proposals.

Wednesday, 3.20.13

7 Marines Killed During Training At Nev. Depot

HAWTHORNE, Nev. (AP) — A mortar shell explosion killed seven Marines and injured a half-dozen more during mountain warfare training in Nevada's high desert, prompting the Pentagon to immediately halt the use of some of the weapons worldwide until an investigation can determine their safety, officials said Tuesday.

The explosion occurred Monday night at the Hawthorne Army Depot, a facility used by troops heading overseas, during an exercise involving the 2nd Marine Expeditionary Force from Camp Lejeune, N.C. Several Marines from the unit were injured in the blast, authori-

The mortar round exploded in its firing tube during the exercise, said Brigadier General Jim Lukeman at a news conference at Camp Lejeune. He said investigators are trying to determine the cause of

Lukeman extended condolences to the families of the victims. "Our first priority is to provide them support and we're doing that now," he said.

The Marine Corps said in a statement that it suspended all use of high-explosive and illumination mortar rounds that were in the same manufacturing lots as the ones that were fired in Nevada. The Pentagon suspended use of those rounds worldwide across all branches. not just the Marines.

Cypriot Rejects Deposits Confiscation Bill

NICOSIA, Cyprus (AP) — Cypriot lawmakers on Tuesday rejected a critical draft bill that would have seized part of people's bank deposits in order to qualify for a vital international bailout, with not a single vote in favor.

The rejection leaves Cyprus's bailout in question. Without external funds, the country's banks face collapse and the government could go bankrupt. Nicosia will now have to come up with an alternative plan to raise the money: the government could try to offer a compromise bill that would be more palatable to lawmakers.

The bill, which had been amended Tuesday morning to shield small deposit holders from the deposit tax, was rejected with 36 votes against and 19 abstentions. One deputy was absent.

"No to new colonial bonds, no to subjugation, no to national dishonor and raw blackmail," said house speaker Yiannakis Omirou during the debate before the vote.

After the vote failed, he said political leaders will have a meeting with the president on Wednesday to discuss the next steps.

Teen Gets 3 Life Sentences In School Shooting

CHARDON, Ohio (AP) — Wearing a T-shirt with "killer" scrawled across it, a teenager cursed and gestured obscenely as he was given three life sentences Tuesday for shooting to death three students in an Ohio high school cafeteria.

T.J. Lane, 18, had pleaded guilty last month to shooting at students in February 2012 at Chardon High School, east of Cleveland. Investigators have said he admitted to the shooting but said he didn't know why he did it.

Before the case went to adult court last year, a juvenile court judge ruled that Lane was mentally competent to stand trial despite evidence he suffers from hallucinations, psychosis and

Lane was defiant during the sentencing, smiling and smirking throughout, including while four relatives of victims spoke.

After he came in, he calmly unbuttoned his blue dress shirt to reveal the T-shirt reading "killer," which the prosecutor noted was similar to one he wore during the shooting.

Student Behind Foiled Attack Had Checklist

ORLANDO, Fla. (AP) — The student behind a foiled attack plot at a Florida university was working off a checklist that included plans to get drunk, pull a fire alarm and then "give them hell," authorities said Tuesday.

James Oliver Seevakumaran was crossing items off his list ahead of his planned attack his classmates with guns and homemade explosives, University of Central Florida Police Chief Richard Beary said at a news conference.

The list found along with his dead body early Monday included drinking at a bar near campus and pulling the fire alarm — which investigators believe was meant to flush out victims. Beary says the final item was "give them hell."

Instead, Seevakumaran shot and killed himself as police officers arrived in response to the fire alarm and a 911 call from a roommate. Beary says authorities confirmed he went to the bar and drank.

At the time of the attack, packages were waiting for Seevakumaran at a campus mailroom containing two 22-round magazines and a sling for his rifle and a firearms training DVD

Woman, 75, Convicted In Shooting Of Grandson

PONTIAC, Mich. (AP) — A 75-year-old Detroit-area woman was convicted of second-degree murder on Tuesday for shooting her teenage grandson six times during an argument last spring.

Sandra Layne's trial was not about whether she pulled the trigger last spring at her home in West Bloomfield Township. It boiled down to whether she would be convicted of first-degree murder or a lesser charge, or cleared based on self-defense.

Layne struck Jonathan Hoffman with six of 10 shots fired over a six-minute span. The jury heard a recording of the 17-year-old's

desperate call to 911 and even more shots while he was on the line. "My grandma shot me. I'm going to die. Help. I got shot again," Hoffman told a dispatcher as he gasped for air.

The jury delivered the verdict on the first full day of deliberation. It also convicted Layne of using a firearm during a felony.

Bombs Kill 65 On Eve Of Iraq War Anniversary

BAGHDAD (AP) — Insurgents sent a bloody message on the eve of the 10th anniversary of the U.S.-led invasion, carrying out a wave of bombings across the country Tuesday that killed at least 65 people in the deadliest day in Iraq this year.

The nearly 20 attacks, most of them in and around Baghdad, demonstrated in stark terms how dangerously divided Iraq remains more than a year after American troops withdrew. More than 240 people were reported wounded.

It was Iraq's bloodiest day since Sept. 9, when an onslaught of bombings and shootings killed 92.

Violence has ebbed sharply since the peak of Sunni-Shiite fighting that pushed the country to the brink of civil war in 2006 and 2007. But insurgents are still able to stage high-profile attacks, while sectarian and ethnic rivalries continue to tear at the fabric of national unity.

The symbolism of Tuesday's attacks was strong, coming 10 years to the day, Washington time, that President George W. Bush announced the start of hostilities against Iraq. It was already early March 20, 2003, in Iraq when the airstrikes began.

Obama Confronts Middle East Landscape

WASHINGTON (AP) — On his second trip to the Middle East as U.S. commander in chief, President Barack Obama this week will confront a political and strategic landscape nearly unrecognizable from the one he encountered on his first trip to the region shortly after assuming office in 2009.

Gone are the authoritarian regimes and leaders in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Yemen, and the once seemingly indestructible Assad regime in Syria is tottering on the brink of collapse. Uncertainty abounds in the wake of the revolutions that have convulsed the Arab world for the past two years and shaken many of the strong but imperfect pillars of stability on the planet's most politically volatile patch of land.

And the few constants are hardly cause for cheer: a moribund Israeli-Palestinian peace process that remains mired in mutual distrust and recrimination, an Iran that seemingly inches closer to nuclear weapons capability despite intensified international

sanctions, and the ever-growing threat from extremists.

At the same time, Obama's 2012 re-election has changed his political calculus. Having run his last race as a political candidate, he is no longer beholden to the whims of voters. His sights appear set on building a legacy that, at least in the short term, is focused not on foreign policy but on the domestic issues that now drive the agenda in Washington.

No Assault Weapons Ban: Not In Dems' Bill

BY ALAN FRAM Associated Press

WASHINGTON — An assault weapons ban won't be in the gun-control legislation that Democrats bring to the Senate floor next month, a decision that means the ban's chances of survival now are all but hopeless.

The ban is the most controversial firearms restriction that President Barack Obama and other Democrats have pressed for since an assault-type weapon was used in the December massacre at an elementary school in Newtown, Conn. Rejection by Congress would be a major victory for the National Rifle Association and its supporters and a setback for Obama and the provision's sponsor, California Sen. Dianne Feinstein.

In a tactical decision, Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, D-Nev., concluded that including the prohibition in the gun bill would jeopardize the chances for passage of any firearms legislation at all, taking away votes that would be needed to overcome Republican attempts to block the Senate from even taking up the issue.

"I very much regret it," Feinstein said Tuesday of the choice that Reid told her he had made. "I tried my best. But my best, I guess, wasn't good enough.

Feinstein's proposal to prohibit militarystyle weapons will still get a vote as an amendment to the gun legislation that Democrats debate. But she is all but certain to need 60 votes from the 100-member Senate to prevail, and she faces solid Republican opposition as well as likely defections from some Democrats.

Reid told reporters that "using the most optimistic numbers," there were less than 40 votes for Feinstein's ban. That is far less than the 60 votes needed to move contested legislation in the chamber, which has 53 Democrats plus two independents who usually back

"I'm not going to try to put something on the floor that won't succeed. I want something that will succeed. I think the worst of all worlds would be to bring something to the floor and it dies there," Reid said.

Because of the opposition the ban has prompted, its exclusion from the initial package the Senate considers had been expected as a way for Democrats to amass the strongest possible vote for the overall legislation. Having a separate vote on assault

weapons might free moderate Democratic senators facing re-election in Republicanleaning states next year to vote against the assault weapons measure, but then support the remaining overall package of gun curbs.

Gun-control supporters also consider a strong Senate vote on an overall bill important because it could put pressure on the Republican-run House, whose leaders have shown little enthusiasm for most of Obama's

Foes of Feinstein's proposal call it a gun grab to take firearms from law-abiding citizens with minimal impact on gun violence. Feinstein and other supporters say limits are needed on the firepower available to people who might make attacks such as the Newtown shootings, which police say involved an assault-type weapon.

Mark Barden, whose 7-year-old son Daniel was killed at Sandy Hook Elementary School, said he hoped an assault weapons ban would pass eventually.

"We're still very happy with the progress that's been made," he said. "Hopefully what is stripped away will return as an amendment."

Pope Francis Urges Protection Of Nature, Weak

BY NICOLE WINFIELD

Associated Press

VATICAN CITY — Pope Francis laid out the priorities of his pontificate during his installation Mass on Tuesday, urging the princes, presidents, sheiks and thousands of ordinary people attending to protect the environment, the weakest and the poorest and to let tenderness "open up a horizon of hope.'

It was a message Francis has hinted at in his first week as pontiff, when his gestures of simplicity often spoke louder than his words. But on a day when he had the world's economic, political and religious leadership sitting before him on the steps of St. Peter's Basilica for the official start of his papacy, Francis made his point clear.

"Please," he told them. "Let us be protectors of creation, protectors of God's plan inscribed in nature, protectors of one another and of the environment.'

The Argentine native is the first pope from Latin America and the first named for the 13th-century friar St. Francis of Assisi, whose life's work was to care for nature, the poor and most disadvantaged. The Vatican said between

150,000-200,000 people attended the Mass, held under bright blue skies after days of chilly rain and featuring flag-waving fans from around the



MAURIZIO BRAMBATTI/ANSA/ZUMA PRESS/MCT

Pope Francis waves to the crowd from the papamobile during his inauguration mass at St Peter's square on March 19, 2013 at the Vatican. World leaders flew in for the inauguration mass for Pope Francis in St Peter's Square on Tuesday where Latin America's first pontiff received the formal symbols of papal power.

In Buenos Aires, thousands of people packed the central Plaza di Mayo square to watch the ceremony on giant TV screens, erupting in joy when Francis called them from Rome, his words broadcast over loudspeakers.

"I want to ask a favor," Francis told them. "I want to ask you to walk together, and take care of one another. ... And don't forget that this bishop who is far away loves you very much. Pray for me."

Back in Rome, Francis was interrupted by applause several times

during his homily, including when he urged the faithful not to allow "omens of destruction," hatred, envy and pride to "defile our lives."

Francis said the role of the leader of the world's 1.2 billion Catholics is to open his arms and protect all of humanity, but "especially the poorest, the weakest, the least important, those whom Matthew lists in the final judgment on love: the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the naked, the sick and those in prison.'

"Today amid so much darkness

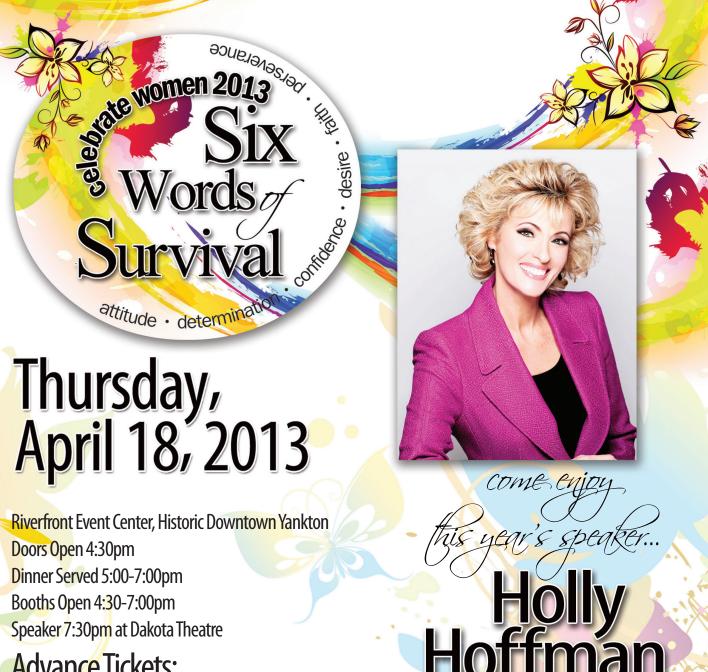
we need to see the light of hope and to be men and women who bring hope to others," he said. "To protect creation, to protect every man and every woman, to look upon them with tenderness and love, is to open up a horizon of hope, it is to let a shaft of light break through the heavy clouds.'

After the celebrations die down, Francis has his work cut out for him as he confronts a church in crisis: Retired Pope Benedict XVI spent eight years trying to reverse the decline of Christianity in Europe, without much success.

While growing in Africa and Asia, the Catholic Church has been stained in Europe, Australia and the Americas by sexual abuse scandals. Closer to home, Francis is facing serious management shortcomings in a Vatican bureaucracy in dire need

Francis hasn't offered any hint of how he might tackle those greater problems, focusing instead on crowd-pleasing messages and gestures that signal a total shift in priority and personality from his German theologian predecessor.

On Wednesday, Francis may give a hint about his ecumenical intentions, as he holds an audience with Christian delegations who attended his installation. On Friday, he will put his foreign policy chops on display in an address to the ambassadors accredited to the Holy See.



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