

Romney Stirs New Controversy On Global Trip

GDANSK, Poland (AP) — It wasn't supposed to be this way.
Mitt Romney outraged Palestinians on Monday, stirring fresh controversy on his visit to Israel just days after insulting the British on what was intended as a feel-good visit to the Olympics in London.
Whether or not the trip changes votes back home, the effect hasn't seemed to be what Romney's presidential campaign had in mind.



Romney

His first steps onto the world stage as President Barack Obama's Republican challenger were carefully crafted to avoid political risk. He visited countries that are staunch U.S. allies, limited questions from the media and arranged made-for-TV appearances at symbolic venues in London and Jerusalem. It was all intended to demonstrate he was ready to handle foreign affairs smoothly and lead during dangerous times.
Instead, as he made his final stop of a three-nation tour in Poland late Monday, Republicans and Democrats alike were shaking their heads in the U.S. Though Republicans said they saw no lasting harm, Democrats raised questions about Romney's ability to handle delicate topics with sensitivity on foreign soil, even under the friendliest conditions.

Conservatives Take Aim At Moderate GOPers

TOPEKA, Kan. (AP) — Frustrated by their inability to achieve some policy goals, conservatives in Republican states are turning against moderate members of their own party, trying to drive them out of state legislatures to clear the way for reshaping government across a wide swath of mid-America controlled by the GOP.
Political groups are helping finance the efforts by supporting primary election challenges targeting several dozen moderate Republicans in the Midwest and South, especially prominent lawmakers who run key state committees.
Two years after Republicans swept into power in many state capitals, the challengers say it's time to adopt more conservative policies. "If you don't believe in that playbook, then why are you on the team?" declared Greg Smith, a Kansas state representative who's running for the state Senate, with the goal of making it more conservative.
The push is most intense in Kansas, where conservatives are attempting to replace a dozen moderate Republican senators who bucked new Gov. Sam Brownback's move to slash state income taxes.

AP: Dems May Formally Back Gay Marriage

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Democratic Party is moving to include support for gay marriage in the official party platform for the first time, a Democratic official said Monday, marking a key milestone for advocates of same-sex unions.
The party's platform drafting committee voted to include language backing gay marriage during a weekend meeting in Minneapolis, the official said. Democratic delegates will formally approve the platform during the party convention in Charlotte, N.C., in early September.
President Barack Obama will officially accept his party's nomination at the convention, which marks the start of the fall campaign blitz. Republican rival Mitt Romney will get the GOP nomination a week earlier during his party's convention in Tampa, Fla.

Indian Power Failure Puts 370M In Dark

NEW DELHI (AP) — A power grid failure blacked out northern India for hours Monday, halting trains, forcing hospitals and airports onto backup power and providing a dark, sweltering reminder of the nation's inability to meet its energy needs as it strives to be an economic power.
While the midsummer outage was unique in its reach — it hit 370 million people, more than the population of the United States and Canada combined — its impact was softened by Indians' familiarity with almost daily blackouts of varying duration. Hospitals and major businesses have backup generators that seamlessly kick in during power cuts, and upscale homes are hooked to backup systems powered by truck batteries.
Nonetheless, some small businesses were forced to shut for the day. Buildings were without water because the pumps weren't working, and the vaunted New Delhi Metro, with 1.8 million daily riders, was paralyzed during the morning commute.
"This will obviously get worse," said Subhash Chawla, a 65-year-old retiree who took the Metro once power was restored. "Unless the Metro has a separate power supply, it will be chaos in the future."

Obama May Be Descended From African Slave

SALT LAKE CITY (AP) — A team of genealogists has found evidence that President Barack Obama could be a descendant of an African slave — but not through the lineage of his black father, the most likely route researchers had followed and exhausted.
The link, genealogists with Ancestry.com said Monday, is, in fact, through an examination of his white mother's family history.
"We were surprised and excited to make that connection," said Joseph Shumway, a member of the Utah-based Ancestry.com team.
Obama's father was from Kenya and his mother was from Kansas. It had been generally assumed that the president had no slave ancestors because researchers couldn't find it through the lineage of his father. However, no one had yet performed any exhaustive research into the lineage of his white mother, who turns out to have a mixed-raced family history.
Ancestry.com now said the maternal line traces back to one of the first documented African slaves in the U.S.
The company said Obama could be the 11th great-grandson of John Punch, an African slave in colonial Virginia. He is believed to have had children with a white woman, starting a family line that led generations later to Obama's mother.
The White House declined comment Monday.

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Syria

Tens Of Thousands Flee Aleppo

BY BASSEM MROUE AND ZEINA KARAM
Associated Press

BUKULMEZ, Turkey — Smoking a cigarette outside a Turkish hospital near the Syrian border, a man in a gray gown and flip-flops held his sleeping 2-year-old daughter, Aya. On Aya's right eye was a bandage. In her left hand was a chocolate bar.
Aya lost her eye when she was struck by shrapnel from a shell that also killed her 8-month-old brother, Mohammad, and their mother. The father and daughter were among some 200,000 people who the U.N. said late Sunday have fled Syria's largest city, Aleppo, during days of clashes between rebels and the military.
Aleppo residents, some severely wounded, are packing up belongings and loading them onto cars, trucks and even motorcycles to seek temporary shelter in rural villages and schools outside the city and dusty tents across the border in Turkey.
In interviews with The Associated Press, refugees described a city besieged by government troops and beset by incessant shelling. Food supplies and gasoline are running low and black market prices for everyday staples are soaring.
As the violence intensified, the country's most senior diplomat in London defected. Charge d'affaires Khaled al-Ayoubi is the latest in a string of high-profile diplomats to abandon President Bashar Assad's regime over a crack-down that, according to rights activists, has

killed more than 19,000 people since March 2011.
The battle for Aleppo, a city of 3 million that was once a bastion of support for Assad, is critical for both the regime and the opposition. Its fall would give the opposition a major strategic victory with a stronghold in the north. A rebel defeat, at the very least, would buy Assad more time.
Activists said regime forces were shelling rebel-held districts of the city and a cluster of surrounding villages relentlessly on Monday, sending entire families and panicked residents fleeing. Many went to Turkey, some 30 miles (50 kilometers) away, where tens of thousands of Syrians have already found refuge during the uprising.
Reem, a woman in her 30s who fled Aleppo's rebel-held district of Saif al-Dawleh, was among those who showed up in Turkey on Monday.
"The situation in Aleppo is dreadful," she told the AP soon after arriving at the Bukulmez illegal border crossing, where she was greeted by Turkish soldiers.
"Had it been merely bearable I wouldn't have left my home," she said.
Wearing a black head scarf and black robe and sandals, Reem described hiding for three days in a room near the entrance of the building in which she lived. She then fled to a village near the Turkish border before crossing over on Monday.
"I blame the regime for everything. People in the city used to go out and protest peacefully,

but they just shot at them," said Reem, who would not give her last name.
Turkish troops ordered an AP team to leave shortly after journalists began interviewing refugees at the border crossing Monday.
Outside the state-run hospital, Aya's father recounted how his family's tragedy unfolded.
"I was at work when I received the call that a shell had hit my house," he said. "As soon as I returned, I found my wife and son dead on the floor. Part of my son's skull was blown off, and Aya was wounded."
"The whole city is destroyed," said Aya's father, who would not give his name but said that he was from the rebel-held district of Bustan al-Qasr.
The U.N. said 200,000 Syrians have left Aleppo over the past 10 days as the government trains its mortars, tanks and helicopter gunships on the neighborhoods seized by the rebels.
"I am extremely concerned by the impact of shelling and use of tanks and other heavy weapons on people in Aleppo," Valerie Amos, the top U.N. official for humanitarian affairs, said in a statement late Sunday. "Many people have sought temporary shelter in schools and other public buildings in safer areas," she added. "They urgently need food, mattresses and blankets, hygiene supplies and drinking water."
"It is not known how many people remain trapped in places where fighting continues today," she warned.

House, Senate Leaders Move To Avoid Shutdown

BY ANDREW TAYLOR
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The rival party leaders on Capitol Hill are moving to avert any chance of a government shutdown this fall in advance of the presidential election, congressional aides said Monday.
Republican House Speaker John Boehner of Ohio and Democratic Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid of Nevada instead are likely to soon unveil a stopgap spending agreement that would keep the government on autopilot at basically current funding levels after the 2012 budget year closes on Sept. 30.



Reid

Reid had tipped his hand last week, saying his preference was for a longer-term stop-gap measure that would take the issue off the table in a post-election lame duck session that's already facing lots of must-do legislation on taxes and averting tough, automatic spending cuts to the Pentagon, domestic programs and Medicare payments to doctors.
An agreement could be announced as early as Tuesday, aides say. They required anonymity because they were not authorized to speak on the record about the developments.
Despite costing more than many Republicans conservatives would like, many of them support the idea because it would avoid the chance that the lame-duck session would produce a foot-tall omnibus spending bill that would upset their tea party supporters. They're also looking for a better deal if, as they hope, likely GOP nominee Mitt Romney wins the White House and Republicans take back the Senate.

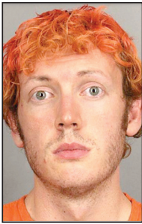
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Colo. Suspect Charged With Murder In Wake Of Theater Massacre

CENTENNIAL, Colo. (AP) — James Holmes appeared just as dazed as he did in his first court appearance last week after the deadly Colorado movie theater shootings.
In a packed Denver-area courtroom Monday, Holmes, 24, sat silently and did not react as he heard formal charges against him, including first-degree murder for each of the 12 who died and attempted murder for each of the 58 people who were injured in one of the deadliest mass shootings in recent U.S. history.
At one point, a shackled Holmes, still with his hair dyed orange-red, leaned over to speak with one of his lawyers and furrowed his brow.
When the judge asked the former neuroscience student if he agreed with his attorney's request to delay a future court hearing so his defense team could have more time to prepare, Holmes said softly: "Yeah."
Some of the people in the court wore Batman T-shirts. Several people clasped their hands and bowed their heads as if in prayer before the hearing. At least one victim attended, and she was in a wheelchair and had bandages on her leg and arm. One unidentified man glared at Holmes throughout the hearing.



Holmes

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