

Blitz Through The Desert

Militants Capture More Towns, Crossings In Western Iraq

BY HAMZA HENDAWI AND QASSIM ABDUL-ZAHRA
Associated Press

BAGHDAD — Sunni militants have blitzed through the vast desert of western Iraq, capturing four towns and three border crossings and deepening the predicament of the Shiite-led government in Baghdad led by Nouri al-Maliki.

The latest military victories — including two border posts captured Sunday, one along the frontier with Jordan and the other with Syria — considerably expanded territory under the militants' control just two weeks after the al-Qaida breakaway group began swallowing up chunks of northern Iraq, heightening pressure on al-Maliki to step aside.

The lightning offensive by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant takes the group closer to its dream of carving out an Islamic state straddling both Syria and Iraq. Moreover, controlling the borders with Syria will help it supply fellow fighters there with weaponry looted from Iraqi warehouses, significantly reinforcing its ability to battle beleaguered Syrian government forces.

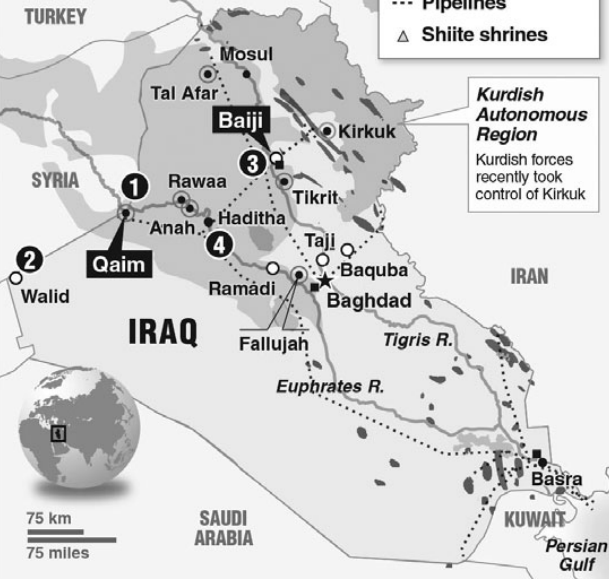
If the Sunni insurgents succeed in their quest to secure an enclave, they could further unsettle the already volatile Middle East and serve as a magnet for Jihadists from around the world — much like al-Qaida attracted extremists in Taliban-ruled Afghanistan.

President Barack Obama, in an interview with CBS' "Face the Nation" aired Sunday, warned that the Islamic State could grow in power and destabilize the region. Washington, he said, must remain "vigilant" but would not "play whack-a-mole and send U.S. troops ... wherever these organizations pop up."

U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry, in the Jordanian capital on Sunday, also weighed in. The Islamic State, he warned,

ISIS control grows in west

On June 10, ISIS fighters captured Mosul, Iraq's second largest city. They have attacked a key oil refinery and power plant near Baiji in the north and pushed south into Diyala province. On June 21, ISIS took Qaim, a key border crossing into Syria.



- 1 Qaim**
On June 21, ISIS attacked this border crossing from west, reportedly routing Iraqi security forces.
- 2 Walid**
Reports say ISIS also attacked this crossing, but the result remains unclear.
- 3 Refinery near Baiji**
Government soldiers are holding out, but ISIS controls highway approaches.
- 4 Dam at Haditha**
ISIS advances spur fears that this crucial dam on Euphrates River could fall to them.

Source: Securing America's Future Energy, McClatchy Washington Bureau © 2014 MCT

is a "threat not only to Iraq, but to the entire region."

The U.S. is looking for ways to work with Middle Eastern nations, most of them led by Sunni governments, to curb the Sunni militant group's growth. Officials in the United States and the Middle East have suggested privately that al-Maliki must leave office before Iraq's Sunnis will believe that their complaints of marginalization by the Shiite-led government in Baghdad will be addressed.

Al-Maliki, in office since 2006, has shown no sign he is willing to step down. However, he has been uncharacteristically silent since Obama and Iraq's top Shiite cleric both urged the prime minister last week to form an inclusive government that promotes the interests of all of Iraq's ethnic and religious groups.

Iraq's newly elected parliament

must meet by June 30, when it will elect a speaker and a new president, who, in turn, will ask the leader who enjoys the support of a simple majority in the 328-seat chamber to form a new government. Al-Maliki's State of the Law won 92 seats, more than any other group but not enough to form a government.

The militants' stunning battlefield successes in the north and the west of Iraq have laid bare the inadequacies of the country's U.S.-trained forces and their inability to defend the rapidly shrinking territory they hold. In the north, troops fled in the face of the advancing militants, abandoning their weapons, vehicles and other equipment. In some cases in the west, they pulled out either when the militants approached or when they heard of other towns falling.

Obama: U.S. Will Avoid 'Mission Creep'

BY JULIE PACE
AP White House Correspondent

WASHINGTON — President Barack Obama, in charting a new phase of American military engagement in Iraq, pledges that his war-weary country will not be "dragged back" into a lengthy conflict or become ensnared in "mission creep."

But recent U.S. military history is full of warning signs about the difficulty of keeping even a limited mission from expanding and extending. The prospect that this latest mission in Iraq could follow that pattern is particularly risky for Obama, given that he has staked so much of his legacy on having brought America's long war there to a close.

Already some of the White House's closest allies worry that Obama's plan to send in 300 special operations forces to train the Iraqi military could be the first step in pulling the U.S. back into Iraq's violent sectarian fight. "I think that you have to be careful sending special forces because that's a number that has a tendency to grow," said House Democratic leader Nancy Pelosi of California, one of Obama's staunchest supporters.

Anna Galland, the executive director of the liberal group MoveOn.org, said even a limited mission "is a dangerous and troubling development that threatens to lead to broader military engagement."

Indeed, the U.S. has seen small operations escalate before. The conflict in Vietnam started with Presidents Dwight Eisenhower and John F. Kennedy sending limited numbers of military advisers to train and assist local forces. But those numbers increased over time and set the stage for what ultimately became a yearslong combat operation.

The wars that began in Iraq and Afghanistan in the last decade were intended to be combat missions from the start. Few people expected at the time that the Iraq war would drag on for more than eight years, the Afghan conflict for more than a dozen years, or that the U.S. troop presence in each country would peak above 100,000.

Putin Calls For Compromise In Ukraine

MOSCOW (AP) — Russian President Vladimir Putin publicly expressed support Sunday for Ukraine's declaration of a cease-fire in its battle against pro-Russian separatists and called on both sides to negotiate a compromise.

Putin said such a compromise must guarantee the rights of the Russian-speaking residents of eastern Ukraine, who must feel like they are "an integral part" of their own country. Putin's statement appeared to signal that he sees their future in Ukraine.

Separatists in the eastern Donetsk and Luhansk regions have declared independence and asked to join Russia. Moscow has rebuffed their appeals, but is seen by Ukraine and the West as actively supporting the insurgency. Putin's conciliatory words came as Russia began large-scale military exercises and after NATO accused Russia of moving troops back toward the Ukrainian border.

Putin appears determined to keep up the pressure to force the Kiev government to give the eastern industrial regions more powers and to prevent Ukraine from moving too close to the European Union or NATO. But he also wants to avoid more punishing sanctions from the U.S. and particularly from the E.U., whose leaders will meet Friday in Brussels, and therefore needs to be seen as cooperating with efforts to de-escalate the conflict.

The Kremlin initially dismissed the peace plan that Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko laid out on Friday. But in a statement issued late Saturday, Putin said he welcomed the cease-fire and Poroshenko's "intention to take other concrete steps to reach a peaceful settlement."

Lawyers Get OK To Scan Social Media

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — Lawyers have been given the green light to scan the social media sites of jurors.

The American Bar Association says it's ethical for lawyers to scour online for publicly available musings of citizens called for jury service — and even jurors in deliberations.

But the ABA does warn lawyers against actively "following" or "friending" jurors or otherwise invading their private Internet areas.

Though judges now universally admonish jurors to refrain from discussing trials on social media, the nationwide lawyers group for the first time is addressing how deeply attorneys, their investigators and their consultants can probe for information that might signal leanings of potential jurors, or unearth juror misconduct during trials.

Jurors' online postings have disrupted many legal proceedings over the years, causing mistrials and special hearings over the effects of Facebook musings, tweets and blog writings about their trial experiences. Lawyers and judges have also been wrangling over how far attorneys can go in assembling a jury with help from online research of jurors' social media habits.

Escapees In Canada Jailbreak Captured

MONTREAL (AP) — A heavily-armed SWAT team raided an upscale Montreal condominium early Sunday to capture the three men police say made a bold escape by helicopter from a Quebec jail two weeks ago.

The men, who were facing murder and gangsterism charges before the jailbreak, were found in a posh 10th-floor condo with a stunning view of the city in a ritzy new development in Old Montreal, just steps from the historic waterfront.

Yves Denis, 35, Denis Lefebvre, 53, and Serge Pomerleau, 49, were arrested after police busted open the door to enter the residence around 1:30 a.m., Quebec provincial police said. They are due in court in Quebec City on Monday to face fresh charges, but police did not spell out what the new accusations would be.

Police did not divulge details about what led them to the condo.

By midday Sunday, police had left the scene after carrying out several containers and bags. Two maintenance workers were cleaning up the home where the men were arrested.

US Gas Prices Rise Slightly To \$3.71

CAMARILLO, Calif. (AP) — A survey says the average price of a gallon of regular gasoline in the U.S. has risen by 2 cents over the last two weeks to \$3.71.

Industry analyst Trilby Lundberg said Sunday that crude oil prices rose over jitters about Iraqi oil production as violence there grows.

Much of that increase hasn't been passed on to consumers yet, and prices could increase over the coming weeks.

The survey taken Friday shows the average price for a gallon of midgrade gas was \$3.90 and the average price for a gallon of premium was \$4.05. Diesel averaged \$3.95 a gallon.

Of cities surveyed in the continental U.S., Tucson, Arizona, had the lowest average price at \$3.37 a gallon. Chicago had the highest average at \$4.15 a gallon.

VA Falls Short On Female Medical Issues

BY GARANCE BURKE
Associated Press Writer

SAN FRANCISCO — Already pilloried for long wait times for medical appointments, the beleaguered Department of Veterans Affairs has fallen short of another commitment: to attend to the needs of the rising ranks of female veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan, many of them of child-bearing age.

Even the head of the VA's office of women's health acknowledges that persistent shortcomings remain in caring for the 390,000 female vets seen last year at its hospitals and clinics — despite an investment of more than \$1.3 billion since 2008, including the training of hundreds of medical professionals in the fundamentals of treating the female body.

According to an Associated Press review of VA internal documents, inspector general reports and interviews:

- Nationwide, nearly one in four VA hospitals does not have a fulltime gynecologist on staff. And about 140 of the 920 community-based clinics serving veterans in rural areas do not have a designated women's health provider, despite the goal that every clinic would have one.
- When community-based clinics refer veterans to a nearby university or other private medical facility to be screened for breast cancer, more than half the time their mammogram results are not provided to patients within two weeks, as required under VA policy.
- Female veterans have been placed on the VA's Electronic Wait List, which consists of all new patients for whom appointments cannot be scheduled in 90 days or less, at a higher rate than male veterans.
- And according to a VA presentation last year, female veterans of child-bearing age were far more likely to be given medications that can cause birth defects than were women being treated through a private HMO.

"Are there problems? Yes," said Dr. Patricia Hayes, the VA's chief consultant for women's health in an AP interview. "The good news for

our health care system is that as the number of women increases dramatically, we are going to continue to be able to adjust to these circumstances quickly."

The 5.3 million male veterans who used the VA system in fiscal year 2013 far outnumbered female patients, but the number of women receiving care at VA has more than doubled since 2000. The tens of thousands of predominantly young, female veterans returning home has dramatically changed the VA's patient load, and the system has yet to fully catch up. Also, as the total veteran population continues to decrease, the female veteran population has been increasing year after year, according to a 2013 VA report.

All enrolled veterans can use what the VA describes as its "comprehensive medical benefits package," though certain benefits may vary by individual and ailment, just like for medical care outside the VA system. The VA typically covers all female-specific medical needs, aside from abortions and in-vitro fertilization.

The strategic initiatives, which sprang from recommendations issued six years ago to enhance women's health system-wide, have kick started research about women veterans' experience of sexual harassment, assault or rape in a military setting; established working groups about how to build prosthetics for female soldiers; and even led to installation of

women's restrooms at the more than 1,000 VA facilities.

Yet enduring problems with the delivery of care for women veterans are surfacing now amid the growing criticism of the VA's handling of patient care nationwide and allegations of misconduct, lengthy wait times and potential unnecessary deaths.

Used to treating the men who served in Vietnam, Korea or World War II, many of the VA's practitioners until a few years ago were unaccustomed to treating menopause or giving advice about birth control.

The study on distribution of prescription medication that could cause birth defects is illustrative of the lagging awareness; one of every two women veterans has received medication from a VA pharmacy that could cause birth defects, compared to one in every six women who received drugs care through a private health care system, said the study's author, Eleanor Bimla Schwarz, a senior medical expert on reproductive health with VA.

INFORMATION REQUEST

If you or a loved one have undergone surgical or other procedures with Allen Sossan, D.O., or if you have information concerning Allen Sossan, D.O. we would appreciate hearing from you.

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Come Join The Fun

June 27 & 28, Riverside Park!

This year's Relay For Life is getting revved up with a great theme of "There's No Place Like **HOPE!**" This Wizard of Oz inspired theme is going to be threaded through the entire night with special games, reenactments, special themed laps, and prizes for everyone willing to come down and help us celebrate our survivors and remember those we have lost to cancer. Take a look at this great line up of ceremonies and activities:

4:30pmSurvivor Registration
5:00-7:00pm.....Community Meal — **EVERYONE WELCOME!** Pork Loin, chips, carrots, watermelon and drink. Survivors eat free. Everyone else is minimum donation of \$5.
5:45pm.....Survivor Picture
6:00-9:00pm.....Relay Store
6:15pm.....Survivor Lap/Ceremony
7:30pm.....Lewis & Clark Theatre Company presents the return of "Wicked Witch of Oz"
8:00pm.....Fight Back Ceremony
8:30pm.....ACS Fight Back Line Dance
Emerald City Talent Search — Bring your talents to share with others!
9:30pm.....Luminaria Ceremony
10:00pm.....Raffle Drawing
Ruby Red Shoes competition! Everyone gets to vote. There is a \$5 entry fee and prizes will be awarded.
Please make sure to have your entries turned in by 6:00pm.
11:00pm.....Laser Tag
Midnight.....Wizard of Oz Quiz Bowl!
3:00am.....Flying Monkey Games!
4:30am.....Darla's Boot Camp!
5:00am.....Breakfast
5:30am-6:00am.....Closing Ceremony & Clean Up

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