

**NATION/WORLD DIGEST**

**Police Threats Spurred Christian Militia Raids**

DETROIT (AP) — Federal authorities had been monitoring members of a Michigan-based Christian militia for some time but were forced to “take them down” over the weekend after learning of an imminent threat against police, the U.S. attorney leading the prosecution said Tuesday.

Barbara McQuade’s comments came three days after eight members of a small group of “Christian warriors” were arrested in several Midwestern states and a day after the FBI nabbed a ninth suspect, Joshua Stone, following a standoff at a trailer in rural Michigan.

“The time had come that we needed to arrest them and take them down,” McQuade told The Associated Press in an interview at her office.

Across the street in Detroit federal court, Stone was arraigned Tuesday and was ordered held without bond until a hearing Wednesday.

McQuade said the “most troubling” finding of the investigation was that Hutaree members plotted to make a false 911 call, kill responding officers and then use a bomb to kill many more at the funeral.

**Vatican Cites Sovereignty In Abuse Case**

VATICAN CITY (AP) — Dragged deeper than ever into the clerical sex abuse scandal, the Vatican is launching a legal defense that the church hopes will shield the pope from a lawsuit in Kentucky seeking to have him deposed.

Court documents obtained Tuesday by The Associated Press show that Vatican lawyers plan to argue that the pope has immunity as head of state, that American bishops who oversaw abusive priests weren’t employees of the Vatican, and that a 1962 document is not the “smoking gun” that provides proof of a cover-up.

The Holy See is trying to fend off the first U.S. case to reach the stage of determining whether victims actually have a claim against the Vatican itself for negligence for allegedly failing to alert police or the public about Roman Catholic priests who molested children.

The case was filed in 2004 in Kentucky by three men who claim they were abused by priests and claim negligence by the Vatican. Their attorney, William McMurry, is seeking class-action status for the case, saying there are thousands of victims across the country.

“This case is the only case that has been ever filed against the Vatican which has as its sole objective to hold the Vatican accountable for all the priest sex abuse ever committed in this country,” he said in a phone interview. “There is no other defendant. There’s no bishop, no priest.”

**Nissan To Sell Electric Car For Just Over \$25K**

NEW YORK (AP) — Nissan Motor Co. said Tuesday its new electric car will cost just over \$25,000 in the U.S., a move that could force rivals to lower prices on similar vehicles. The Leaf, a four-door hatchback due in showrooms late this year, will have a base price of \$32,780, but buyers can get a \$7,500 electric vehicle tax credit, Nissan said.

The price tag puts the Leaf, which can go up to 100 miles on a single charge from a home outlet, within reach of mainstream car buyers, and it also will force competitors to respond when they introduce their cars.

General Motors Co., which also will begin selling its Chevrolet Volt rechargeable electric car later this year, said that it will look at Nissan’s pricing before announcing the Volt’s price closer to its December sales date.

“I think it’s fair to say their pricing, it won’t overwhelm, but it will have some influence on our pricing decision,” said GM spokesman Rob Peterson.

GM was looking to price the Volt, which can go 40 miles on full electricity before a small gas engine kicks in to provide power, around \$35,000. It would cost \$27,500 with the tax credit.

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**ECONOMY**

**Consumer Confidence Slowly Rising**

BY ANNE D’INNOCENZIO  
AP Retail Writer

NEW YORK — Signs of life in consumer spending are sprouting this spring.

A partial rebound in consumer confidence, a positive report on January home prices and an expected strong March from retailers suggest Americans are cautiously perking up.

The Conference Board said Tuesday its Consumer Confidence Index rose to 52.5 in March, recovering about half of the nearly 11 points it lost in February. Analysts expected a reading of 50 for March, but the index is still far below the 90 reading that’s considered healthy.

February’s 46.4 marked the lowest level since April 2009 and also erased three consecutive months of improvement. In January, the reading was 56.5.

Economists watch the figures closely because consumer spending, including health care and other major expenses, accounts for about 70 percent of U.S. economic activity and is critical to a strong economic recovery.

“We’re a lot better off, but we have a lot more improvement to go,” said Michael P. Niemira, chief economist at the International Council of Shopping Centers. He said shoppers have “more willingness to spend” and are starting to trade back up in areas where they had cut back.

Separately, the Standard & Poor’s/Case-Shiller 20-city home price index showed prices rose 0.3 percent from December to January, the eighth consecutive monthly gain. Among the 20 cities in the index, 12 rose. But there’s some worry the momentum in the housing market won’t be sustained. Home sales sank during the winter, and government incentives that have propped up the market

are ending.

Meanwhile, merchants are expected to report a 3.5 percent gain for March when they release sales figures next week, according to Niemira’s estimate, which was upgraded from his original 2.5 percent projection. The figure is based on sales at stores open at least a year, considered a key indicator of a retailer’s health.

Retailers reported a 3.7 percent increase for February, marking the biggest increase since November 2007, a month before the recession began.

The index excludes Wal-Mart Stores Inc., the world’s largest retailer, which stopped reporting sales figures on a monthly basis.

Still, as consumers cautiously return to some more expensive brands and stores, they’re still buying differently than before the recession, keeping some frugal habits while shedding the more extreme cutbacks.

**Obama, Sarkozy Push For Sanctions On Iran**

WASHINGTON (AP) — With the president of France at his side, President Barack Obama declared Tuesday he hopes to have international sanctions against Iran in place “within weeks,” not months, because of its continuing nuclear program. But he acknowledged he still lacks full support.

Obama said while “the door remains open if the Iranians choose to walk through it,” there have been no signs that the Iranians are close to moving back from their nuclear program — and patience has all but run out.

French President Nicolas Sarkozy and he are “inseparable” on such a stance, Obama said.

For his part, Sarkozy told reporters, “Iran cannot continue its mad race” toward acquiring nuclear weapons. “The time has come to take decisions,” he said.

Both presidents are trying to build support on the United Nations Security Council for new, tougher sanctions.

Obama said meeting global challenges such as Iran require global cooperation. Obama also said the pair discussed the financial regulatory overhaul and peace negotiations in the Middle East.

**Record Rainstorm Pounds Northeast U.S.**

CRANSTON, R.I. (AP) — A record-shattering rainstorm hammered the Northeast on Tuesday, delivering widespread flooding for the second time this month and unleashing particular havoc in Rhode Island, a tiny coastal state already beleaguered by a sagging economy and backbreaking unemployment rate.

The storm soaked all corners of what is known as the Ocean State, pushing rivers over their banks, closing roads and schools, and requiring hundreds of people to evacuate, including by boat. The rain finally tapered off by Tuesday afternoon but resumed in Providence by evening, with officials bracing for what is expected to be the most severe flooding to hit the state in more than 100 years.

As flood waters began to sweep through first floors in some areas, rivers from Maine down to the New York area weren’t even expected to crest until Wednesday or Thursday.

“None of us alive have seen the flooding that we are experiencing now or going to experience,” Rhode Island Gov. Don Carcieri said Tuesday night. “This is unprecedented in our state’s history.”

The rain came as residents were still recovering from a storm two weeks ago that dumped as much as 10 inches on the region and led President Barack Obama to declare a major disaster in all but one Rhode Island county. Business owners in the flood zone are still grappling with the impact of lost income.

Carcieri last week cited what he called the state’s “fragile economic climate” and an estimated \$220 million state budget deficit when he asked Obama to declare a federal disaster. The state’s unemployment rate has hovered for months around 13 percent and has long been among the highest in the nation.

Even fishermen were hit: Shellfish beds in Rhode Island and Massachusetts were closed because of sewage overflows and failures at wastewater treatment facilities caused by flooding.



JOHN WOIKE/HARTFORD COURANT/MCT  
Jonathan Gibson had 16 inches of water in his basement from flood waters due to a slow-moving Nor’easter in Stonington, Connecticut on Tuesday.

National Guard troops were activated in Rhode Island, Massachusetts and Connecticut. Scattered home evacuations were reported in those states, as well, and residents in flood-prone areas of New Hampshire were put on alert that they may have to leave. No deaths were reported in those states as of Tuesday evening.

Records fell across the region. The nearly 14 inches of rain that fell this month in Boston broke the previous March record of 11, according to the National Weather Service. New Jersey and parts of New York City also set March records. And by Tuesday afternoon, Providence had recorded

more than 15 inches of rain in March, becoming the r Interstate 95, a major East Coast thoroughfare, was flooded down to one lane in some areas of Rhode Island. In Maine, a dam in Porter let loose Tuesday morning, sending a torrent of water down country roads. No evacuations or injuries were reported.

Weather-related delays averaged three hours at Newark Liberty International Airport and two hours at New York’s La Guardia Airport, according to the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey. In New York City, a mudslide caused some interruptions on a commuter rail line in the Bronx.

**OBITUARIES**

**Alfreda Lien**

Alfreda Helen Lien, age 88, of Yankton, South Dakota, died peacefully Monday, March 29, 2010 at Avera Sacred Heart Hospital in Yankton surrounded by her four daughters.

Funeral services are 2:00 p.m. on Thursday, April 1, 2010 at Faith United Lutheran Church in rural Volin, South Dakota with Pastor Velma Larson officiating. Burial will be in the Zion Cemetery.

Visitation is from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. on Wednesday, at the Wintz & Ray Funeral Home in Yankton. Visitation resumes one hour prior to the service at the church.

Pallbearers are her grandchildren.

Alfreda was born January 29, 1922 to Lewis H. and Helga (Thompson) Jacobson. She grew up on a farm near Wakonda, South Dakota and graduated from Wakonda High School. She married Alvin Lien on November

25, 1945. After their marriage, they lived on the Lien homestead farm near Volin where they raised their five children. In 2002, they moved to Yankton. Alfreda was a wonderful mother who loved the Lord and shared that love with her family. She loved spending time with her daughters, grandchildren and great grandchildren. Alfreda enjoyed baking, music, doing handiwork and visiting with her many friends.

Those grateful for having shared her life are her four daughters: Linda (Ed) Shepherd of Des Moines, IA, Janet (Jerry) Melick of Yankton, Jane (Tom) Maurer of Madison, SD, and Audrey (Keith) Skrondahl of Pierre, SD; a daughter-in-law, Lisa Lien of Sioux Falls; ten grandchildren: Jill (Jay) Swatek, Beth (Joe) Stolp, Bryan (Jessica) Shepherd,



Lien

Alicia (Dustin) Wildeboer, Katie (Rick) Melius, Kent Skrondahl, Kyle and Allison Maurer, Aaron and Kariann Lien.; four great grandchildren: Tayson and Bryn Swatek, Luke Melius and Aubrey Stolp; two sisters, Agnes Marshall of Pleasant Hill, IA and Gladys Larsen of Yankton.

Alfreda was preceded in death by her parents; husband, Alvin Lien of 61 years; beloved son, Gregg Lien; two brothers, Curtis and Roland Jacobson and a sister, Virginia Jacobson.

To post an online sympathy message, please visit wintzrayfuneralhome.com.

Yankton Press & Dakotan  
March 31, 2010



Online condolences at: www.wintzrayfuneralhome.com

**IN REMEMBRANCE**

<b>Kenneth Kisner</b> 10:30 AM, Wednesday Holy Trinity Catholic Church Hartington	<b>Thomas Beam</b> 10:00 AM, Thursday First Baptist Church Wayne NE
<b>Alfreda Lien</b> 2:00 PM, Thursday Faith United Lutheran Church Volin	

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Start recycling #1 & #2 plastics, corrugated cardboard, tin and aluminum cans and foil, newspaper, magazines and slicks. Details can be found at www.cityofyankton.org or by calling 668-5211.

**EASTER MENU** Sunday, April 4<sup>th</sup>  
Come Dine With Us!  
**Breakfast Buffet \$5.99**  
Served 7am-2pm  
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