

Syrian Army Regains Town, Thousands Flee

BEIRUT (AP) — Elite Syrian troops backed by helicopters and tanks regained control Sunday of a town where police and soldiers joined forces with the protesters they were ordered to shoot — a decisive assault from a government prepared for an all-out battle to keep power.

Troops led by the president's brother shelled Jisr al-Shughour as the gunships hovered overhead, paving the way for scores of tanks and armored personnel carriers to roll in from two directions. By early afternoon, the sounds of battle faded. The army was in control.

Sunday's developments, and actions by opponents of the Syrian government, marked a major departure from what had been a largely peaceful protest movement. Among them: the discovery of a mass grave filled with uniformed bodies and the increasing willingness of mutineers and outgunned residents to fight back.

President Bashar Assad's response in Jisr al-Shughour, the first town to spin out of government control since the uprising began in mid-March, mirrored his father's 1980 assault there. It was a clear message to anyone contemplating defiance.

Syrians who were among thousands to flee for the nearby Turkish border said about 60 mutineers were defending the town alongside some 200 unarmed residents. Their fate was unknown late Sunday, but the government reported three deaths in the fighting — one of its own soldiers and two unidentified men whose bodies were shown to reporters.

Al-Qaida Mastermind's Death Welcomed

MOGADISHU, Somalia (AP) — The killing of an al-Qaida mastermind who planned the devastating bombings of two U.S. embassies in Africa drew praise on Sunday from Kenyans and Somalis, while Somalia's president showed documents linking the dead man to militants who are trying to topple his nation's fragile, U.N.-backed government.

Fazul Abdullah Mohammed eluded capture for 13 years and topped the FBI's most wanted list for planning the Aug. 7, 1998, U.S. Embassy bombings in Kenya and Tanzania. His death, reported Saturday by Somali officials, was the third major blow to al-Qaida in six weeks. The worldwide terror group was headed by Osama bin Laden until his death last month.

But Somali President Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed said Mohammed also posed a grave threat to Somalia, which has been ravaged by two decades of anarchy and conflict. Ahmed congratulated government soldiers for killing Mohammed on Tuesday at a Mogadishu security checkpoint.

"His aim was to commit violence in and outside the country," Ahmed said, showing reporters documents and pictures he said government troops recovered from Mohammed.

Ahmed did not let reporters check the documents, but he held up photos he said were of Mohammed's family and operational maps for the militants in Mogadishu.

Turkey's Ruling Party Wins Third Term

ISTANBUL (AP) — Turkey's ruling party surged to a third term in parliamentary elections Sunday, setting the stage for the rising regional power to pursue trademark economic growth, assertive diplomacy and an overhaul of the military-era constitution.

However, the Justice and Development Party of Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan fell short of a two-thirds majority in parliament, a shortcoming that will force it to seek support for constitutional change from other political groups. Despite a record of democratic reform, the government has faced increasing criticism that it has sought to consolidate power at the expense of consensus-building.

Erdogan sought to allay those concerns in his victory speech, delivered from the balcony of the ruling party headquarters to thousands of ecstatic supporters who gathered below, chanting slogans and waving Turkish flags.

"We will be humble," said Erdogan, who pledged to start work on a new constitution. "We will be seeking consensus with the main opposition, the opposition, parties outside of parliament, the media, NGOs, with academics, with anyone who has something to say."

Erdogan's party won 50 percent of the votes, according to TRT, the state-run television. It said the Republican People's Party, the main opposition group, had 26 percent of the vote.

Fire Evacuation Order Lifted On 2 Ariz. Towns

SPRINGERVILLE, Ariz. (AP) — Firefighters on Sunday expressed the first real sense of hope that they were making progress in their battle against a huge eastern Arizona wildfire burning since May, as officials began allowing roughly 7,000 residents to return home to two towns that had been threatened by the blaze.

"We've been praying every day to come home," Valarina Walker said Sunday while chatting with other returning locals outside a convenience store in Springerville.

The bed of her red pickup truck was overflowing with boxes of photo albums and family heirlooms.

"Just took what couldn't be replaced, left the rest behind," Walker said crying. "I'm just so happy and excited to be home. We thank God for those firefighters."

Fire crews remained in Springerville and the nearby town of Eagar, guarding against flare-ups, but Apache County Sheriff's Cmdr. Webb Hogle said residents could return home because the blaze was "no longer a threat to the citizens."

Blasts In Pakistan Kill 34, As CIA Director Visits

PESHAWAR, Pakistan (AP) — Two explosions went off minutes apart in the northwest Pakistani city of Peshawar, killing 34 people and injuring more than 100 in one of the deadliest attacks since the U.S. raid that killed Osama bin Laden last month, officials said.

The blasts, one of which was caused by a suicide bomber, occurred just after midnight Sunday in an area of the city that is home to political offices and army housing.

The attack took place as CIA Director Leon Panetta and Afghan President Hamid Karzai visited Islamabad, 95 miles (150 kilometers) to the east, to speak separately with senior Pakistani officials about intelligence sharing and efforts to reconcile with the Taliban.

The first explosion was relatively small and drew police and rescue workers to the site, said Dost Mohammed, a senior local police official. A large explosion rocked the area a few minutes later, causing the fatalities and wounding 108 people, 18 critically, said Rahim Jan, a senior doctor at a local hospital.

The second blast was caused by a suicide bomber riding a motorcycle packed with 22 pounds (10 kilograms) of explosives, said Ejaz Khan, a senior police official. The source of the first explosion was unknown.

Pawlenty Hits Romney On His Health Care Plan

WASHINGTON (AP) — Republican presidential candidate Tim Pawlenty said Sunday he would never support requiring everyone to buy health insurance, taking issue with the health care changes that 2012 rival Mitt Romney oversaw as Massachusetts governor.

Pawlenty discounted Romney's argument that, while the federal government went too far in requiring individuals to buy insurance under President Barack Obama's health care law, it was appropriate for states to decide if individual mandates were right for them.

"I strongly oppose the individual mandate at any level," Pawlenty said. "I think it's a dramatic overreach." He noted that he was party to a lawsuit in Florida trying to get the law declared unconstitutional.

Elbowing Romney ahead of a candidates' debate Monday night in New Hampshire, Pawlenty said Obama had stated that "he designed Obamacare after Romneycare and basically made it Obama-care." He added: "What I don't understand is they both continue to defend it."

Pawlenty said that as governor of Minnesota he had rejected the individual mandate idea and opted for market-based changes that encouraged consumers to make good decisions in choosing health care plans.

Pawlenty's attempt to draw a sharp policy distinction with Romney, the current front-runner in the GOP presidential race, came as he sought to bat down suggestions that he's too "nice and too 'bland'" to take the political fight to Obama.

Fox News Channel's Bill O'Reilly said last week that Pawlenty was "invisible" and that ice cream maker Haagen-Dazs could put his picture on vanilla ice cream.

Pawlenty asked "Fox News Sunday" host Chris Wallace whether O'Reilly was "playing the race card on me." Wallace said he thought O'Reilly was discussing "the taste, not the color."

New Photos Of Giffords Released

BY RAMIT PLUSHNICK-MASTI AND AMANDA LEE MYERS
Associated Press

HOUSTON — Two portraits of a smiling Rep. Gabrielle Giffords gave the nation its closest look yet at the congresswoman's remarkable recovery less than six months after she was shot in the head at point-blank range outside a supermarket.

The pictures posted Sunday on Facebook were the first clear photos of the Arizona congresswoman who rose to national prominence after a gunman opened fire on her in January as she met with constituents in Tucson. Six people were killed and 13 others wounded.

But the images left unanswered many questions about her cognitive abilities and when — or even if — she will be able to resume her job in Congress.

"The image doesn't tell us the inner mental state or the brain itself, how it's functioning," said Jordan Grafman, director of the



PHOTO: P.K. WEIS, SOUTHWESTPHOTOBANK.COM

This photo of Rep. Gabrielle Giffords, who received a head wound during a January attack in Arizona, was one of two new photos released on her Facebook page Sunday.

Traumatic Brain Injury Research Laboratory at the Kessler Foundation Research Center in West Orange, N.J., explaining that many brain-injury patients look good

within months of being hurt.

"What's their social skills? Do they have a nuanced sense of humor? Can they participate in activities? All that is what's important," asked Grafman, who has not treated Giffords.

In one of the images, Giffords smiles broadly and looks straight at the camera like a high school student posing for a yearbook. In another, more candid shot, she is grinning alongside her mother. In both, her smile is largely unchanged, though her hair is shorter and darker. The pictures give few indications she has been hurt, let alone shot in the forehead.

Giffords' aides say she could be ready to be released from a rehabilitation center later this month or in early July. The idea was to discourage a "paparazzi-like frenzy" of photography when she attends outpatient therapy in a more public setting, they said.

The congresswoman's staff said the images had not been altered or touched up in any way. But other

than saying the pictures were taken May 17 at the Houston rehabilitation hospital where Giffords has been undergoing treatment, her staff offered no further insight into her recovery.

For months, they have closely guarded Giffords and information about her condition. Her doctors, in the absence of permission from the family to speak publicly, remain mum. So the release of the photos attracted intense interest.

Giffords was shot in the left side of the head, the part of the brain that controls speech and communication. Doctors, friends and families have said she can speak, sing some of her favorite songs and engage in some conversation.

Since she was wounded, the public's only other glance of Giffords came in grainy images from late April that showed her slowly walking up the steps of a NASA jet that flew her to Cape Canaveral, Fla., to watch her husband, astronaut Mark Kelly, rocket into space.

New Weiner Photos Surface On Internet, Says He Won't Quit

BY ANDREW MIGA
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The second-ranking House Democrat on Sunday joined the party leadership in urging Rep. Anthony Weiner to quit because of his sexting scandal, a request the New York lawmaker has sidestepped in favor of a temporary leave of absence.

The Republican Party chairman criticized Democratic leaders for not taking a more forceful stand earlier on the affair, which has overshadowed much of the legislative business on Capitol Hill over the past week.

Weiner has acknowledged exchanging messages and photos, ranging from sexually suggestive to explicit, with several women online. The latest to surface appeared on the gossip website TMZ.

The photos posted Sunday were purportedly taken in the House members' gym and show a shirtless Weiner with a towel around his waist and his hand on his crotch. TMZ said the photos were sent online to at least one woman.

Rep. Steny Hoyer of Maryland, the No. 2 House Democrat, spoke of Weiner's "bizarre and unacceptable behavior" in sending inappropriate pictures of himself to young women. Hoyer said it would be "extraordinarily diffi-

cult" for Weiner to continue to represent his constituents effectively.

In New York, foes and supporters of Weiner confronted each other.

"He's not fit to be our congressman," said Jim Scott, 61, one of about two dozen constituents who rallied in front of Weiner's office in the Kew Gardens section of Queens. "People are sick of him, especially his attitude."

Half a dozen Weiner supporters gathered a few yards away. College student Olivia Lurie, 18, said Weiner was a good leader who made a mistake.

Weiner announced Saturday that he was entering professional treatment at an undisclosed location and wanted a leave of absence from Congress. A statement from an aide did not say where he would receive treatment or what type was involved.

That announcement came right after House Democratic leader Nancy Pelosi of California and Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz, the national party head, said Weiner must go.

Weiner said at news conference last Monday that he had lied in previously saying that he had not sent any photos. Pelosi immediately called for an ethics committee investigation. But it was not until the weekend that leaders said he should step down.

Hoyer said the ethics commit-

tee process to decide if Weiner had committed an expellable offense would take time and "I really don't know if we have that time." He said he didn't see how Weiner could stay in office.

Rep. Paul Ryan, R-Wis., said Weiner should resign. "We've got important work to do and this is a ridiculous distraction," he said in an appearance with Hoyer on "Face the Nation" on CBS.

Lawmakers marching Sunday in New York's Puerto Rican Day parade were less demanding. "I think it could have been handled better," Rep. Charles Rangel, D-N.Y., said when asked whether he stood with Pelosi in calling for Weiner's resignation.

Rangel, who was censured by the House last year for ethics violations, was also asked if he thought it was a good idea for Weiner to take time off to enter treatment. "He is the one that knows the best, he and his wife," Rangel responded.

Sen. Charles Schumer, D-N.Y., declined to comment any further, saying, "Those of us who have been longtime friends of Anthony are heartbroken, and I'm just going to try to enjoy the parade today."

On NBC's "Meet the Press," Republican National Committee chairman Reince Priebus criticized Pelosi and other Democrats for not acting sooner.

"It seemed to me that for the first 10 days in this circus ... the

only job that Nancy Pelosi was interested in saving was Anthony Weiner's," he said.

That drew a sharp retort from Wasserman Schultz, D-Fla., who accused Republicans of a double standard.

She said that Republican leaders didn't call for the resignation of Sen. David Vitter, R-La., when he got caught up in a prostitution scandal, and that Priebus had not publicly sought the resignation of former Sen. John Ensign, R-Nev., who stepped down this year over an affair with a staffer's wife.

Wasserman Schultz said party officials initially gave Weiner "some breathing room" to reach the conclusion that he needed to step down on his own, but decided to toughen their stance Saturday after it became apparent he would not do so.

David B. Cohen, a political science professor at the University of Akron, said Sunday: "Had Anthony Weiner not been a rising star in the party and such a hero to progressives, he would have already been gone. But the fact that he is a national figure that has a national base of support bought him some time."

A leave of absence may be Weiner's only chance to rehabilitate his career, Cohen said. "Remorse isn't going to cut it in this case. Buy some time, and some time out of the public spotlight."

Perdue Becomes 1st NC Gov. To Veto Budget Plan

RALEIGH, N.C. (AP) — Democrat Beverly Perdue on Sunday became the first North Carolina governor to veto a budget bill since the chief executive was given the power in 1997.

Perdue said in her announcement Sunday that the Republican-led Legislature's \$20 billion proposal would do "generational damage" to public education. She says the Legislature has turned its "back on our schools, our children, our longstanding investments in education and our future economic prospects."

Then she sat down in the old Senate chambers and thumped on the budget document a red-stained veto stamp handed to her by Chief of Staff Britt Cobb.

Republican Senate leader Phil Berger said the veto was irresponsible and political. He said the budget plan she rejected does more to create jobs and help public schools than her own.

North Carolina governors have vetoed 15 bills over the past 14 years, but never a budget.

The GOP could still win the battle with an expected override vote this week. Five Democrats defected to approve the measure and they have said they would vote to overturn the veto as well.

"Not only our schools and our universities and our community colleges are damaged, but also our communities, our environment, our public safety system and our ability to care for those who need us most," Perdue said.

None of the five Democrats who favored the bill have waived, despite an onslaught of criticism from Perdue and her allies in TV ads, mailers and during impassioned meetings in the districts of the defectors in hopes of turning them back. Just four would have to side with Republicans in the House. The Senate Republican majority is already veto-proof.

Confident Republican legislative leaders quickly countered Perdue's criticism Sunday. House Speaker Thom Tillis, R-Mecklenburg, said in a statement he looked forward to an override vote soon.

"She has shown no leadership on this issue and no willingness to work with the Legislature, choosing instead to veto a budget that projects education and creates jobs," Tillis said.



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