

Greeks Reforms Proposal For Deal

ATHENS, Greece (AP) — Greece's prime minister acknowledged Friday the reforms his government has proposed in return for a third bailout are harsh and include measures far from his party's election pledges, but insisted they were Greece's best chance to emerge from its financial crisis.

In a speech delivered after midnight and with strong personal overtones, Alexis Tsipras sought to persuade lawmakers, including dissenters within his own left-wing Syriza party, to back the proposals and grant his finance minister the authorization to use them as a basis for negotiations with creditors over the weekend.

A vote was expected at about 3 a.m. Saturday.

Tsipras said his government had made mistakes during his six-month tenure but said he had negotiated as hard as he could.

"There is no doubt that for six months now we've been in a war," he said, adding that his government had fought "difficult battles" and had lost some of them.

Gov. Personnel Chief Steps Down

WASHINGTON (AP) — The embattled head of the government's personnel office abruptly stepped down Friday, bowing to mounting pressure following the unprecedented breach of private information her agency was entrusted to protect.

Katherine Archuleta had served as director of the federal Office of Personnel Management since November 2013. The former national political director for President Barack Obama's 2012 re-election campaign, Archuleta came under scathing criticism amid revelations this year that hackers — widely believed to be China's government — had infiltrated her agency's databases as well as background-check records for millions who applied for U.S. security clearances.

On Thursday, Archuleta had rebuffed demands that she resign, declaring she was "committed to the work that I am doing." But her continued tenure at the agency grew untenable as calls from lawmakers — including members of Obama's own party — mushroomed. On Friday morning, she came to the White House to personally submit her resignation to Obama.

He named Beth Cobert, currently deputy director for management at the White House's Office of Management and Budget, to step in as acting director at OPM.

"It's quite clear that new leadership, with a set of skills and experiences that are unique to the urgent challenges that OPM faces, are badly needed," said White House spokesman Josh Earnest.

FBI Questions Shooters Gun Ownership

WASHINGTON (AP) — The gunman charged in the Charleston, South Carolina, church massacre should not have been allowed to purchase the weapon used in the attack, FBI Director James Comey said Friday as he outlined a series of "heartbreaking" missed opportunities and background check flaws that allowed the transaction to take place.

"We are all sick that this has happened," Comey told reporters at an unusual, hastily scheduled meeting at FBI headquarters. "We wish we could turn back time, because from this vantage point, everything seems obvious. But we cannot."

He said he had ordered a review into what happened and that FBI officials would meet Friday with victims' relatives to explain the errors.

The cascading set of problems began with the drug-related arrest of Dylann Roof in South Carolina weeks before the shooting, touching off miscommunication between local and federal officials and revealing potential shortcomings in the government's background check process.

At issue was a police report from Roof's arrest in which authorities say he admitted to possessing illegal drugs. Under federal rules, that admission alone would have been enough to disqualify him from an April gun purchase even though he wasn't convicted of the charge.

Iranian Nuclear Talks Turn To Blame

VIENNA (AP) — The Iran nuclear talks shifted Friday to a blame game, as Iran's foreign minister accused the United States of shifting its demands and dismissed a warning that the U.S. was ready to quit the negotiations.

Hours after his comments, Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif met again with U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry for another attempt at resolving the differences standing in the way a landmark deal that offers Iran sanctions relief in exchange for long-term, verifiable curbs on nuclear programs that Tehran could use to make weapons.

Afterward, Kerry spoke of progress, while acknowledging a "couple of very difficult issues" still blocking a deal. And despite the sharp public comments by both sides, he said the negotiating atmosphere was "very constructive."

Still, the sense of drift grew. A senior U.S. official said the preliminary April deal that set up the present negotiations had been extended until Monday. That effectively set a fourth target date for a final accord that initially was supposed to be sealed by June 30.

The tougher rhetoric Friday mirrored the frustrations by the sides as the current round of talks entered its 14th day. After blowing past two extensions, negotiators had hoped to wrap up the talks by Friday, but Zarif's comments cast doubts that agreement was near.

Customers Hear Minion Say Curse Words

NEW YORK (AP) — McDonald's swears up and down that the little yellow "Minions" Happy Meal toy is speaking only nonsense words and not something a little more adult.

Experts say the company may be right, and the curse words many hear may be tied to how our brains are primed to find words even when they're not really there.

The world's largest hamburger chain and purveyor of Happy Meals said Friday that it doesn't plan to take the talking Happy Meal toy out of distribution, even though some customers say it sounds like it's cursing.

A toy bought by The Associated Press made a sound that could be interpreted as the phrase often abbreviated as "WTF." Another phrase sounded like it could be "Well I'll be damned." The sound quality of the toy makes it hard to say definitively who is right.

The little yellow Minion characters speak a nonsense language and McDonald's Corp. said the Minion Caveman toy makes three sounds — "ha ha ha," "para la bukey," and "eh eh." The Oak Brook, Illinois-based company issued a statement saying it received only a few comments from customers about the toy, which was introduced July 3.

Changes \$10 Bill Rankles Descendants

COLUMBUS, Ohio (AP) — Doug Hamilton is just fine with plans to put a woman's portrait on U.S. paper money, but he'd prefer that the Treasury Department leave the \$10 bill alone — particularly the prominent visage of his great-great-great-great-grandfather, Alexander Hamilton.

The 10-spot is a source of family pride in Hamilton's house in suburban Columbus, a dignified symbol of the historical importance of his ancestor, whose picture has been on it since 1929. So naturally, Hamilton started making some noise when he heard about the proposal that has Alexander Hamilton sharing the note with a deserving woman yet to be chosen.

The 64-year-old salesman for IBM has joined a growing backlash against what he calls the "diminishing" of Hamilton, who as the country's first treasury secretary created the modern U.S. financial system, with a national debt, bank and mint, and with the dollar as currency.

"He's the father of paper money," says Doug Hamilton, who has a son and grandson carrying the name of their famous ancestor. (His daughter, Elizabeth, was named for Alexander Hamilton's wife.)

He's urging people to sign a petition on the White House "We The People" website, and this weekend he'll be preaching the Hamiltonian gospel at a series of annual events in New York and New Jersey planned around the anniversary of Alexander Hamilton's death on July 12, 1804, a day after his duel with Aaron Burr.

Confederate Flag Taken Down In SC After 54 Years

BY JEFFREY COLLINS AND MEG KINNARD
Associated Press

COLUMBIA, S.C. — With protracted emotional debates and raucous protests behind them, South Carolina officials were preparing Friday to quietly and quickly remove the Confederate flag from the Statehouse where it has flown for more than a half-century.

The state planned a simple, short ceremony at 10 a.m. to remove the rebel banner, which was surrounded in its final hours by ropes and barricades.

"We will bring it down with dignity and we will make sure it is stored in its rightful place," South Carolina Gov. Nikki Haley said.

A special armored van will take the flag to the Confederate relic room, where it eventually will be housed in a multimillion-dollar shrine lawmakers promised to build as part of a compromise to get the bill ordering the flag's removal through the House.

South Carolina's leaders first flew the battle flag over the Statehouse dome in 1961 to mark the 100th anniversary of the Civil War. It remained there to represent official opposition to the civil rights movement.

Decades later, mass protests against the flag by those who said it was a symbol of racism and white supremacy led to a compromise in 2000 with lawmakers who insisted that it symbolized Southern heritage and states' rights. The two sides came

to an agreement to move the flag from the dome to a 30-foot pole next to a Confederate monument in front of the Statehouse.

Thousands of people showed up for the transfer. Flag supporters shouted, "Off the dome and in your face!" at protesters who wanted the flag gone, a line of police in special gear separating the two sides. A pair of Citadel cadets, one white and one black, lowered the flag from the dome as a dozen Confederate re-enactors marched to the brand new flagpole and raised the rebel banner.

Organizers didn't give out details of what will happen Friday, but said the removal will be short, simple and dignified. The flagpole will also be taken down, but no time frame has been announced for that.

The flag is coming down 23 days after the massacre of state Sen. Clementa Pinckney and eight others inside Charleston's Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church. Haley signed the bill with 13 pens. Nine of them went to the families of the victims.

Authorities say they believe the killings were racially motivated. By posing with the Confederate flag before the shootings, suspect Dylann Storm Roof, who has not yet entered a plea to nine counts of murder, convinced some that the flag's reputation for white supremacy and racial oppression had trumped its symbolism of Southern heritage and ancestral pride.

"People say he was wrapped in hate,

that he was a hateful person," said Democratic Rep. Justin Bamberg. "Well, his hate was wrapped in the cloak of that Confederate flag. That is why that flag is coming down."

Supporters of the flag were disappointed, but resigned.

"It's just like the conclusion of the war itself," said Rep. Mike Pitts, who submitted several amendments to fly a different flag on the pole that all failed. "The issue was settled, and the nation came back together to move on."

States across the nation are moving on without their Confederate symbols. The rebel flag is gone from the Alabama Capitol, and the U.S. House voted that it can no longer fly at historic federal cemeteries in the Deep South. A city council committee in Memphis wants to move a statue and the remains of Civil War hero and slave trader Nathan Bedford Forrest out of a prominent park, and officials in Alaska want a new moniker for a U.S. Census district named for Confederate Gen. Wade Hampton.

Haley said the removal of symbols that have become divisive is the right thing to do for the family members of those killed at Charleston's Emanuel AME.

"We saw the families show the world what true grace and forgiveness look like," Haley said. "That set off an action of compassion by people in South Carolina and all over this country. They stopped looking at their differences and started looking at their similarities."

Shooter's Defense Rests

CENTENNIAL, Colo. (AP) — The defense in the Colorado theater shooting trial rested its case Friday after trying to show James Holmes was legally insane when he opened fire at a midnight movie and was suffering from delusions that each person he killed would increase his self-worth.

Holmes' public defenders ended their case after playing two silent surveillance videos of Holmes taken in the months following the attack. One showed him in his jail cell, running and slamming his head against the wall, then falling backward and sitting down.

The other, taken at a hospital, showed Holmes naked and tethered to a bed, repeatedly trying to cover his head with a blanket and then a sheet. Uniformed officers and hospital workers pull them off and try to cover the lower half of Holmes' body with them.

Jurors also read a sheaf of papers that included writing by Holmes titled "Galactic Colonization," but the contents were not discussed in court.

The decision to rest the case ended 10 weeks of often-gruesome testimony, with witnesses describing the bloody shooting scene and their own crippling wounds and attorneys probing psychiatrists about Holmes' mental condition.

At Least 22 People Killed In Stampede

DHAKA, Bangladesh (AP) — At least 22 people were killed in a stampede in central Bangladesh early Friday when hundreds of people stormed the home of a businessman for a charity handout during the holy Muslim month of Ramadan, police said.

Another 30 were injured and rushed to a hospital in

Mymensingh, a town 115 kilometers (70 miles) north of the capital, Dhaka, said police officer Kamrul Islam.

The crowd gathered outside the businessman's home around 4 a.m. and stormed in when the gates were opened to collect free clothing, Islam said.

Twenty-one women and

one child were killed in the stampede, he said.

Authorities detained six people, including the businessman, for questioning, Islam said.

Stampedes are common at religious places and during charity handouts in South Asian countries.

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