

US Officials Say Strike In Libya Hit Target

CAIRO (AP) — Pentagon officials say they believe they hit their target — the one-eyed, al-Qaida-linked commander who led a deadly attack on an Algerian gas facility in 2013. But uncertainty still surrounds the U.S. airstrike in eastern Libya, and whether Mokhtar Belmokhtar was actually among the militants said to have been killed in the bombing.

Libyan officials say Sunday's airstrike hit a gathering of militants on a farm outside Ajdabiya, a coastal city about 850 kilometers (530 miles) east of the capital, Tripoli, but there were conflicting reports on how many died.

An initial assessment shows the bombing that targeted Belmokhtar was successful, and "post-strike assessments" were still underway Monday to determine whether the Algerian militant was killed, said Col. Steve Warren, a Pentagon spokesman.

"But we're not prepared to confirm that because we haven't finalized our assessment," he said, adding that the strike had hit a "hard structure."

Maj. Mohammed Hegazi, a military spokesman from Libya's internationally recognized government based in the east, also said tests were needed to identify the dead, which numbered at least 17, with their bodies badly burned. Among those killed were three foreigners — a Tunisian and two unidentified militants, he said.

Kurdish Militias Seize Parts Of City

BEIRUT (AP) — U.S.-backed Kurdish fighters captured large sections of a strategic town on the Syria-Turkish border on Monday, dealing the biggest setback yet to the Islamic State group, which lost a key supply line for their nearly self-proclaimed capital.

The seizure of Tal Abyad threatened to flare tensions between Kurds and ethnic Arabs, who accused the Kurdish militia of deliberately displacing thousands of people from the town, which has a mixed population.

Redur Khalil, a spokesman for the main Kurdish fighting force, known as the YPG, said Kurdish fighters entered from the east and were advancing west toward the town's center amid fierce clashes with pockets of IS resistance.

"We expect to have full control over Tal Abyad within a few hours," he told The Associated Press by telephone. A few hours later, the YPG announced on its Facebook page that it had liberated the town.

The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights confirmed the Kurdish fighters had "almost full control" of Tal Abyad by Monday evening, and had taken command of the border crossing with Turkey. It said some 40 Islamic State militants were targeted by U.S.-led airstrikes as they tried to flee south.

Leader Of NAACP Chapter Resigns

SPOKANE, Wash. (AP) — Rachel Dolezal resigned as president of the NAACP's Spokane chapter Monday just days after her parents said she is a white woman posing as black — a dizzyingly swift fall for an activist credited with injecting remarkable new energy into the civil rights organization.

The furor touched off fierce debate around the country over racial identity and divided the NAACP itself.

"In the eye of this current storm, I can see that a separation of family and organizational outcomes is in the best interest of the NAACP," Dolezal, who was elected the chapter's president last fall, wrote on the group's Facebook page. "Please know I will never stop fighting for human rights."

Dolezal, a 37-year-old woman with a light brown complexion and dark curly hair, graduated from historically black Howard University, teaches African studies at a local university and was married to a black man. For years, she publicly described herself as black and complained repeatedly of being the victim of racial hatred in the heavily white region.

The uproar that led to her resignation began last week after Dolezal's parents told the news media their daughter is white with a trace of Native American heritage. They produced photos of her as girl with fair skin and straight blond hair.

Deportation Threat Looms In Republic

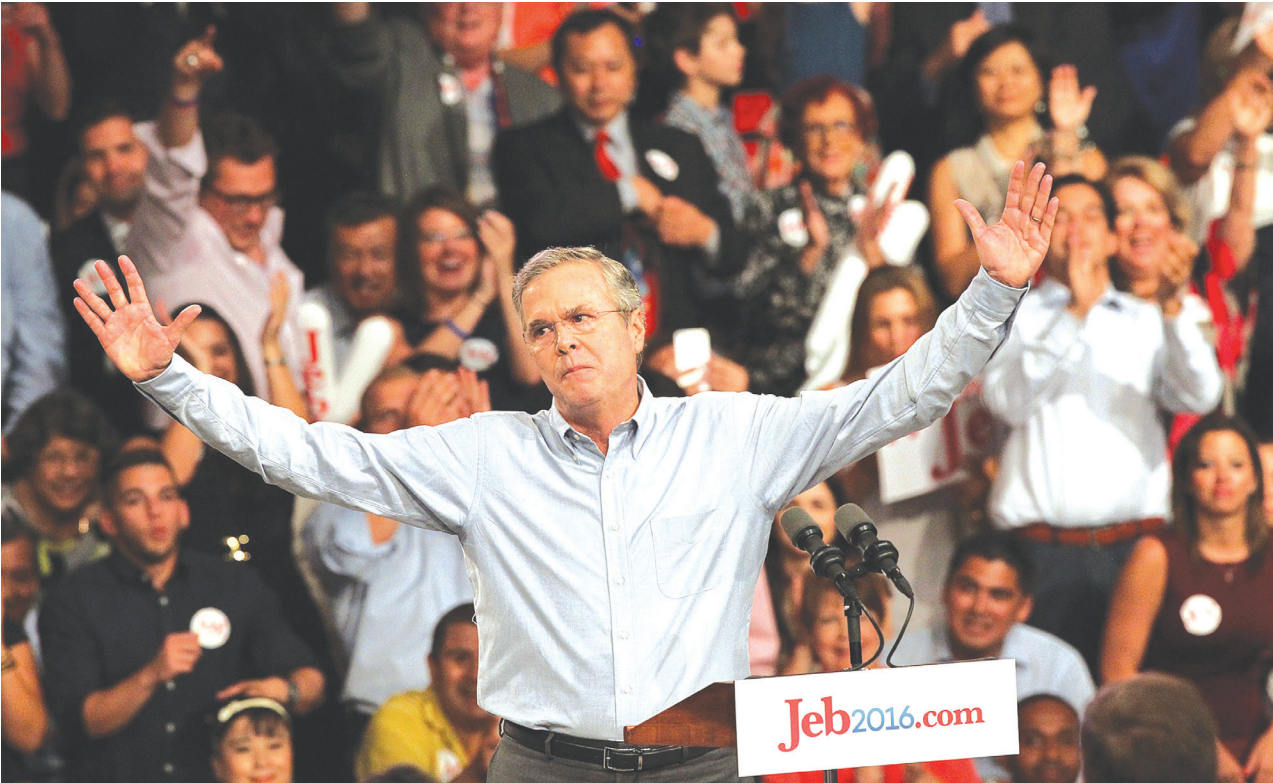
SANTO DOMINGO, Dominican Republic (AP) — Haitians and other non-citizens stood in long lines across the Dominican Republic on Monday in last-minute bids to secure legal residency, hurrying to beat a looming paperwork deadline along with the threat of possible quick deportation.

Lines snaked outside Interior Ministry offices as foreign residents, who are overwhelmingly from neighboring Haiti, sought to submit papers before a 7 p.m. Tuesday deadline. Many said they have had to spend all day and return multiple times after being told they lacked sufficient documentation to complete the applications.

"You still have to bring more papers. It's always hard, but we'll see," bricklayer Aime Morette said as he waited with more than 140 other people to submit his application.

Morette, a 28-year-old who has a wife and two children, said he has lived more than half his life in the Dominican Republic, but that doesn't automatically qualify him for legal residency under an initiative begun last year aimed at regulating the migration of workers who have long flowed across the border from Haiti.

Under the program, the government said it would consider granting legal residency to non-citizens who could establish their identity and prove they arrived before October 2011.



PATRICK FARRELL/MIAMI HERALD/TNS
The crowd cheers as former Florida Gov. Jeb Bush announces his candidacy for president on Monday, June 15 at the Kendall campus of Miami Dade College in Kendall, Fla.

Jeb Bush Has Optimistic Message, Faces Challenges In '16 Bid

BY STEVE PEOPLES
AND BRENDAN FARRINGTON
Associated Press

MIAMI — Vowing to win the Republican presidential nomination on his own merits, Jeb Bush launched a White House bid months in the making Monday with a promise to stay true to his beliefs — easier said than done in a bristling primary contest where his conservative credentials will be sharply challenged.

"Not a one of us deserves the job by right of resume, party, seniority, family or family narrative. It's nobody's turn," Bush said, confronting critics who suggest he simply seeks to inherit the office already held by his father and brother. "It's everybody's test, and it's wide open — exactly as a contest for president should be."

Bush sought to turn the prime argument against his candidacy on its head, casting himself as the true Washington outsider while lashing out at competitors in both parties as being part of the problem. He opened his campaign at a rally near his south Florida home at Miami Dade College, an institution with a large and diverse student body that symbolizes the nation he seeks to lead.

"The presidency should not be passed on from one liberal to the next," he declared in a jab at Democratic favorite Hillary Rodham Clinton.

And he said: "We are not going to clean up the mess in Washington by electing the people who either helped create it or have proven incapable of fixing it."

That was an indirect but unmistakable swipe at Republican presidential rivals in the Senate. Among them is his political protege, Florida Sen. Marco Rubio, who welcomed Bush into the 2016 contest earlier in the day.

Bush enters a 2016 Republican contest that will test both his vision of conservatism and his ability to distance

himself from family.

Neither his father, former President George H.W. Bush, nor his brother, former President George W. Bush, attended Monday's announcement. The family was represented instead by Jeb Bush's mother and former first lady, Barbara Bush, who once said that the country didn't need yet another Bush as president, and by his son George P. Bush, recently elected Texas land commissioner.

Before the event, the Bush campaign came out with a logo — Jeb! — that conspicuously leaves out the Bush surname.

Bush, whose wife is Mexican-born, addressed the packed college arena in English and Spanish, an unusual twist for a political speech aimed at a national audience.

"In any language, my message will be an optimistic one because I am certain that we can make the decades just ahead the greatest time ever to be alive in this world," he said. "I will campaign as I would serve, going everywhere, speaking to everyone, keeping my word, facing the issues without flinching."

In the past six months, Bush has made clear he will remain committed to his core beliefs in the campaign to come — even if his positions on immigration and education standards are deeply unpopular among the conservative base of the party that plays an outsized role in the GOP primaries.

Tea party leader Mark Meckler on Monday said Bush's positions on education and immigration are "a nonstarter with many conservatives."

"There are two political dynasties eyeing 2016," said Meckler, a co-founder of the Tea Party Patriots, one of the movement's largest organizations, and now leader of Citizens for Self-Governance. "And before conservatives try to beat Hillary, they first need to beat Bush."

Yet a defiant Bush has showed little willingness to placate his party's right wing.

Instead, he aimed his message on Monday at the broader swath of the electorate that will ultimately decide the November 2016 general election. Minority voters, in particular, have fueled Democratic victories in the last two presidential elections.

Of the five people on the speaking program before Bush, just one was a white male.

He was not planning to address immigration on Monday, but protesters left him little choice. Just as he introduced his mother, a group of several people removed their outer shirts, revealing yellow T-shirts that spelled out: "Legal status is not enough."

Bush responded by departing from his prepared remarks: "Just so that our friends know, the next president of the United States will pass meaningful immigration reform, so that that will be solved — not by executive order."

He prefers creating a path to legal status for the millions of immigrants now living in the country illegally as part of an overhaul, rather than a path to U.S. citizenship.

Bush is one of 11 major Republicans in the hunt for the nomination. Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker and Ohio Gov. John Kasich are among those still deciding whether to join a field that could end up just shy of 20.

Bush's critics in both parties have criticized him as aggressively as they would if he were the clear Republican favorite.

Kentucky Sen. Rand Paul said Monday there's "Bush-Clinton fatigue" in America. "I think some people have had enough Bushes and enough Clintons," Paul said in an interview with The Associated Press.

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