

Syria Tries To Root Out Rebels In Aleppo

BEIRUT (AP) — Syrian tanks and artillery pounded rebel-held neighborhoods in the commercial hub of Aleppo on Sunday in a bid to retake control as President Bashar Assad's regime accused regional powerhouses Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Turkey of trying to destroy the country.

Activists say opposition fighters control large swaths of territory across Syria's largest city. The government has been struggling for a week to beat back their assault and stem the tide of recent rebel advances in the civil war.

The head of the main opposition group, the Syrian National Council, called for international help in arming the rebels to face the regime's heavy weaponry, particularly tanks.

"If the international community cannot act, they should support the opposition with anti-tanks missiles and anti-aircraft rockets," Abdel Basset Sida told the Gulf News during a stopover in Abu Dhabi. "We seek international supporters to arm our uprising against the regime."

Saudi Arabia and Qatar have expressed willingness to help fund the rebels and they are believed to be funneling money through Turkey to the opposition, which is using it to purchase arms and equipment.

DA: Mass. Dad Shot 2 Kids, Then Killed Self

WORCESTER, Mass. (AP) — A man who had recently separated from his wife shot his two children, killing his 7-year-old daughter, before committing suicide, prosecutors said.

A family member called police Saturday night after finding the bodies of 41-year-old Daryl Benway and his daughter, Abigail, in the master bedroom of their two-story Oxford home, Worcester County District Attorney Joseph Early Jr. said.

Benway's 9-year-old son, Owen, was found shot in the head in the kitchen and was taken to UMass Memorial Children's Medical Center in serious condition. Owen has been in pediatric intensive care, a spokesman for Early said Sunday. He said he had no additional information about Owen Benway's condition, and a hospital spokeswoman would not comment.

Benway's wife, Kelleen, returned home after the shootings, unaware of what had happened, and found a swarm of police cruisers and television crews, Early said. She was taken to the children's hospital, where authorities told her the fates of her children and husband.

Neighbors told the Telegram & Gazette that Daryl Benway's brother Shawn lived on the first floor of the home with his wife and mother. Shawn Benway called 911 to report the shootings, Early said.

Romanian Referendum Sees Low Turnout

BUCHAREST, Romania (AP) — Exit polls indicate that Romanians have voted to impeach their president, but he is claiming the turnout was too low for the national referendum to be legally binding.

Two exit polls said more than 80 percent voted Sunday to impeach President Traian Basescu, but they did not predict the final turnout. By law, such referendums are invalid if less than half the electorate cast ballots in them.

Three hours before the polls closed, Romania's Central Election Bureau said the turnout was just 37.67 percent. It did not immediately give the outcome of the referendum or the turnout total.

But Basescu claimed on national TV that he had survived the vote because of the low turnout, saying: "Romanians have invalidated the referendum by not participating."

Police: Man Opens Fire On Relatives In Florida

MIAMI (AP) — Miami police say they are searching for a man who shot at least three people in an apparent domestic dispute.

Detective William Moreno said Sunday that 23-year-old Erin Cash was driving with his girlfriend and their 3-year-old son when she jumped out of the car. He continued on with the boy to visit relatives. The woman was not identified, but Moreno described the incident as a domestic violence situation.

Cash dropped off the boy at his mother's house before driving to a home where the woman's two brothers were. Police say Cash shot at them both and injured a bystander. Their injuries are not life-threatening.

Police say Cash has "assured" them that he won't surrender to authorities.

Americans' Views On Race Relations Divided

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — Ask Americans how race relations have changed under their first black president and they are ready with answers.

Ashley Ray, a white woman, hears more people debating racial issues. "I know a lot of people who really thought we were OK as a nation, a culture, and now they understand that we're not," she says.

Karl Douglass, a black man, sees stereotypes easing. "White people deal with me and my family differently," he says.

Jose Lozano, who is Hispanic by way of Puerto Rico, believes prejudice is emerging from the shadows. "Now the racism is coming out," he says.

In the aftermath of Barack Obama's historic victory, most people in the United States believed that race relations would improve. Nearly four years later, has that dream come true? Americans have no shortage of thoughtful opinions, and no consensus.

'Dark Knight' Stays Atop Box Office With \$64M

LOS ANGELES (AP) — "The Dark Knight Rises" stayed atop the box office for the second straight weekend, making just over \$64 million. But it's lagging behind the staggering numbers of its predecessor, 2008's "The Dark Knight."

The final piece in Christopher Nolan's Batman trilogy has now grossed more than \$289 million in its first 10 days in theaters. It dropped 60 percent from its opening weekend of \$160.9 million.

By comparison, "The Dark Knight" took a 53 percent drop in its second weekend with a gross of nearly \$75.2 million and a 10-day cumulative gross of \$313.8 million.

In second place this weekend was the animated family film "Ice Age: Continental Drift," which is still going strong in its third week. It made \$13.3 million for a domestic total of nearly \$114.9 million.

The 20th Century Fox comedy "The Watch" came in third place with \$13 million. Big-name comic actors Ben Stiller, Vince Vaughn and Jonah Hill play a group of guys who come together to form a neighborhood watch; despite the star power, the film was panned critically, receiving only 14 percent positive reviews on the Rotten Tomatoes website.

And "Step Up Revolution" — the fourth film in the dance franchise, which is set in Miami this time — opened at No. 4 with \$11.8 million.

Decision 2012

In Israel, Romney Warns Iran

BY KASIE HUNT
Associated Press

JERUSALEM — Standing on Israeli soil, U.S. presidential candidate Mitt Romney on Sunday declared Jerusalem to be the capital of the Jewish state and said the United States has "a solemn duty and a moral imperative" to block Iran from achieving nuclear weapons capability.

"Make no mistake, the ayatollahs in Iran are testing our moral defenses. They want to know who will object and who will look the other way," he said. "We will not look away nor will our country ever look away from our passion and commitment to Israel."

The presidential election hovered over the speech. The Old City formed a made-for-television backdrop behind Romney, while some of his campaign donors listened in the audience.

Romney's declaration that Jerusalem is Israel's capital was matter-of-fact and in keeping with claims made by Israeli governments for decades, even though the United States, like other nations, maintains its embassy in Tel Aviv.



Romney

He did not say if he would order the embassy moved if he wins the White House, but strongly suggested so in a CNN interview.

"My understanding is the policy of our nation has been a desire to move our embassy ultimately to the capital (Jerusalem)," he said, adding, "I would only want to do so and to select the timing in accordance with the government of Israel."

His remarks on the subject during his speech drew a standing ovation from his audience, which included Sheldon Adelson, the American businessman who has said he will donate millions to help elect Romney to the White House.

Romney's embrace of Israel was on display throughout the day when he met with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and other leaders. He also visited the Western Wall, Judaism's holiest site, where he was mobbed by worshippers. In addition, Romney met with Palestinian

Prime Minister Salam Fayyad.

In his remarks, Romney steered clear of overt criticism of President Barack Obama, even though he said the threat of a nuclear-armed Iran "has only become worse" in the past five years.

In an unspoken rebuttal to Obama and other critics, Romney said, "It is sometimes said that those who are the most committed to stopping the Iranian regime from security nuclear weapons are reckless and provocative and inviting war."

"The opposite is true. We are the true peacemakers," he said.

The former Massachusetts governor also stepped back from a comment a senior aide made a short while before the speech.

"We recognize Israel's right to defend itself," he told the audience. Earlier, the aide, Dan Senor, previewed the speech for reporters, saying that "if Israel has to take action on its own, in order to stop Iran from developing the capability, the governor would respect that decision."



Signs and banners are a huge component at the public memorial site for the 12 killed last week in the Century 16 Theaters in Aurora, Colo., on Saturday. In the age of Twitter and instant messages, the handmade signs are a low-tech way for the community to communicate their feelings, passions and aid in the healing.

Colorado Theater Lacked Security, Unlike Some Peers

BY MIKE BAKER AND NICHOLAS RICCARDI
Associated Press

DENVER — The Colorado movie theater complex that was the scene of a gunman's massacre this month didn't have any uniformed security guards on duty the night of the shooting, even though other theaters operated by the same company did provide such protection for the busy premiere of the Batman film "The Dark Knight Rises."

It's impossible to know whether guards — often off-duty police officers — at the Aurora Century 16 would have spotted the suspected gunman, James Holmes, and thwarted the attack that left 12 moviegoers dead and dozens wounded on July 20.

Officers hired as guards are generally armed and usually spend their time roaming the complex, checking bags or dealing with minor disputes.

Cinemark provided off-duty police guards at the Aurora theater on busy Friday and Saturday nights. As for other nights of the week, theater operators decide on a case-by-case basis whether to hire security, depending on the likelihood of trouble. The attack came early Friday, shortly after the midnight screening of the Batman film began.

Larry Lowak, whose son Brent was among the wounded, said security personnel on the scene possibly could have stopped the gunman, and he was dismayed to learn that guards weren't on hand.

"If you bring in security on Friday or Saturday, you sure as hell want to bring it in for this particular function," Lowak said.

Plano, Texas-based Cinemark, which operates the Aurora theater, declined to explain why guards weren't provided in Aurora that night and declined to discuss safety policies in general.

Through interviews with police officers and officials outside the theater company, The Associated Press was able to identify places around the country that did use armed security workers for the July 19-20 Batman showings — including places like Beaumont, Texas; Lake

Charles, La., and Tupelo, Miss.

Some other locations, including a Cinema Century 16 theater in the western Denver suburb of Lakewood, did not have security.

Aurora Police Chief Dan Oates has said that the Cinemark in Aurora normally uses off-duty officers to provide security on weekend nights but did not have any working for the July 19 showings that went into the next morning. The theater does not have an unusually high record of complaints or crimes, police Sgt. Cassidee Carlson said.

In Moosic, Pa., Cinemark has worked for years with off-duty officers from the local police department — typically on Fridays and Saturdays — and authorities said they were asked to provide two officers on July 19 because the midnight showing was likely to be a major event.

"If they're expecting large crowds, they call our department for additional police presence," said Moosic Borough Police Officer James Giehl.

Two major multiplexes in Amarillo, Texas, including one Cinemark facility, also ensured that off-duty uniformed police officers were present for the first screenings of the Batman film. Amarillo Police Cpl. Jerry Neufeld said that the off-duty officers work in pairs; the town's theaters made a point of asking for them on the busy opening night.

There were no incidents at the screenings, and Neufeld said he heard that people were, as always, happy to see people there to deal with any dangers.

"When they're there, they're visible, people see them and people come in and say, 'hey man, we're glad you're here,'" Neufeld said. "It gives people a sense of calm."

The Aurora shooting has stirred discussion about appropriate security precautions at gathering places commonly considered safe from the cares and worries of the outside world. Experts say that security at public venues has increased substantially over the past decade, but they also note that it's impossible to maintain perfect safety at all times.

Panetta Says Syria's Assad Hastening Own Demise

BY ROBERT BURNS
AP National Security Writer

TUNIS, Tunisia — Syrian President Bashar Assad's use of helicopter gunships to counter a civil uprising will prove to be "a nail in Assad's coffin," U.S. Defense Secretary Leon Panetta said Sunday at the outset of a five-day Mideast tour.



Panetta

While giving no indication that the Obama administration is contemplating military intervention, Panetta said it is increasingly clear that the Syrian crisis is deepening and that Assad is hastening his own demise.

"If they continue this kind of tragic attack on their own people... I think it ultimately will be a nail in Assad's coffin," Panetta told reporters traveling with him from Washington. "His regime is coming to an end."

Panetta said he would use his meetings in Tunisia, Egypt, Israel and Jordan to reinforce an international consensus that Assad must step down and allow a peaceful transition to a democratic form of government.

He said he also will continue consultations on efforts to ensure that Syria's stockpiles of chemical weapons do not fall into the wrong hands.

Panetta will be in Israel just days after U.S. Republican presidential hopeful Mitt Romney, who has cast the Obama administration as too soft on Iran and insufficiently supportive of the Jewish state.

In a speech in Jerusalem Sunday, Romney said the United States has "a solemn duty and a moral imperative" to block Iran from achieving nuclear weapons capability. He steered clear of overt criticism of President Barack Obama, even though he said the threat of a nuclear-armed Iran "has only become worse" in the past five years.

Panetta declined to respond. "I'm just not going to get into that game of commenting on what candidates do," he said.

Panetta said he believes Israeli leaders still support an international campaign of economic, political and diplomatic pressure on Iran to prevent it from obtaining a nuclear weapon.

"My view is that they have not made any decisions with regards to" attacking Iran, he said.

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