

Judge Enters Not Guilty Plea For Colo. Shooter

CENTENNIAL, Colo. (AP) — The judge in the deadly Colorado movie theater shooting case entered a not guilty plea on behalf of James Holmes on Tuesday after the former graduate student’s defense team said he was not ready to enter one.

If Holmes is convicted, he could be executed or spend the rest of his life in prison. Judge William Sylvester said Holmes, 25, can change his plea to not guilty by reason of insanity later, if he chooses.

Such a change could be the only way Holmes could avoid life in prison or execution.

Prosecutors, for their part, have not said yet whether they will pursue the death penalty, announcing Tuesday that they will make their decision known on April 1.

The judge set Aug. 5 for the start of the trial. Prosecutors and defense attorneys declined comment.

Mars Had Right Ingredients To Support Microbes

LOS ANGELES (AP) — The Curiosity rover has answered a key question about Mars: The red planet in the past had some of the right ingredients needed to support primitive life.

The evidence comes from a chemical analysis by Curiosity, which last month flexed its robotic arm to drill into a fine-grained, veiny rock and then test the powder.

Curiosity is the first spacecraft sent to Mars that could collect a sample from deep inside a rock, and scientist said Tuesday that they hit pay dirt with that first rock.

“We have found a habitable environment that is so benign and supportive of life that probably if this water was around and you had been on the planet, you would have been able to drink it,” said chief scientist John Grotzinger of the California Institute of Technology.

The rover made a dramatic “seven-minutes-of-terror” landing last August near the planet’s equator. A key task: Find out if ancient Mars ever had conditions favorable for microscopic organisms.

New York Cop Convicted In Kidnapping Plot

NEW YORK (AP) — Police Officer Gilberto Valle’s lawyers said he was just spinning sick and twisted fantasies for his own pleasure when he chatted online about abducting, roasting and eating women. A jury, though, decided he was deadly serious.

Valle, 28, was convicted Tuesday of conspiracy in a macabre case that opened a window on a shocking Internet world of cannibalism fetishists. He could get life in prison at sentencing June 19 but is likely to face much less.

His lawyers branded the outcome a “thought prosecution” that sets a dangerous precedent, while federal prosecutors said the verdict proved that Valle crossed the line from fantasy to reality and was genuinely bent on committing “grotesque crimes.”

Valle slumped in his chair, dropped his head and wept when the verdict in what the tabloids dubbed the “Cannibal Cop” trial was announced after more than two days of deliberations: guilty of conspiracy to commit kidnapping and guilty of illegally using a police database.

The jurors left the courthouse without comment. Most did not immediately respond to emails and phone messages or declined to discuss the case.

Israel’s Ultra-Orthodox Parties On New Ground

JERUSALEM (AP) — As Israel’s new government takes shape, the country’s powerful ultra-Orthodox Jewish political parties seem poised to find themselves in unfamiliar territory — the parliamentary opposition — instead of their traditional seats around the Cabinet table.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s two new potential partners pledge to end a system in which the ultra-Orthodox have used political clout to win generous government subsidies, evade compulsory military service and attempt to impose their conservative social mores.

Nothing is certain yet. Netanyahu is still negotiating, and he has not yet signed coalition agreements with the two main parties — the centrist Yesh Atid and hawkish Jewish Home.

If his new government excludes the ultra-Orthodox parties, it could reshape the face of Israel, which has experienced growing strife in recent years between the fast-growing ultra-Orthodox community and the general public.

Ultra-Orthodox party leaders are vowing to put up a fight.

Bob Dylan Voted Into Elite Arts Academy

NEW YORK (AP) — If he lived in England, he’d surely be Sir Bob Dylan.

The most influential songwriter of his time has become the first rock star voted into the elite, century-old American Academy of Arts and Letters, where artists range from Philip Roth to Jasper Johns and categories include music, literature and visual arts. According to executive director Virginia Dajani, officials couldn’t decide whether he belonged for his words or for his music, so they settled on making him an honorary member, joining such previous choices as Meryl Streep, Woody Allen and a filmmaker who has made a documentary about Dylan, Martin Scorsese.

“The board of directors considered the diversity of his work and acknowledged his iconic place in the American culture,” Dajani said recently. “Bob Dylan is a multi-talented artist whose work so thoroughly crosses several disciplines that it defies categorization.”

Dylan’s manager, Jeff Rosen, had no immediate comment on Dylan’s reaction — Dylan did accept membership, a condition for the vote to go through — or whether he would attend the academy’s April dinner or May induction ceremony. Dylan usually tours in the spring and is already booked for much of April for shows in the East and Midwest, none of them in the New York City area.

“I would guess it’s unlikely,” Dajani said of whether Dylan would show up for either occasion.

Scientists Exhume Bodies In S. Africa Killings

JOHANNESBURG (AP) — Forensic scientists on Tuesday exhumed two bodies believed to belong to young activists last seen 24 years ago at the home of Winnie Madikizela-Mandela as police said they have opened a new murder investigation.

The case reopens a dark chapter in the life of the then-wife of Nelson Mandela. Many South Africans still revere the 76-year-old as “the mother of the nation,” but others have feared as a vengeful and heartless operator. She had “the blood of African children on her hands,” her former friend Xoliswa Falati told South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

In the late 1990s, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission found that Madikizela-Mandela was responsible for the disappearances in November 1988 of 21-year-old Lolo Sono and his friend Sibuniso Tshabalala, 19. But nothing was done to pursue allegations she was directly involved in their killings, even though her chief bodyguard Jerry Richardson told the commission he and a colleague stabbed the young men to death on Madikizela-Mandela’s orders.

Mortuary records indicate the two bodies that were unearthed on Tuesday had multiple stab wounds

In front of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Madikizela-Mandela denied all knowledge of the two and said allegations she was involved in six other killings were rubbish. Madikizela-Mandela could not be reached for comment.

Woman Accused Of Getting Boy To Kill Husband

DEFIANCE, Ohio (AP) — Prosecutors in northern Ohio say a woman somehow persuaded her 10-year-old stepson to kill his own father in a decade-old killing that had initially been ruled accidental.

Authorities in Defiance County have charged Judith Hawkey with aggravated murder, insurance fraud and child endangering in connection with the 2003 death of Robert Breiningner.

Hawkey, of Oakwood, pleaded not guilty to the charges Tuesday and is being held on a \$3 million bond.

Authorities reopened the investigation last year. Defiance County Prosecutor Morris Murray says new evidence led to the charges last week.

Murray says Hawkey abused the boy for at least three years before the shooting.

Budget Battle

GOP Proposal Aims At Spending

BY ANDREW TAYLOR  
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — House Republicans redoubled their efforts to roll back signature accomplishments of President Barack Obama on Tuesday, offering a slashing budget plan that would repeal new health care subsidies and cut spending across a wide swath of programs dear to Obama and his Democratic allies.

The GOP plan was immediately rejected by the White House as an approach that “just doesn’t add up” and would harm America’s middle class. Obama has rebuffed similar plans two years in a row and ran strongly against the ideas when winning re-election last year — when its chief author, Budget Committee Chairman Paul Ryan, R-Wis., was on the Republican ticket.

Ryan’s budget illustrates the stark differences in the visions of tea party-backed Republicans and Obama and his Democratic allies about the size and role of government — with no obvious avenues for compromise.

Senate Democrats are responding with a milder plan that would repeal automatic spending cuts that began to take effect earlier this month while offering \$100 billion in new spending for infrastructure and job training. The Democratic counter won’t be officially unveiled until Wednesday, but its rough outlines were described by aides. They spoke only on condition of anonymity because they weren’t authorized to describe it publicly.

That plan by Senate Budget Committee Chairman Patty Murray, D-Wash., would raise taxes by almost \$1 trillion over a decade and cut spending by almost \$1 trillion over the same period. But more half of the combined deficit savings would be used to repeal the automatic, across-the-board spending cuts that began to hit the economy earlier this month and are slated to continue through the decade.

All this was in the works as Obama trekked to the Capitol to join Senate Democrats for their weekly closed-door policy luncheon as part of his bipartisan outreach efforts to lawmakers in both House and Senate on the budget. Obama is pressing for a “grand bargain” that would attract more moderate elements from both parties — even as this week’s competing budget presentations are tailored to appeal strictly along party lines.

Obama meets with House Republicans on Wednesday.

At issue is the arcane and partisan congressional budget process, which involves a unique, non-binding measure called a budget resolution. When the process works as designed — which is rarely — budget resolutions have the potential to stake out parameters for follow-up legislation specifying spending and rewriting the complex U.S. tax code.

But this year’s dueling GOP and Democratic budget proposals are more about defining political differences — as if last year’s elections didn’t do enough of that — than charting a path toward a solution.

“If you look at the two budgets, there’s not a lot of overlap,” said Rep. Chris Van Hollen of Maryland, top Democrat on the Budget Committee.

Senate Panel Approves Background Checks On Guns

BY ALAN FRAM  
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Democrats gave a boost Tuesday to the pillar of President Barack Obama’s plans for reducing gun violence, pushing a bill requiring nearly universal federal background checks for firearms buyers through the Senate Judiciary Committee over solid Republican opposition.

The proposal still faces a difficult path through Congress, where GOP lawmakers say it would have little impact on crime and warn that it is a precursor to a federal registry of gun owners. Such a listing is forbidden by federal law and is anathema to conservatives and the National Rifle Association.

The committee approved the bill 10-8, supported by every Democrat and opposed by all Republicans. It would require background checks for transactions between private individuals — they are now mandatory only for sales by licensed gun dealers — and expand a system designed to keep firearms from criminals, those with major mental problems and others.

“This isn’t going to be a perfect bill,” said its sponsor, Sen. Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., acknowledging that it wouldn’t end gun violence. “But it will sure reduce crimes.”

The panel also voted 14-4 for a measure providing an additional \$40 million annually for school safety improvements like classroom locks and training for teachers. Four Republicans joined Democrats in backing that measure, which initially called for a higher figure that was reduced in bargaining between Sens. Barbara Boxer, D-Calif., and Susan Collins, R-Maine.

Awaiting a committee vote Thursday is a proposal by Sen. Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif., to ban assault weapons and high-capacity ammunition magazines. That bill is expected to win panel approval but die in the full Senate when the chamber considers gun legislation, probably in April.

Tuesday’s session came as lawmakers wrestle over responding to December’s carnage at an elementary school in Newtown, Conn., that took the lives of 20 students and six educators. It also underscored the hurdles faced by expanded background checks, which has been seen as the most potent step lawmakers could take that has a fighting chance of passing Congress.

“Mass shootings would continue to occur despite universal background checks,” said Iowa Sen. Charles Grassley, the committee’s top Republican. “Criminals will continue to steal guns and buy them illegally to circumvent the requirements. When that happens, we will be back here debating whether gun registration is needed. And when registration fails, then the next step is gun confiscation.”

Schumer responded that that assertion “demeans the argument.”

Schumer said he is continuing to negotiate with Republicans in hopes of crafting a compromise

background-check bill. Talks failed with conservative Sen. Tom Coburn, R-Okla.

Schumer also faces potential defections from a half-dozen moderate Democrats from Republican-leaning states in the South and West who face re-election next year.

There are 53 Democrats in the 100-member Senate and two independents who usually side with them. Republicans are likely to force Democrats to get the 60 votes needed to advance legislation.

Leaders in the GOP-dominated House have expressed little support for extending background checks to private transactions.

At one point during Tuesday’s debate, Schumer sounded almost wistful about the proposal’s prospects.

“It’s sad,” he said. “Right after Newtown, there was a view that maybe the right place that we could all come together on was background checks.”

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CROSSWORD  
By THOMAS JOSEPH

- ACROSS**
- 1 Foolish
  - 5 Forgivable
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  - 12 Show clearly
  - 13 Field cover
  - 14 Fit an arrow to a bow
  - 15 Crunch targets
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  - 17 Motif
  - 19 Flowed into
  - 22 Man of many words
  - 24 Syco-phantic
  - 26 District
  - 27 Buffalo's county
  - 28 Muffler's kin
  - 30 Bulletproof apparel
  - 31 Hole number
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  - 34 TV's Trebek
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  - 43 Comfort
  - 44 Stun with noise
- DOWN**
- 1 Poll numbers
  - 2 Swift horse
  - 3 It's needed for the uphill climb
  - 4 Spigot
  - 5 Malice
  - 6 Conjures up
  - 7 Pleasant
  - 8 Tattoos, slangily
  - 9 King top-per
  - 10 Was in front
  - 16 Airport sight

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Yesterday's answer

- 18 Get news of
- 19 Fresh-man
- 20 Give off
- 21 Colors
- 22 Rough voice
- 23 Killer whale
- 25 Lusty look
- 29 Cat
- 30 Puzzle holder
- 33 Colorless gas
- 34 "Like that'll happen!"
- 36 Otherwise
- 37 Freshman, usually
- 38 Roulette bet
- 39 Heady drink
- 40 — tizzy
- 41 Flock

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3-13

A X Y D L B A A X R  
is L O N G F E L L O W

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

3-13

CRYPTOQUOTE

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C F V Z D Z D K U F E D A V E F E J

D S K F E G F Z F N T K F E D M D S K

G F Z F N T K . — D M E O V M N N F E Z  
Yesterday's Cryptoquote: WITHOUT A HUMBLE BUT REASONABLE CONFIDENCE IN YOUR OWN POWERS YOU CANNOT BE SUCCESSFUL OR HAPPY. — NORMAN VINCENT PEALE