes. A cigarette was believed to be the cause.

"Please use an ashtray," Nickles said. "One of these times, we're not going to be so lucky, and the fire is going to extend beyond the road ditch."

Earlier this week, the Lester-ville Fire Department was called to a grass fire near Highway 46 and 433rd Avenue. In that case, a vehicle being driven through a pasture sparked the blaze.

"It's not taking much of anything to get a fire started right now," Nickles said.

You can follow Nathan Johnson on Twitter at [twitter.com/AnhlandVoyage](https://twitter.com/AnhlandVoyage)

## Wildfires

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Wight said firefighters believe the flames could be contained by Sunday.

The reopening of the entire Niobrara River, which is visited by thousands of people every summer, will provide an important economic boost to the region. The weekends are the busiest time on the river.

The river downstream of Smith Falls State Park has been closed since early this week as a precaution because helicopters were drawing out water out to fight the fire. Officials plan to open that stretch of the river Friday.

That means the 31 miles of the river that's the most popular for floating downstream will be open. Egelhoff said only a few of her clients canceled for the weekend, so she expects to be busy

after spending the past week worrying about fire.

"We're just very, very relieved that we're all still standing," Egelhoff said. "We have a lot to be thankful for."

Fire officials say the cost of battling the fires will add up to a staggering figure. Region 24 Emergency Manager Doug Fox, who oversaw the first few days of the fight, said fuel costs alone for the all the fire departments will be huge.

Fox told KBRB radio in Ainsworth that the fuel bill for the Ainsworth Fire Department is roughly \$150,000 so far, and the Springview Fire Department has racked up a \$60,000 fuel bill. That's more than either department's entire annual budgets.

Fox said the fire departments will need state and federal help to pay for those costs. Donations also may help pay some of the bills.

## YFD

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Those fires weren't the first of the day for the department.

A call was received at 9:15 a.m. of a car fire in the 500 block of Broadway Avenue.

"It appeared that the car blew its transmission lines and caught fire," Nickles said. "The car was a total loss, but there were no injuries."

Firefighters were on the scene for about 30 minutes.

The department was also called to an ATV accident along Deer Boulevard south of Highway 50 at 7:42 a.m. Thursday.

An adult male lost control of a four-wheeler and rolled it.

"He had some injuries and was transported to the hospital," Nickles said.

## Obama Not Seeking New Gun Laws

WASHINGTON (AP) — Even as the issue of guns shifts to the forefront of the presidential campaign, the White House and the Senate's top Democrat made it clear Thursday that new gun legislation will not be on the political agenda this year. Instead, President Barack Obama intends to focus on other ways to combat gun violence — a position not unlike that of his rival, Mitt Romney.

Days after the mass shootings in Colorado, White House spokesman Jay Carney said Obama still supports a ban on the sale of assault weapons, a restriction that expired in 2004. But he added: "There are things we can do short of legislation and short of gun laws that can reduce violence in our society."

Carney's comments came the day after Obama, in a speech to an African-American group Wednesday in New Orleans, embraced some degree of additional restrictions on guns. He acknowledged that not enough had been done to keep weapons out of the hands of criminals and pledged to work with lawmakers from both parties to move forward on the matter.

Carney also spoke as a prominent gun control group called on Obama and Romney to lead a search for solutions to gun violence. The Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence said both candidates owe voters concrete plans and appealed to them not to duck the issue.

In the Senate, Majority Leader Harry Reid said Thursday that the Senate would not consider the gun issue this year, even though he agreed with Obama's remarks in New Orleans.

## Sandusky Accuser Says He Plans To Sue

HARRISBURG, Pa. (AP) — For months, the identity of the boy who was sexually assaulted in the locker room showers by Jerry Sandusky was one of the biggest mysteries of the Penn State scandal. Now, for the first time, a man has come forward to claim he was that boy, and is threatening to sue the university.

The man's lawyers said Thursday they have done an extensive investigation and gathered "overwhelming evidence" on details of the abuse by Sandusky, the former assistant football coach convicted of using his position at Penn State and as head of a youth charity to molest boys over a period of 15 years.

Jurors convicted Sandusky last month of offenses related to so-called Victim 2 largely on the testimony of Mike McQueary, who was a team graduate assistant at the time and described seeing the attack.

"Our client has to live the rest of his life not only dealing with the effects of Sandusky's childhood sexual abuse, but also with the knowledge that many powerful adults, including those at the highest levels of Penn State, put their own interests and the interests of a child predator above their legal obligations to protect him," the lawyers said in a news release.

They did not name their client, and The Associated Press generally does not identify victims of sex crimes without their consent.

## Facebook's Revenue Grows But Stock Tumbles

NEW YORK (AP) — Facebook's first earnings report as a public company had solid numbers, but in the end it landed with a thud — much like its rocky initial public offering two months ago.

Facebook reported stronger-than-expected revenue and a gain in user numbers Thursday. But investors weren't impressed and after a brief spike, its stock fell more than 10 percent, or \$2.74, to \$24.10 in after-hours trading.

The decline means Facebook's stock will most likely open at its lowest level since going public.

It's another big disappointment for the Harvard-born company that was supposed to usher in the next Internet boom.

"They didn't break any banks," said Debra Aho Williamson, an analyst at research firm eMarketer. "They did not come out any better than anybody had expected."

Even so, Facebook Inc. said revenue grew 32 percent to \$1.18 billion from \$895 million a year ago.

## Culture War Flares Over Chicken Sandwiches

ATLANTA (AP) — All of a sudden, biting into a fried chicken sandwich has become a political statement.

Chick-fil-A, the fast-food chain known for putting faith ahead of profits by closing on Sundays, is standing firm in its opposition to gay marriage after touching off a furor earlier this month.

Gay rights groups have called for a boycott, the Jim Henson Co. pulled its Muppet toys from kids' meals, and politicians in Boston and Chicago told the chain it is not welcome there.

Across the Bible Belt, where most of the 1,600 restaurants are situated, Christian conservatives have thrown their support behind the Atlanta-based company, promising to buy chicken sandwiches and waffle fries next week on "Chick-fil-A Appreciation Day."

The latest skirmish in the nation's culture wars began when Chick-fil-A president Dan Cathy told the Baptist Press that the company was "guilty as charged" for backing "the biblical definition of a family."

In a later radio interview, he ratcheted up the rhetoric: "I think we are inviting God's judgment on our nation when we shake our fist at him and say, 'We know better than you as to what constitutes a marriage.'"

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