

Odor Leads To Grisly Find In Cleveland

EAST CLEVELAND, Ohio (AP) — Authorities responding to a report of a foul odor from a home discovered a body and arrested a registered sex offender who led police on a gruesome hunt through a poor Ohio neighborhood in a search for potentially more victims, officials said Sunday.

East Cleveland Police Chief Ralph Spotts said Sunday that searchers should be prepared to find one or two more victims, but he declined to elaborate. Mayor Gary Norton said the suspect has indicated he might have been influenced by Cleveland serial killer Anthony Sowell, who was convicted in 2011 of murdering 11 women and sentenced to death.

It's the latest in a series of high-profile cases involving the disappearance of women from the Cleveland area.

One body was found Friday in a garage. Two others were found Saturday — one in a backyard and the other in the basement of a vacant house. The bodies, believed to be female and all wrapped in plastic bags, were found about 100 to 200 yards apart, and authorities believed the victims were killed in the last six to 10 days.

Searchers rummaging through vacant houses in the same neighborhood Sunday were warned by Spotts to brace themselves for the smell of rotting bodies and to look out for trash bags that might conceal a body. He declined to elaborate on his comments about the possible additional victims.

Obama Set For New Economic Speeches

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Barack Obama will return this week to an Illinois college where he once spelled out a vision for an expanded and strengthened middle class as a freshman U.S. senator, long before the Great Recession would test his presidency.

The address Wednesday at Knox College in Galesburg, Ill., will be the first in a new series of economic speeches that White House aides say Obama will deliver over the next several weeks ahead of key budget deadlines in the fall, including the start of a new fiscal year in October.

Obama will talk about efforts to expand manufacturing, sign up the uninsured for health care coverage, revitalize the housing industry and broaden educational opportunities for preschoolers and college students. He will also promote the economic benefits of an immigration overhaul.



Obama

Israelis, Palestinians Leery Before Talks

JERUSALEM (AP) — Israeli and Palestinian officials voiced skepticism Sunday that they can move toward a peace deal, as the sides inched toward what may be the first round of significant negotiations in five years.

U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry announced late last week that an agreement has been reached that establishes the basis for resuming peace talks. He cautioned that such an agreement still needs to be formalized, suggesting that gaps remain.

In his first on-camera comment Sunday, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu appeared to lower expectations by saying the talks will be tough and any agreement would have to be ratified by Israelis in a national referendum.

Netanyahu pledged to insist on Israel's security needs above all — saying his main guiding principles will be to maintain a Jewish majority in Israel and avoid a future Palestinian state in the West Bank becoming an Iranian-backed "terror state."

A lifelong hawk, Netanyahu has been a reluctant late-comer to the idea of Palestinian statehood, and his critics say he uses the pretext of security to avoid engaging in good-faith negotiations.

Hagel Offers Little Hope For Budget Help

JOINT BASE CHARLESTON, S.C. (AP) — The audience gasped in surprise and gave a few low whistles as Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel delivered the news that furloughs, which have forced a 20 percent pay cut on most of the military's civilian workforce, probably will continue next year, and it might get worse.

"Those are the facts of life," Hagel told about 300 Defense Department employees, most of them middle-aged civilians, last week at an Air Force reception hall on a military base in Charleston.

Future layoffs also are possible for the department's civilian workforce of more than 800,000 employees, Hagel said, if Congress fails to stem the cuts in the next budget year, which starts Oct. 1.

On the heels of the department's first furlough day, and in three days of visits with members of the Army, Navy, Air Force and Marine Corps, Hagel played the unenviable role of messenger to a frustrated and fearful workforce coping with the inevitability of a spending squeeze at the end of more than a decade of constant and costly war.

The fiscal crunch also lays bare the politically unpopular, if perhaps necessary, need to bring runaway military costs in line with most of the rest of the American public that has struggled economically for years.

Syrian Mortar Rounds Hit Town Market

AMMAN, Jordan (AP) — Government troops fired mortar rounds that slammed into a main market in a town in northern Syria on Sunday, killing at least 20 civilians, activist groups said.

The mortar shells struck the town of Ariha, which is held mostly by opposition fighters, a few hours ahead of iftar, the meal that breaks the dawn-to-dusk fast during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan.

The U.K.-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights and the Local Coordination Committees, two opposition groups tracking the violence in Syria, said at least 20 people were killed including two children and two women. It was not immediately clear what triggered the shelling.

Also Sunday, state media said government forces killed nearly 50 rebels in an ambush near Damascus.

Separately, Kurdish rebels freed the local commander of an al-Qaida-linked group in a town near Syria's northern border with Turkey in return for 300 Kurdish civilians detained by the group, as part of an agreement to end rebel infighting that erupted a day earlier in the region.

Despite Outcry, Repeal Of Stand-Ground Laws Unlikely

BY CURT ANDERSON

AP Legal Affairs Writer

MIAMI — Despite an outcry from civil rights groups, a call for close examination by President Barack Obama and even a 1960s-style sit-in at the Florida governor's office, the jury's verdict that George Zimmerman was justified in shooting unarmed teenager Trayvon Martin is unlikely to spur change to any of the nation's stand-your-ground self-defense laws.

"I support stand your ground," Republican Arizona Gov. Jan Brewer said last week.

"I do not see any reason to change it," said Georgia Gov. Nathan Deal, also a Republican.

At least 21 states have laws similar to that in Florida, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures. Many are conservative and lean toward laws that defend gun owners' rights. So far, there does not appear to be an appetite in Florida or other states to repeal or change the laws, which generally eliminate a person's duty to retreat in the face of a serious physical threat. In fact, some states are moving in the opposite direction.

"The debate about stand-your-ground laws largely reproduces existing divisions in American politics, particularly between blacks and whites and between Democrats and Republicans," said John Sides, associate professor of political science at George Washington University.

Zimmerman, a 29-year-old former neighborhood watch volunteer, was acquitted this month of second-degree murder and manslaughter charges in the 2012 shooting of 17-year-old Martin in a gated commu-



DAN HONDA/BAY AREA NEWS GROUP/MCT
Nathan Pitts, 6, of Brentwood, Calif., holds a sign at a rally held at the Ronald V. Dellums Federal Building in Oakland Saturday. The march and rally for peace and justice also coincided with a national day of protest called by the Rev. Al Sharpton to demonstrate against the verdict in the George Zimmerman-Trayvon Martin case.

nity in Sanford, Fla. Zimmerman told police he shot Martin only after the African-American teenager physically attacked him; Martin's family and supporters say Zimmerman, who identifies himself as Hispanic, racially profiled Martin as a potential criminal and wrongly followed him.

Zimmerman's lawyers decided not to pursue a pretrial immunity hearing allowed by Florida's stand-your-ground law. But jurors were told in final instructions by Circuit Judge Debra Nelson that they should acquit Zimmerman if they found "he had no duty to retreat and had the right to stand his ground and meet force with force, including deadly force if he reasonably

believed that it was necessary."

Before the stand-your-ground law was passed in 2005, the instruction would have read that Zimmerman "cannot justify his use of force likely to cause death or great bodily harm if by retreating he could have avoided the need to use that force."

Since the law was enacted, justifiable homicides in Florida have risen from an annual average of 13.2 between 2001 and 2005 to an average of 42 between 2006 and 2012, including a record 66 in 2012, according to the Florida Department of Law Enforcement. FBI data have shown similar increases in some states that enacted similar laws, such as Texas,

while others haven't seen an uptick.

Beyond Florida, these states have some form of a stand-your-ground law, according to the national group: Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, Georgia, Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Michigan, Mississippi, Montana, Nevada, New Hampshire, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Utah and West Virginia.

Attorney General Eric Holder, in a speech last week to the NAACP convention in Orlando, said the Martin shooting demonstrates a need to re-examine stand-your-ground laws nationwide. He said they "senselessly expand the concept of self-defense" and increase the possibility of deadly confrontations.

On Friday, Obama said the nation needed to do some "soul-searching." He questioned whether a law could really promote peace and security if it sent a message that someone who is armed "has the right to use those firearms even if there is a way for them to exit from a situation."

Civil rights leaders, including the Rev. Al Sharpton, said they would push for repeal of the laws, starting in Florida, where a group of young protesters occupied GOP Gov. Rick Scott's office demanding change.

"If we can do it in Florida, we can affect other states," Sharpton said last week.

On Saturday, Sharpton's National Action Network organized "Justice for Trayvon" rallies in more than 100 cities. In addition to pushing for federal civil rights charges against Zimmerman, the rallies attacked stand-your-ground laws.

After 3 Years, House GOP Has No Alternative To Obamacare

By The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Three years after campaigning on a vow to "repeal and replace" President Barack Obama's health care law, House Republicans have yet to advance an alternative for the system they have voted more than three dozen times to abolish in whole or in part.

Officially, the effort is "in progress" — and has been since Jan. 19, 2011, according to GOP.gov, a leadership-run website.

But internal divisions, disagreement about political tactics and Obama's 2012 reelection add up to uncertainty over whether Republicans will vote on a plan of their own before the 2014 elections, or if not by then, perhaps before the president leaves office, more than six years after the original promise.

Sixteen months before those elections, some Republicans cite no need to offer an alternative. "I don't think it's a matter of what we put on the floor right now," said Rep. Greg Walden of Oregon, who heads the party's campaign committee. He added that what is important is "trying to delay Obamacare."

Rep. Fred Upton of Michigan, who leads a committee with jurisdiction over health care, said, "If we are successful in ultimately repealing this legislation, then yes, we will have a replacement bill ready to come back with."

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