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Obama Aim: Keep Mideast Troubles From Boiling Over

BY JULIE PACE
AP White House Correspondent

WASHINGTON — When President Barack Obama steps into the Middle East's political cauldron this coming week, he won't be seeking any grand resolution for the region's vexing problems.

His goal will be trying to keep the troubles, from Iran's suspected pursuit of a nuclear weapon to the bitter discord between Israelis and Palestinians, from boiling over on his watch.

Obama arrives in Jerusalem on Wednesday for his first trip to Israel as president. His first priority will be resetting his oft-troubled relationship with now-weakened Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and evaluating the new coalition government Netanyahu laboriously cobbled together.

The president also will look to boost his appeal to a skeptical Israeli public, as well as to frustrated Palestinians.

"This is not about accomplishing anything now. This is what I call a down payment trip," said Aaron David Miller, an adviser on Mideast peace to six secretaries of state who is now at the Woodrow Wilson International Center.

For much of Obama's first term, White House officials saw little reason for him to go to the region without a realistic chance for a peace accord between the Israelis and Palestinians. But, with the president's one attempt at a U.S.-brokered deal thwarted in his first term and the two sides even more at odds, the White House has shifted thinking.

Officials now see the lowered expectations as a chance to create space for frank conversations between Obama and both sides about what it will take to get back to the negotiating table. The president will use his face-to-face meetings to "per-



Obama

sue both sides to refrain from taking provocative unilateral actions that could be self-defeating," said Haim Malka, a senior fellow at the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

The trip gives Obama the opportunity to meet Netanyahu on his own turf, and that could help ease the tension that has at times defined their relationship.

The leaders have tangled over Israeli settlements and how to contain Iran's nuclear ambitions. Netanyahu also famously lectured the president in front of the media during a 2011 meeting in the Oval Office, and later made no secret of his fondness for Republican challenger Mitt Romney in last year's presidential campaign.

Beyond Mideast peace, the two leaders have similar regional goals, including ending the violence in Syria and containing the political tumult in Egypt, which has a decades-old peace treaty with Israel.

The president's trip comes at a time of political change for Israel.

Netanyahu's power was diminished in January elections, and he struggled to form a government. He finally reached a deal on Friday with rival parties, creating a coalition that brings the centrist Yesh Atid and pro-settler Jewish Home parties into the government and excludes the ultra-Orthodox Jewish parties for the first time in a decade.

The coalition will be sworn in Monday, two days before Obama's arrival.

White House press secretary Jay Carney on Saturday congratulated Israelis on their new government. He said the president looked forward to working closely with Netanyahu and

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WEARING OF THE GREEN

Kim Sawatzke of The Jokers sports his St. Patrick's Day colors as he sings during the Shamrock 'n Roll fundraiser held at the Excelsior Mill in Yankton Saturday night. The Jokers, who disbanded several years ago, regrouped for this event, which was a fundraiser for the Mead Building restoration project. For more information about the Mead project, contact the Dakota Territorial Museum at 665-3898. (Kelly Hertz/P&D)



Yankton Native Enjoying Culinary Success

BY DEREK BARTOS
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Steve Lacey can still remember how he felt as a child when it was time to crack an egg.

"That was the best thing," Lacey said. "If there was something that was going to have eggs in it, I was excited, because I would literally be standing on a chair, and my dad would let me crack the eggs into something. And that was the beginning."

That excitement led to a lifelong love for the culinary arts, and today, the Yankton native and 1985 YHS grad is enjoying his success as executive chef at the Minnesota Landscape Arboretum in Chaska, Minn.

In recognition of his work, Lacey was

featured on the cover of last month's Southwest Metro Magazine. The monthly publication covers dining, shopping and leisure activities for the southwest metro region and suburbs of Minneapolis.

"It's nice to have people recognize you for what you're doing," Lacey said. "I've had people come through that say, 'Hey, are you that chef?' It's just kind of funny."

While cracking eggs may have sparked his interest in cooking, Lacey didn't know for sure that he wanted to pursue a career as a chef until he was in high school. However, that path was



Lacey

marked with a few detours.

"I was pretty sure that's what I wanted to do, but in the '80s in Yankton, it just wasn't something you did," Lacey said. "You didn't go to culinary school. You went to college. So I looked at some schools and went to college."

He tried to focus on other areas, but Lacey couldn't quite shake his desire to be back in the kitchen.

He started working at a Happy Chef restaurant, where he became a manager.

"Eventually I thought, 'This is what I want to do, so I'm going to go to school for it,'" Lacey said.

He attended the New England Culinary Institute in Montpelier, Vt., where

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Michigan-Bound

South Dakota State Heads To Michigan Thursday To Face The University Of Michigan In The NCAA Men's Basketball Tourney Opener.

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SOUTH DAKOTA STATE UNIVERSITY

ONE WIN SHORT



JAMES D. CIMBUREK/P&D

Members of the Viborg-Hurley basketball team huddle up while hoisting aloft the runner-up trophy Saturday night at the South Dakota Class B State Basketball Tournament in Aberdeen. The Cougars fell to White River 63-51 in the final — the second straight year Viborg-Hurley lost to White River in the championship match. It was the third consecutive year Viborg-Hurley fell in a state basketball title game (the first year of the run was in Class A), and it was the first year that this former cooperative program played as a consolidated school. For details, see page 7.

YSD Superintendent Survey Results Likely To Guide Search

BY ANDREW ATWAL
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After Dakota Educational Consulting, the firm leading the search for a new Yankton School District superintendent, posted a survey for community and faculty members to take about a month ago about the search for a new superintendent, the *Press & Dakotan* has learned the results of the survey.

The survey of community members featured 276 respondents, while the faculty survey had 245 respondents.

Rick Melmer, who is helping to lead the YSD search with the consulting firm, said the surveys will help a lot during the search.

"The survey helps us as we formulate questions for the candidates when we screen and do phone interviews," he said. "It's also probably helpful for the



Melmer

school board so that they know what qualities are most important in a superintendent from the perspective of faculty and community members."

Questions included a list of options, and respondents could check all areas that applied to the next superintendent.

However, one question was opened and asked about the issues or topics that are important for the next superintendent to know. A final question asked respondents to rate each quality in terms of how necessary it is for the next leader of YSD to have.

Eighty-three percent of community respondents felt the next superintendent should be a good communicator. Sev-

enty-eight percent said the next superintendent should be good with budget skills, while 74 percent said he/she should have strong interpersonal skills.

Other qualities community members want in the next superintendent include being involved in the community (71 percent), being a visionary for the district (65 percent), acting as an instructional leader (49 percent), being articulate and well-spoken (49 percent), and being courageous (36 percent).

YSD faculty members had somewhat similar answers for the qualities they want in their next leader.

Ninety-two percent of faculty members said they believe the next superintendent should be a good communicator, 80 percent felt he/she should have strong interpersonal skills and 77 per-

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CHANNEL SURFING



KELLY HERTZ/P&D

Kasey Erickson brought Pippi Longstocking to life at the Pine Acres Kiwanis 4-H Ice Center Saturday night as part of Yankton Figure Skating's season-ending spring performance. This year's theme was "TV Land," which featured performances inspired by television shows past and present. To see or purchase images from this event, visit spotted.yankton.net.



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