

Obama Speaks About Africa's Problems

ADDIS ABABA, Ethiopia (AP) — President Barack Obama arrived in East Africa with no big American aid packages, no ramped up U.S. military resources for fighting terror groups and no new initiatives with billions in government backing. Instead, he brought a frank message on democracy, corruption and security that could perhaps be delivered only by a Western leader viewed in Africa as a local son. “The future of Africa is up to Africans,” Obama said during a trip to Kenya and Ethiopia that concluded Tuesday. “For too long, I think that many looked to the outside for salvation and focused on somebody else being at fault for the problems of the continent.” The president’s advisers reject the notion that Obama’s policy toward Africa is all talk, pointing to the long-term potential of initiatives to boost power access and food security for millions on the continent. They stress the importance of America’s first black president, one with a sprawling family still living in Kenya, capitalizing on his ability to speak not as a lecturing Westerner, but as someone with a personal stake in the continent’s success. “He is someone who is broadly respected by not just the leaders, but the peoples of these countries, especially young populations who make up an increasing percentage of these countries,” said Ben Rhodes, Obama’s deputy national security adviser. “So, for that reason, I think people pay close attention to what he has to say.”

Lull Is Over For Health Care Spending

WASHINGTON (AP) — The nation’s respite from accelerating health care costs appears to be over. Spending on health care will outpace the nation’s overall economic growth over the next decade, the government forecast on Tuesday, underscoring a coming challenge for the next president, not to mention taxpayers, businesses and individual Americans. A combination of expanded insurance coverage under President Barack Obama’s law, an aging population, and rising demand, will be squeezing society’s ability to pay. By 2019, midway through the next president’s term, health care spending will be increasing at roughly 6 percent a year, compared to an average annual rise of 4 percent from 2008 through 2013. The higher rate of increase is still “relatively modest,” says the report from the Office of the Actuary in the Health and Human Services Department. The forecast, through 2024, does not foresee a return to pre-recession days of torrid health care inflation, as the government and private employers try to revamp the way they pay hospitals and doctors to emphasize quality over quantity.

TX Jail Releases Footage Before Death

HEMPSTEAD, Texas (AP) — Texas authorities on Tuesday released several hours of footage showing Sandra Bland during her three days in jail, saying they wanted to dispel rumors that she was dead before arriving there. Waller County Judge Trey Duhon said such conspiracy theories — including one that Bland’s mug shot was taken after her death — have prompted death threats against county officials. “Because of some of the things that’s gone out on social media, this county has been literally attacked,” he said at a news conference, adding that the FBI is investigating the most serious threats. “Sandra Bland was alive and well” until she was found hanging on July 13 in her cell at the Waller County Jail, Duhon said. Authorities have ruled that Bland’s death, three days after her arrest during a confrontational traffic stop, was a suicide. The video released shows her arriving at the jail, being questioned by a jailer filling out forms, making phone calls, getting her mug shot taken, sleeping in her cell and being taken in and out.

Senate To Vote On Planned Parenthood

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Senate will vote before its August recess on a Republican effort to block federal aid to Planned Parenthood, GOP leaders said Tuesday, as anti-abortion groups clamored for action by lawmakers. Democrats said they will strongly oppose what they called the latest Republican effort to weaken women’s health care programs, but stopped short of flatly predicting its defeat. The positioning came as an anti-abortion group released a third covertly recorded video of Planned Parenthood officials discussing procedures for obtaining tissue from aborted fetuses for research and showing stark close-ups of what it said was fetal tissue in a Planned Parenthood lab. The unveiling of the videos has put Planned Parenthood and many Democrats on the defensive, though there is little sign that they won’t be able to head off the GOP effort. “Good luck,” Senate Minority Leader Harry Reid, D-Nev., said of the uphill Republican drive to garner the 60 of 100 Senate votes they will need to cut off Planned Parenthood’s money. “We’re dealing with the health of American women, and they’re dealing with some right-wing crazy.” There are a total of 54 Republicans in the Senate, mostly opposed to abortion, and just a handful of anti-abortion Democrats. One of them, Sen. Bob Casey, D-Pa., said in a brief interview that he would not support the effort to end government help for Planned Parenthood because “they provide all kinds of primary health care” for women and because of the prohibition against using federal funds for virtually any abortions. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., said a group of senators led by Sen. Joni Ernst, R-Iowa, were crafting a measure responding to “these horrendous videos.” He said the Senate would vote “on a measure that they support sometime before we break for the August recess,” scheduled to begin after next week. Senators said the group also includes Sens. Rand Paul, R-Ky., and James Lankford, R-Okla.

Prison Worker Pleads Guilty To Escape

PLATTSBURGH, N.Y. (AP) — A prison worker who was “in over her head” with two inmates convicted of murder tearfully pleaded guilty Tuesday to charges of aiding them by smuggling hacksaw blades and other tools to the pair, who broke out and spent three weeks on the run. Joyce Mitchell, an instructor in the tailor shop at the Clinton Correctional Facility in upstate New York, wore shackles and prison stripes as she entered the pleas in a barely audible voice. Afterward, her lawyer, Stephen Johnston, said she realizes she made a “horrible mistake” by getting involved with Richard Matt and David Sweat, who staged an elaborate escape from the maximum-security prison on June 6. “She got in over her head into something that she never should have started. But she did, and she’s paying the price now,” Johnston told reporters outside court. “I think that to a certain extent, Matt got her to feeling good about herself, better than she had for a period of time, and she was swept off her feet a bit. ... And then when she realized who she was dealing with, everything changed.” Matt was shot and killed by searchers June 26, about 30 miles west of the prison. Sweat was captured near the Canadian border two days later and sent to another prison.

NFL Upholds Tom Brady's Suspension

NEW YORK (AP) — The commissioner pointed to concealed evidence. The team described it as a folly. And the agent added sham to the lexicon of “Deflategate.” Then the players’ union said it would take it all to court. Tom Brady’s four-game suspension for his role in using underinflated footballs during the AFC championship game was upheld Tuesday by NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell. Goodell said the New England quarterback told an assistant to destroy Brady’s cellphone on or just before March 6. Brady met with independent investigator Ted Wells on that day. “He did so even though he was aware that the investigators had requested access to text messages and other electronic information that had been stored on that phone,” Goodell said in his decision.

Pollard To Be Freed; US Analyst Spied For Israel

BY ERIC TUCKER
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Jonathan Pollard, the former Navy intelligence analyst whose conviction of spying for Israel stoked fierce international passions, has been granted parole and will be released from prison in November after nearly 30 years. The decision to free Pollard from his life sentence, announced Tuesday by his lawyers and then confirmed by the Justice Department, caps an extraordinary espionage case that spurred decades of legal and diplomatic wrangling. Critics have condemned the American as a traitor who betrayed his country for money and disclosed damaging secrets, while supporters have argued that he was punished excessively given that he spied for a U.S. ally. Pollard is due to be released on Nov. 21, three decades after he was arrested while trying to gain asylum at the Israeli Embassy in Washington. Though American Jews have wrestled with how much leniency he should get, Israelis

have long campaigned for his freedom. The government there has recognized him as an Israeli agent and granted him citizenship, even as recent American presidents have resisted efforts to free him early. “We are looking forward to his release,” Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said in a statement Tuesday. White House officials strongly denied that the release was in any way tied to the nuclear deal recently reached with Iran, or that it was intended as a concession to Israel. Secretary of State John Kerry, who testified before Congress on the nuclear deal on Tuesday, told reporters Pollard’s parole was “not at all” connected. And Israeli officials have said that while they would welcome the release, it would not ease their opposition to the Iran agreement. The U.S. had previously dangled the prospect of his release, including during Israel-Palestinian talks last year, when the Obama administration considered the possibility of freeing Pollard early as part of a package of incentives to keep Israel at the negotiat-

ing table. As it turned out, the peace effort collapsed and nothing came of the proposal. The Justice Department, for its part, noted that federal sentencing rules in place at the time of Pollard’s prosecution entitled him to parole after serving 30 years of his life sentence. Department lawyers did not contest his parole bid, which was granted following a hearing this month before the U.S. Parole Commission that took into account Pollard’s behavior in prison and whether he was likely to commit new crimes if released. Though parolees are required for five years after their release to get government permission for foreign travel, Pollard’s lawyers say they intend to ask President Barack Obama to grant him clemency as well as authority to leave the United States and move to Israel immediately. But the White House quickly shot down that prospect, saying Pollard had committed “very serious crimes” and would serve his sentence under the law.

Boy Receives Double-Hand Transplant

BY KATHY MATHESON
Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA — An 8-year-old boy who lost his hands and feet to a serious infection has become the youngest patient to receive a double-hand transplant, surgeons said Tuesday. Zion Harvey’s forearms were heavily bandaged but his hands were visible as he flashed some big smiles Tuesday at a hospital news conference. He demonstrated his still-delicate grip and described waking up with new hands as “weird at first, but then good.” The boy, from the Baltimore suburb of Owings Mills, Maryland, received the transplant earlier this month at The Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia, though doctors did not publicly disclose the nearly 11-hour operation until this week. A 40-person medical team used steel plates and screws to attach the old and new bones. Surgeons then painstakingly reconnected Zion’s arteries, veins, muscles, tendons and nerves. “He woke up smiling,” said Dr. L. Scott Levin, who heads the hand transplant program. “There hasn’t been one whimper, one tear, one complaint.” Zion, a bright and precocious child Levin described as having “a maturity that is way beyond his 8 years,” contracted sepsis as a toddler. The resulting multiple organ failure forced the amputation of his hands and feet; by age 4, he needed a kidney transplant, receiving the organ from his mother. Leg prosthetics have allowed Zion to be very active, including walking, running and jumping. He learned to use his forearms to write, eat and play video games and has been attending school.



CLEM MURRAY/PHILADELPHIA INQUIRER/TNS

Zion Harvey, 8, of Baltimore, watches as an occupational therapist works on his new right hand while in his hospital bed on July 27. Zion lost his hands and feet to a bacterial disease when he was 2, but had a double hand transplant at Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia in early July 2015, the first pediatric double hand transplant.

Physicians hope he’ll now be able to achieve more milestones, including his goals of throwing a football and playing on the monkey bars. “It was no more of a risk than a kidney transplant,” his mother, Pattie Ray, said. “So I felt like I was willing to take that risk for him, if he wanted it — to be able to play monkey bars and football.” Several adults in the U.S. have received double-hand or double-arm transplants in the past few years. Hospi-

tal officials in Philadelphia believe Zion is the youngest person to have the surgery, which requires a lifetime of immune-suppressing drugs to ensure the body doesn’t reject the new hands. Zion already had been taking anti-rejection drugs because of his donated kidney, which made him a good candidate for the hand transplant, doctors said. Doctors say Zion will spend several weeks in physical rehab at the hospital before returning home. Two

rows of relatives attended the news conference, and they stood to be recognized at Zion’s request. “I want to say to you guys, thank you for helping me through this bumpy road,” he said. The donor’s family chose to remain anonymous. Children’s Hospital said it would not hold Zion’s family liable for any costs beyond that which may be covered by medical insurance.

Northern California Wildfire Jumps Line, Forces Evacuations

BY SCOTT SMITH
Associated Press

FRESNO, Calif. — More than 200 people were ordered from their homes Tuesday when a wildfire jumped a containment line east of California’s Napa Valley wine country in one of several blazes burning across the state. The week-old fire was given a burst of energy by rising temperatures, wind gusts and low humidity, said Daniel Berlant, a spokesman for the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection. A smoke plume was visible for miles. The flare-up in the rugged, steep terrain of Solano County quickly consumed 150 acres. The fire has charred more than 10 square miles and firefighters had it mostly contained, despite the additional area that burned. “With the winds picking up, they’re challenging us,” Berlant said, adding that firefighters have dug a secondary containment line. “We’re hoping those lines will hold it where it’s at.” Residents of 136 homes were ordered to leave, said Christine Castillo of the Solano County Sheriff’s Office.

In the Central California foothills, helicopters and air tankers were attacking another fire burning near the tiny wooded communities of Bass Lake and Cascadel Woods north of Fresno. Residents remained under orders to be prepared to evacuate because of the fire, which has charred nearly 3 square miles. A boy acknowledged starting the fire by playing with a lighter to burn pine needles, Madera County District Attorney David Linn said, noting the boy tried to smother the fire with his clothes and his family fought it with water. “As dry as the conditions are in the Sierra now ... they couldn’t stop it,” said Linn, declining to identify the boy, who remains at home because of his cooperation and could be charged next week. In the Sierra Nevada foothills northeast of Sacramento, 50 homes remained evacuated because of a wildfire that ignited Saturday. As many as 1,800 homes were threatened by shifting winds, Berlant said. Four firefighters were hurt Sunday while battling the wildfire. One had serious, non-life threatening injuries and remains hospitalized. The firefighter was identi-

fied as Matt Aoki, a captain of the Los Padres Hotshots from Los Padres National Forest. Aoki has severe burns on his hands and face. He remained hospitalized at UC Davis Medical Center in Sacramento. The fire grew overnight to more than 3 square miles. Temperatures throughout Northern California could hit 108 Wednesday. California has seen more wildfires this year, but less acreage has been burned thanks to favorable weather and more firefighters who can quickly be dispatched to corral flames, fire officials say. Since Jan. 1, about 5,200 fires have burned on state and federal lands, according

to the U.S. Forest Service. That’s 10 percent more than last year, but the 74,000 acres burned is 6 percent less. Spurts of unseasonably rainy weather combined with the availability of hundreds of additional firefighters paid for with emergency drought funding have made a big difference, Berlant said. So far this year, state firefighters have responded to nearly 3,900 blazes — a 41 percent increase from the same period last year, according to Cal Fire. The fires have burned 28 percent less area than last year. Cal Fire’s map of fire activities showed nine blazes across the state.

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