

Missile Took Down Passenger Jet

WASHINGTON (AP) — American intelligence authorities believe a surface-to-air missile took down a passenger jet in eastern Ukraine on Thursday, a U.S. official said, but the Obama administration was still scrambling to confirm who launched the strike and whether there were American citizens killed in the crash.

Vice President Joe Biden said the incident was “not an accident” and described the Malaysia Airlines plane as having been “blown out of the sky.”

Among the unanswered questions was whether the missile was launched from the Russian or Ukrainian side of the border they share, according to the official, who was not authorized to discuss the matter publicly by name and insisted on anonymity. But the official said U.S. intelligence assessments suggest it is more likely pro-Russian separatists or the Russians rather than Ukrainian government forces shot down the plane.

The U.S. has sophisticated technologies that can detect missile launches, including the identification of heat from a rocket engine.

President Barack Obama, speaking during a trip to Delaware, made no mention of who might be responsible for the crash of the plane, and called the incident a “terrible tragedy.”

Microsoft To Cut 18,000 Jobs

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Microsoft announced the biggest layoffs in its 39-year history Thursday, outlining plans to cut 18,000 jobs in a move that marked the CEO's sharpest pivot yet away from his predecessor's drive for the company to make its own devices.

Although some cuts had been expected ever since Microsoft acquired Nokia's mobile-device unit, the number amounted to 14 percent of the Microsoft workforce — about twice what analysts had estimated.

The cuts will include some 12,500 jobs associated with the Nokia unit — nearly half of the 28,000 employees Microsoft brought on board in April through the acquisition.

When the cuts are complete, the company will still have about 10,000 more employees than before the Nokia acquisition, with an overall headcount of 109,000.

In a public email to employees, CEO Satya Nadella said the changes were needed for the company to “become more agile and move faster.” The move also pushes Nokia to focus solely on the Windows Phone operating system.

Robbers Intended To Take Hostages

STOCKTON, Calif. (AP) — Misty Holt-Singh had just popped into the bank, leaving her 12-year-old daughter in the car, when the horror began. An hour later, the mother of two lay dead after a bank robbery and planned hostage-taking spun into a chaotic police chase and furious gunbattle during which two holdup men were killed, authorities said.

Holt-Singh was found dead at the end of a shootout in which one of the robbers who took her hostage used her as a human shield, according to police.

“In my over two decades of law enforcement, I have never seen or experienced this type of total disregard for human life nor the intensity of the situation that our officers were faced with,” Stockton Police Chief Eric Jones said.

“It is very rare for bank robbers to take hostages. It is very rare for them to so heavily arm themselves and prepare to kill and then to actively and continually to try to kill our police officers.”

Whose bullets killed Holt-Singh remained unclear Thursday, a day after the burst of violence in this Northern California city, but police said the responsibility rests with the three bank robbers.

Some Defend Mexican Group Founder

ZAMORA, Mexico (AP) — About 500 people marched through this western Mexico city Thursday in support of the embattled but highly regarded founder of a shelter raided amid allegations of sexual and physical abuse and filthy living conditions.

Shelter founder Rosa del Carmen Verdusco, known as “Mama Rosa,” had been taking in children for about 65 years and drew support from the government, philanthropists and intellectuals for her “Gran Familia” group home.

But after a police raid on the refuse-strewn group home Tuesday, residents of the shelter told authorities that some employees beat and raped residents, fed them rotting food or locked them in a tiny “punishment” room.

Verdusco remains hospitalized under police guard as she is treated for diabetes and blood pressure problems. Eight of her employees also were detained.

“Mama Rosa, we are with you!” read signs carried by the marchers, most of who wore white T-shirts emblazoned with the slogan “I, too, am a child of Mama Rosa.”

N. Korea Threatens To Boycott Games

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — North Korea has threatened to review its decision to enter the coming Asian Games in South Korea after their talks on the games broke down.

North Korea has said it would send athletes and cheerleaders to the games is part of measures aimed at reducing tension. Many in South Korea doubt the North's sincerity, citing its recent series of missile and rocket tests.

Pyeongyang's state media on Friday accused South Korea of opposing the North, by accusing it of planning to send too many athletes and use national flags that were too big during the games when they met at a border village Thursday.

North Korea says the South Korean demands are aimed at stopping the North from attending the games and that it will re-examine its participation.

Pope Demands Justice For Attack

BUENOS AIRES, Argentina (AP) — Pope Francis is demanding justice for the victims of Argentina's worst terrorist attack, using what is increasingly becoming his signature way of communicating: an amateur smartphone video message, recorded on the fly by a visiting friend in the comfort of Francis' Vatican hotel room.

To be aired Friday during the official commemoration of the 1994 bombing of a Jewish community center in Buenos Aires that killed 85 people, the video is the latest evidence that Francis has no qualms about circumventing the Vatican's media machine to get his message out — for better or worse.

A close friend of the pope's, Claudio Epelman, executive director of the Latin American Jewish Congress, shot the video last month on his Samsung phone when he visited Francis at the Vatican. Epelman said he asked Francis, who was an auxiliary bishop in Buenos Aires at the time of the attack, if he would like to send a message to Argentina's Jewish community to mark the anniversary.

“He thought about it for half a second and said, ‘Do you have your cellphone with you?’ Epelman told The Associated Press. “And I said ‘yes’ and then he said, ‘Good, let's record it now!’”

In the message, the pope speaks off-the-cuff, with the hum of passing cars audible through the open windows of his hotel room. He condemns terrorism as “lunacy” and says Argentina must come to terms with the damage and pain the unsolved crime still causes.

“Today, together with my solidarity and my prayers for all the victims, comes my desire for justice. May justice be done!” he says.

Israel Invades Gaza After Hamas Rejects Truce

BY KARIN LAUB
AND IAN DEITCH

Associated Press

GAZA CITY, Gaza Strip — The heavy thud of tank shells, often just seconds apart, echoed across the Gaza Strip early Friday as thousands of Israeli soldiers launched a ground invasion, escalating a 10-day campaign of heavy air bombardments to try to destroy Hamas' rocket-firing abilities and the tunnels militants use to infiltrate Israel.

Flares lit up the night sky before dawn and the wail of ambulance sirens mixed with the Muslim call to prayer from mosque loudspeakers as thick smoke rose into the air from sites where shells and missiles struck.

“There is a tank shell every minute,” said an official in the Gaza security operations room, who said all of the seaside strip's border areas were being shelled and that Hamas fighters were exchanging fire with Israeli troops near a northern Gaza town.

“There is also fire from the sea toward police checkpoints.”

Israel launched the offensive late Thursday after becoming increasingly exasperated with unrelenting rocket fire from Gaza on its cities, especially following Hamas' rejection of an Egyptian cease-fire plan earlier in the week. Palestinian militants have fired more than 1,500 rockets at Israeli cities

Israel launches ground offensive

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has ordered a ground invasion across the borders of the Gaza Strip. Residents report artillery and naval bombardment from Israeli forces.

Update, July 17
Reports as of 5 p.m. ET

Recent violence

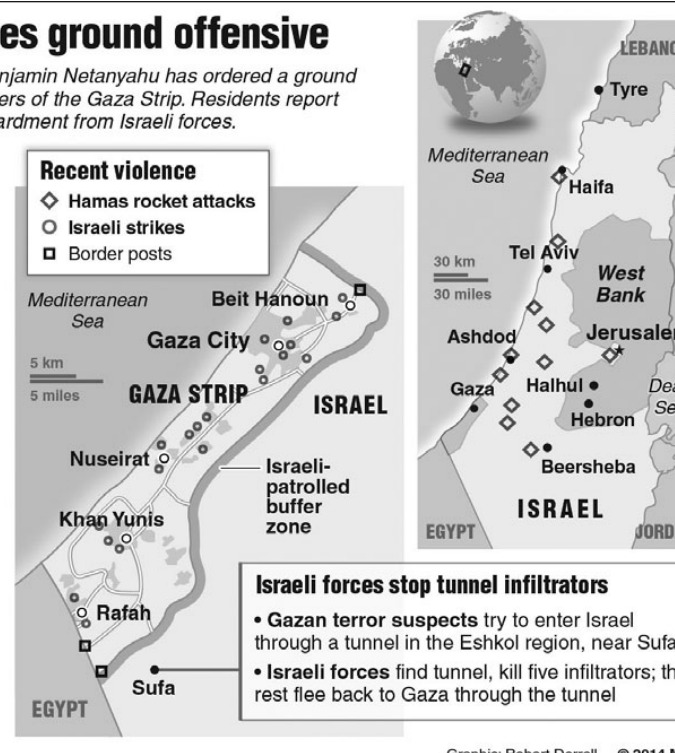
- ◆ Hamas rocket attacks
- Israeli strikes
- Border posts

- Heavy Hamas rocket attacks against Israel have continued, despite a proposed cease-fire set to begin July 18
- Israeli statement says their goal now is to deal a “significant blow to Hamas' terror infrastructure”

- Israel has called up almost 50,000 army reservists, with armored units near the border

- Since the start of the 10-day conflict, at least 213 Palestinians and one Israeli have died

Source: ESRI, Aerogrid, AEX, DigitalGlobe, Earthstar, Geographics, GeoEye, Getmapping, i-cubed, NAVTEQ, NRCAN, USGS, Reuters, AP, BBC, NBC News



Israeli forces stop tunnel infiltrators

- Gazan terror suspects try to enter Israel through a tunnel in the Eshkol region, near Sufa
- Israeli forces find tunnel, kill five infiltrators; the rest flee back to Gaza through the tunnel

Graphic: Robert Dorrell © 2014 M

since fighting began.

However, a ground offensive could quickly lead to military and political entanglements for Israel, especially if more Palestinian civilians are killed.

More than 240 Palestinians have already died in the air campaign, including 14 children under age 12 killed over the past two days, according to Palestinian health officials. One Israeli has also died.

Hamas struck a defiant tone. A spokesman, Fawzi Barhoum, said Israel “will

pay dearly” for the assault. “Hamas is ready for a confrontation,” he said.

The Israeli operation began around 10 p.m. Thursday, with what the military said was an open-ended assault to be carried out on several fronts.

“Large ground forces accompanied by massive air force support, naval forces and intelligence, are taking over targets in Gaza, operating against tunnels and terror activists and infrastructure,” said chief military spokesman Brig.

Gen. Motti Almoz.

He called on Gaza residents to evacuate targeted areas, warning the “military is operating there with very great force.”

Gaza health officials said eight Palestinians were killed in the early stage of the ground operation, including a 3-month-old boy who died after a shell hit his family's Bedouin tent in southern Gaza. The body was evacuated on a donkey cart because ambulances couldn't reach the area due to heavy shelling, the officials said.

Risk Of Earthquake Increased For One-Third Of US

BY SETH BORENSTEIN

AP Science Writer

WASHINGTON—A new federal earthquake map dials up the shaking hazard just a bit for about one-third of the United States and lowers it for one-tenth.

The U.S. Geological Survey on Thursday updated its national seismic hazard maps for the first time since 2008, taking into account research from the devastating 2011 earthquake and tsunami off the Japanese coast and the surprise 2011 Virginia tremor.

The maps are used for building codes and insur-

ance purposes and they calculate just how much shaking an area probably will have in the biggest quake likely over a building's lifetime.

The highest risk places have a 2 percent chance of experiencing “very intense shaking” over a 50-year lifespan, USGS project chief Mark Petersen said. Those with lower hazard ratings would experience less intense swaying measured in gravitational force.

“These maps are refining our views of what the actual shaking is,” Petersen said. “Almost any place in the United States can have an

earthquake.”

Parts of 16 states have the highest risk for earthquakes: Alaska, Hawaii, California, Oregon, Washington, Nevada, Utah, Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, Missouri, Arkansas, Tennessee, Illinois, Kentucky and South Carolina. With the update, new high-risk areas were added to some of those states.

Also, Colorado and Oklahoma saw increased risk in some parts and moved up to the second of the seven hazard classifications, he said.

There are major faults and quake hazards along the entire west coast, with an increased concern in the Cas-

cadia region around Oregon. Southern Alaska, the big island of Hawaii, the Missouri-Tennessee-Arkansas-Illinois New Madrid fault area and Charleston round out the biggest hazard areas.

But shaking hazards are nearly everywhere.

Much of the country west of the Rockies, along with parts of Oklahoma and Tennessee and sections of central Arkansas, northern Alabama, Georgia, South Carolina, Indiana, Illinois, Ohio, Michigan, Virginia, New York and New England saw an increase in shaking hazards for small buildings like houses.

Disaster

From Page 1A

gation. He insisted his forces did not shoot down the plane.

Ukraine's security services produced what they said were two intercepted telephone conversations that showed rebels were responsible. In the first call, the security services said, rebel commander Igor Bezler tells a Russian military intelligence officer that rebel forces shot down a plane. In the second, two rebel fighters — one of them at the crash scene — say the rocket attack was carried out by a unit of insurgents about 25 kilometers (15 miles) north of the site.

Neither recording could be independently verified.

Earlier in the week, the rebels had claimed responsibility for shooting down two Ukrainian military planes.

President Barack Obama called the crash a “terrible tragedy” and spoke by phone with Russian President Vladimir Putin as well as Poroshenko. Britain asked for an emergency meeting of the U.N. Security Council on Ukraine.

Later, Putin said Ukraine bore responsibility for the crash, but he didn't address the question of who might have shot it down and didn't accuse Ukraine of doing so.

“This tragedy would not have happened if there were peace on this land, if the military actions had not been renewed in southeast Ukraine,” Putin said, according to a Kremlin statement issued early Friday. “And, certainly, the state over whose territory this occurred bears responsibility for this awful tragedy.”

Officials said more than half of those aboard the

plane were Dutch citizens, along with passengers from Australia, Malaysia, the United Kingdom, Germany, Belgium, the Philippines and Canada. The home countries of nearly 50 were not confirmed.

The different nationalities of the dead would bring Ukraine's conflict to parts of the globe that were never touched by it before.

Ukraine's crisis began after pro-Moscow President Viktor Yanukovich was driven from office in February by a protest movement among citizens angry about endemic corruption and seeking closer ties with the European Union. Russia later annexed the Crimean Peninsula in southern Ukraine, and pro-Russians in the country's eastern regions began occupying government buildings and pressing for independence. Moscow denies Western charges it is supporting the separatists or sowing unrest.

Kenneth Quinn of the Flight Safety Foundation said an international coalition of countries should lead the investigation. Safety experts say they're concerned that because the plane crashed in area of Ukraine that is in dispute, political considerations could affect the investigation.

The RIA-Novosti agency quoted rebel leader Alexander Borodai as saying talks were underway with Ukrainian authorities on calling a short truce for humanitarian reasons. He said international organizations would be allowed into the conflict-plagued region.

Some journalists trying to reach the crash site were detained briefly by rebel militiamen, who were nervous and aggressive.

Aviation authorities in several countries, including the FAA in the United States, had issued warnings not to fly over parts of Ukraine

prior to Thursday's crash, but many carriers, including cash-strapped Malaysia Airlines, had continued to use the route because “it is a shorter route, which means less fuel and therefore less money,” said aviation expert Norman Shanks.

Within hours of Thursday's crash, several airlines said they were avoiding parts of Ukrainian airspace.

Malaysia Airlines said Ukrainian aviation authorities told the company they had lost contact with Flight 17 at 1415 GMT (10 a.m. EDT) about 30 kilometers (20 miles) from Tamak waypoint, which is 50 kilometers (30 miles) from the Russia-Ukraine border.

A U.S. official said American intelligence authorities believe the plane was brought down by a surface-to-air missile but were still working to determine additional details about the crash, including who fired the missile and whether it came from the Russian or Ukraine side of the border.

But U.S. intelligence assessments suggest it is more likely pro-Russian separatists or the Russians rather than Ukrainian government forces shot down the plane, according to the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to discuss the matter publicly.

The U.S. has sophisticated technologies that can detect missile launches, including the identification of heat from the rocket engine.

Anton Gerashenko, an adviser to Ukraine's interior minister, said on his Facebook page the plane was flying at about 10,000 meters (33,000 feet) when it was hit by a missile from a Buk launcher, which can fire up to an altitude of 22,000 meters (72,000 feet). He said only that his information was based on “intelligence.”

Shortage

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the Legislature transferred bonding authority to the state Railroad Board this year.

The board already had responsibilities to lease state-owned lines and provide loans and grants for rail projects.

Cope wants a presentation on rights, responsibilities and mechanics of bonding because there are some large projects on the horizon.

He said he'd like to get direction from the governor's office.

Another board member, Sheldon Cotton of Volga, seeks a presentation on federal railroad tax credits.

Cotton stressed that he wants an unbiased presenter. The state railroad office is seeking a \$28 million federal grant to continue rehabilitation work west from Oacoma on the state-owned Mitchell to Rapid City line.

More than \$14 million in additional funding has been raised in pledges from farmers, commodity groups and local governments and through potential grants and loans from state government.

The immediate goal is to reach central Lyman County where Wheat Growers would like to build its agri-center.

Board member Dan Baker of Rapid City noted there was a state bond issue in 1995 for what was then known as the Dakota, Minnesota and Eastern Railroad. It was for \$20 million.

The bonding authority was established in the late 1970s so that state government could purchase the South Dakota properties of the bankrupt Milwaukee Road.