

Syrian President Assad Vows Reform

BEIRUT (AP) — Syria's president promised a national dialogue Monday to consider political reforms, but his vague overtures to a pro-democracy uprising fell flat as protesters took to the streets shouting "Liar!" and demanding his ouster.

In only his third public appearance since the revolt erupted in March, Bashar Assad returned to a now-familiar refrain: He blamed the unrest on "saboteurs," offered modest potential reforms, but gave no sign he'd move toward ending the Assad family's political domination.

He clearly intends to try to ride out the wave of protests, showing the steely determination that has kept the Assads in power for 40 years. But the mobilized opposition appeared to be digging in as well, bracing for a showdown in one of the deadliest uprisings of the Arab Spring.

"We want only one thing: Toppling the regime!" read one banner among marchers in several cities Monday.

EU Overhauls Rescue Funds To Contain Crisis

LUXEMBOURG (AP) — Europe tried to set up a firewall on Monday between the financial turmoil ravaging Greece and the destinies of Ireland and Portugal, the two other bailed-out eurozone countries, and increased pressure on Athens to pass new austerity measures in exchange for saving it from default.

Eurozone governments agreed to reinforce their bailout funds to boost confidence in their ability to stop the crisis from taking down other countries and to help Ireland and Portugal emerge from their debt holes.

Greece's financial life support from Europe, meanwhile, depends on it taking new deficit-cutting measures.

After days of political chaos, the government in Athens has to survive a confidence vote and then get its austerity plan through parliament. To make sure that happens, eurozone ministers have delayed crucial new loans until after the parliamentary vote.

Study: Doctors Ignoring Guidelines For Tests

WASHINGTON (AP) — Too many doctors are testing the wrong women, or using the wrong test, for a virus that causes cervical cancer.

The days of one-size-fits-all screening for cervical cancer are long gone. How often to get a Pap smear — and whether to be tested for the cancer-causing HPV virus at the same time — now depend on your age and other circumstances.

But a government study reports Monday that a surprising number of doctors and clinics aren't following guidelines from major medical groups on how to perform HPV checks, suggesting a lot of women are getting unnecessary tests.

That wastes money and could harm women who wind up getting extra medical care they didn't need, says Dr. Mona Saraiya of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, who led the research.

Even she wasn't protected from the confusion. Saraiya was stunned to get a bill showing that her own doctor had ordered testing for HPV strains not connected to cervical cancer.

Officials Tally Damage From Arizona Wildfire

PHOENIX (AP) — Authorities in southern Arizona on Monday were going through neighborhoods to tally the damage from a wildfire that was pushed by fierce winds into a heavily-populated area, burning homes and businesses.

Officials say the fire came off a mountain Sunday afternoon into the outskirts of Sierra Vista and forced about 3,000 residents of 1,700 homes to flee. The evacuations brought the total number to about 10,000 people from 4,300 homes forced out by the Monument fire.

The blaze began June 12 and had destroyed 44 homes before Sunday. Among the confirmed losses Sunday was a popular Mexican restaurant. Officials expected to get a confirmed count of the losses by midday, said Carol Capas, a spokeswoman for the Cochise County Sheriff's Office.

N.Y. Senate Stalls On Gay Marriage Vote

ALBANY, N.Y. (AP) — Old-time, backroom politics faced down hundreds of chanting protesters from each side of the highly charged gay marriage debate in New York on Monday as the issue stalled again over whether religious groups could be protected from discrimination charges under a same-sex marriage law.

And Albany's notoriously entrenched politics won, for now. After a three-hour conference behind closed doors, while groups from each side waited in a stifling hot hallway, Senate Republicans emerged without comment. A vote within the conference to even move the bill to the floor for final legislative approval was pushed to at least Tuesday as private negotiations continue between Republican Senate leader Dean Skelos and Democratic Gov. Andrew Cuomo, who made same-sex marriage a major initiative.

New York's vote is pivotal in the national question over same-sex marriage, an effort that largely stalled in the same room two years ago when the Senate voted it down. Since then, efforts have failed in New Jersey, Rhode Island and Maryland. Advocates hope a "yes" vote in the nation's third-most populous state will jumpstart the effort.

Troops Coming Home?

Obama To Announce Afghan Drawdown Decision Wednesday

BY JULIE PACE
 Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Barack Obama will announce the critical next steps in America's decade-long war in Afghanistan on Wednesday, outlining both a plan to start bringing thousands of U.S. troops home next month and a broader withdrawal blueprint aimed at giving Afghans control of their own security in 2014.

But even as Obama finalizes those plans, there are divisions in his administration, with military leaders favoring only a gradual reduction in troops but other advisers advocating a significant decrease in the coming months.

Administration officials say Obama is still working through the details on how many troops will start leaving Afghanistan in July, his self-imposed deadline for beginning the drawdown. He is considering a range of options presented to him last week by Gen. David Petraeus, the top U.S. and NATO commander in Afghanistan.

"He's finalizing his decision. He's reviewing his options," White House spokesman Jay Carney said Monday.

Obama is expected to make Wednesday's announcement in Washington. On Thursday, he will visit troops at Fort Drum, the upstate New York military base that is home to the 10th Mountain Division, one of the most frequently deployed divisions to Afghanistan and Iraq.

While much of the attention is focused on how many troops will leave Afghanistan next month, the more telling aspects of Obama's

decision center on what happens after July, particularly how long the president plans to keep the 30,000 surge forces he sent in 2009 in the country.

There is a growing belief that the president must at least map out the initial withdrawal of the surge troops when he addresses the public. But whether those forces should come out over the next eight to 12 months or slowly trickle out over a longer time is hotly debated.

Military commanders want to keep as many of those forces in Afghanistan for as long as possible, arguing that too fast a withdrawal could undermine the fragile security gains in the fight against the Taliban insurgency in Afghanistan, the al-Qaida training ground for the Sept. 11 attacks. There are also concerns about pulling out a substantial number of U.S. forces as the heightened summer fighting season gets under way.

Retiring Defense Secretary Robert Gates has said he believes the initial drawdown should be "modest".

But other advisers are backing a more significant withdrawal that starts in July and proceeds steadily through the following months. That camp believes the slow, yet steady, security gains in Afghanistan, combined with the death of Osama bin Laden and U.S. success in dismantling much of the al-Qaida network in the country give the president an opportunity to make larger reductions this year.

There is also growing political pressure on Capitol Hill for a more significant withdrawal. Twenty-seven senators, Democrats as well as

Republicans, sent Obama a letter last week pressing for a shift in Afghanistan strategy and major troop cuts.

"Given our successes, it is the right moment to initiate a sizable and sustained reduction in forces, with the goal of steadily redeploying all regular combat troops," the senators wrote. "The costs of prolonging the war far outweigh the benefits."

There is broad public support for starting to withdraw U.S. troops. According to an Associated Press-GfK poll last month, 80 percent of Americans say they approve of Obama's decision to begin withdrawal of combat troops in July and end U.S. combat operations in Afghanistan by 2014. Just 15 percent disapprove.

Obama has tripled the number of U.S. forces in Afghanistan since taking office, bringing the total there to about 100,000. The 30,000 troop surge he announced at the end of 2009 came with the condition that he would start bringing forces home in July 2011.

The president took months to settle on the surge strategy. This time around, aides say the process is far less formal and Obama is far more knowledgeable about the situation in Afghanistan than he was in 2009, his first year in office.

Obama has said the July withdrawal will be "significant," though aides haven't quantified that. They do say Obama sees the initial drawdown in July as part of a larger strategy aimed at ending the U.S. combat mission in Afghanistan by the end of 2014 and turning security responsibility over to the Afghans.

Tunisian Ex-Leader Convicted In Absentia

TUNIS, Tunisia (AP) — Tunisia's former ruler and his wife were convicted in absentia on embezzlement and other charges on Monday after \$27 million (euro 18.97 million) in jewels and public funds were found in one of his palaces.

Five months after being forced from power, Zine El Abidine Ben Ali and Leila Trabelsi were sentenced to 35 years each in prison and fined tens of millions of dollars in the first of what is sure to be a long string of trials.

However, the trial in some ways failed to live up to its billing. With the 74-year-old Ben Ali not present for his judgment, there was a sense of frustration among many.

The couple went into exile on Jan. 14 in Saudi Arabia, which failed to respond to an extradition

request. Monday's convictions followed a day-long hearing before the Tunis criminal court.

The ex-president was fined 50 million dinars (about \$36 million) and his wife 41 million dinars for embezzlement of public funds and misappropriation.

The trove of jewels, some which the court said had "historic value," and the money were found in a palace in the picturesque town of Sidi Bou Said, outside Tunis, following Ben Ali's departure.

The verdict in a second affair stemming from the discovery of weapons and drugs in the official presidential palace in Carthage, this one targeting only Ben Ali, was postponed. Public defenders assigned to Ben Ali said Monday that they needed time to study

the file. The trial was to resume June 30.

Ben Ali vigorously denied the charges in a statement through his French lawyer, calling the proceedings a "shameful masquerade of the justice of the victorious."

"I devoted my life to my country and aspire, at the twilight of my existence, to conserve my honor," Ben Ali said in the statement, referring to his years as interior minister and his 23 years as president.

Ben Ali, and in particular his widely detested wife's Trabelsi clan, are widely accused of treating Tunisia as their personal property to amass money, privilege and power.

An official for the Ministry of State Domains, Mohamed Adel Ben Ismail, has evaluated the fortune amassed by Ben Ali and the

Trabelsi clan at a quarter of the value of the Tunisian economy.

The much despised Trabelsi family, alleged to have operated as a mafia, had vast control over the economy of this North African country with stakes in everything from tourist hotels to banks or car dealerships and radio and television.

However, the total value of assets in Tunisia and abroad of Ben Ali and his wife are not known. The Swiss were among the first nations to seize the families' assets and prosecutors said in January they had launched a money laundering investigation into the family's accounts.

Blocked accounts for Ben Ali and some 40 members of his entourage contained tens of millions of Swiss francs, according to the Swiss prosecutors office said.

Report: Pentagon Must Bolster Cyber Staff

WASHINGTON (AP) — A new government report says America's enemies recognize that cyberattacks are a low-cost way to counter U.S. military might. It says the Pentagon must clarify the duties and command structure of its cyber workforce.

The Government Accountability Office report says the Pentagon has made progress setting up its new U.S. Cyber Command, but must set deadlines to lay out more detailed guidelines on how its cyber workforce fits together.

Gayville-Volin School District 63-1

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Title II (discrimination based on disability): Title VI (discrimination based on national origin or race) or Title IX (discrimination based on gender):

Jason Selchert, Ed.S.
 Superintendent
 100 Kingsbury Street
 Gayville, SD 57031
 (605) 267-4476 x. 104

Section 504 (discrimination based on disability):

Patrick Beeman, Principal
 100 Kingsbury Street
 Gayville, SD 57031
 605-267-4476 x. 108

Parents' Right to Know

As a parent of a student at the Gayville-Volin School, you have the right to know the professional qualification of the classroom teachers who instruct your child. Federal law allows you to ask for certain information about your child's classroom teachers, and requires us to give you this information in a timely manner if you ask for it. Specifically, you have the right to ask for the following information about each of your child's classroom teachers:

- Whether DOE has licensed or qualified the teacher for the grades and subject he or she teaches.
- Whether DOE has decided that the teacher can teach in a classroom without being licensed or qualified under state regulations because of special circumstances.
- The teacher's college major; whether the teacher has any advanced degrees and, if so, the subject of the degrees.
- Whether any teacher's aides or similar paraprofessionals provide services to your child, and if they do, their qualifications.

If you would like to receive any of this information, please call your child's principal at 267-4476.

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