

China: Separatists Blamed For Attack

KUNMING, China (AP) — Authorities on Sunday blamed a slashing rampage that killed 29 people and wounded 143 at a train station in southern China on separatists from the country's far west, while local residents said government crackdowns had taken their toll on the alleged culprits. Police fatally shot four of the assailants — putting the overall death toll at 33 — and captured another after the attack late Saturday in Kunming, the capital of Yunnan province, the official Xinhua News Agency said. But authorities were searching for at least five more of the black-clad attackers. State broadcaster CCTV said two of the assailants were women, including one of the slain and the one detained. "All-out efforts should be made to treat the injured people, severely punish terrorists according to the law, and prevent the occurrence of similar cases," said China's top police official, Politburo member Meng Jianzhu, who arrived in Kunming early Sunday, an indication of how seriously authorities viewed the attack. The attackers' identities have not been confirmed, but evidence at the scene showed that it was "a terrorist attack carried out by Xinjiang separatist forces," Xinhua said. The far western region of Xinjiang is home to a simmering rebellion against Chinese rule by some members of the Muslim Uighur (pronounced WEE-gur) population, and the government has responded there with heavy-handed security.

Will Bergdahl Be Left In Afghanistan?

WASHINGTON (AP) — The case of Army Sgt. Bowe Bergdahl, held by the Taliban since 2009, has arisen again as the U.S. and other countries engage in diplomatic efforts to free him. But if he is released, will America's only prisoner of the Afghan war be viewed as a hero or a deserter? While tattered yellow ribbons still adorn utility poles in his native Hailey, Idaho, others are expressing conflicting thoughts about Bergdahl's plight as the war winds down, with President Barack Obama threatening to withdraw all U.S. troops by year's end unless the Afghan government signs a crucial security agreement.

They are convinced that on June 30, 2009, just a few months after he arrived in Afghanistan, Bergdahl willingly walked away from his unit, which was deployed in Paktika province in eastern Afghanistan, adjacent to the border with Pakistan. While they do want Bergdahl home, they think he should have to answer allegations that he deserted his unit. Bergdahl was last seen in a video the Taliban released in December.

Court Explores Reliance On IQ Testing

WASHINGTON (AP) — A Floridian with an IQ as high as 75 may be diagnosed as mentally disabled and be eligible for help getting a job. But on death row, the state says having an IQ higher than 70 categorically means an inmate is not mentally disabled and may be executed. The Supreme Court barred states from executing mentally disabled inmates in 2002, but until now has left the determination of who is mentally disabled to the states. In arguments Monday, 68-year-old Florida inmate Freddie Lee Hall is challenging the state's use of a rigid IQ cutoff to determine mental disability. Florida is among a few states that use a score of 70, as measured by IQ tests, as the threshold for concluding an inmate is not mentally disabled, even when other evidence indicates he is. "Simply put, IQ tests are not a perfect measure of a person's intellectual ability," Hall's lawyers told the court in written arguments.

Rap Disrespect Of Black Icons Seen

By The Associated Press

Malcolm X and rap music have always fit together like a needle in the groove, connected by struggle, strength and defiance. But three recent episodes involving the use or misuse of Malcolm and other black icons have raised the question: Has rap lost touch with black history? Chart-topping rapstress Nicki Minaj provoked widespread outrage with an Instagram post featuring one of black history's most poignant images: Malcolm X peering out the window of his home, rifle in hand, trying to defend his wife and children from firebombs while under surveillance by federal agents. Superimposed on the photo: the title of Minaj's new song, which denigrates certain black men and repeats the N-word 42 times. That came after Minaj's mentor Lil Wayne recorded a verse last year using the civil rights martyr Emmett Till in a sexual metaphor, and the hip-hop mogul Russell Simmons posted a Harriet Tubman "sex tape" video on his comedy channel. What is happening to mainstream rap music, which was launched by Simmons and is now ruled by the likes of Minaj and Wayne? "I don't want to say today's rappers are not educated about black history, but they don't seem as aware as rap generations before them," said Jermaine Hall, editor-in-chief of Vibe, the hip-hop magazine and website.

President To Push Min. Wage In Conn.

WASHINGTON (AP) — Striving to show momentum on a top legislative priority, President Barack Obama is appearing next week with Northeastern governors who back his push to raise the federal minimum wage to \$10.10 an hour and will pledge to lift the earnings of the lowest-paid workers in their states to at least the same level. Obama planned an appearance Wednesday at Central Connecticut State University in New Britain with Democratic Govs. Dannel Malloy of Connecticut, Deval Patrick of Massachusetts and Peter Shumlin of Vermont, as well as Rhode Island Gov. Lincoln Chafee, an independent. A higher minimum wage and an overhaul of immigration laws are Obama priorities, but it remains doubtful whether lawmakers will send him either piece of legislation this year, particularly when the entire House and one-third of the Senate are up for re-election. A Senate-passed immigration bill is stalled in the House, while Republicans oppose raising the federal minimum wage from \$7.25 an hour, arguing that jobs will be eliminated, unemployment will rise and the economy will suffer if the government forces businesses to cut bigger paychecks for their workers. The White House believes momentum for a higher minimum wage is building, however, and wants to keep the pressure on Congress, in part to help draw distinctions between the political parties for November's voters.

Evacuation Orders Lifted After Storm

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Residents in three California foothill communities headed home Sunday after a powerful storm that threatened to unleash mud on neighborhoods beneath unstable hills scarred by recent wildfires. With the storm reduced to sprinkles, residents in the Los Angeles County cities of Glendora and Azusa were allowed back into their homes. Monrovia residents were allowed back late Saturday, officials said. The storm — the largest since 2010 — kept emergency planners and rescue crews busy, but it didn't produce enough rain to pull California out of a crippling drought that has grown to crisis proportions for the state's vast farming industry. The precipitation will bring the Los Angeles region to about half its normal rainfall for the season, Bill Patzert, a climatologist for the Jet Propulsion Laboratory in La Cañada Flintridge, told the *Los Angeles Times*. "This is no drought-buster, but it's a nice, fat down payment" in the water bank, he said.

Ukraine

West Prepares Tough Response For Russia

World Scrambles As Moscow Tightens Grip On Crimea

BY TIM SULLIVAN AND DAVID MCHUGH
Associated Press

PEREVALNE, Ukraine (AP) — Warning that it was "on the brink of disaster," Ukraine put its military on high alert Sunday and appealed for international help to avoid what it feared was the possibility of a wider invasion by Russia.

Outrage over Russia's military moves mounted in world capitals, with U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry calling on President Vladimir Putin to pull back from "an incredible act of aggression."

A day after Russia captured the Crimean Peninsula without firing a shot, fears grew in the Ukrainian capital and beyond that Russia might seek to expand its control by seizing other parts of eastern Ukraine. Senior Obama administration officials said the U.S. now believes that Russia has complete operational control of Crimea, a pro-Russian area of the country, and has more than 6,000 troops in the region.

Ukrainian Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk said there was no reason for Russia to invade Ukraine and warned that "we are on the brink of disaster."

"We believe that our western partners and the entire global community will support the territorial integrity and unity of Ukraine," he said Sunday in Kiev.

World leaders rushed to try to find a diplomatic solution to the crisis.

NATO held an emergency meeting in Brussels, Britain's foreign minister flew to Kiev to support its new government and Kerry was to travel to Ukraine Tuesday. The U.S., France and Britain debated the possibility of boycotting the next Group of Eight economic summit, to be held in June in Sochi, the host of Russia's successful Winter Olympics.

In Kiev, Moscow and other cities, thousands of protesters took to the streets to either decry the Russian occupation or celebrate Crimea's return to its former ruler.

"Support us, America!" a group of protesters chanted outside the U.S. Embassy in



SEIGE L. LOIKO/LOS ANGELES TIMES/MCT
An anti-Russian demonstration in central Simferopol in Crimea, Ukraine, on Sunday.

Kerry To Travel To Kiev Tuesday

WASHINGTON (AP) — A senior administration official says Secretary of State John Kerry will travel to the Ukrainian capital of Kiev Tuesday to meet with government officials.

Kerry's trip comes as the U.S. and other Western nations weigh a response to Russia's military advance into Ukraine. Kerry has raised the possibility of issuing economic sanctions and visa bans, freezing Russian assets and levying trade and investment penalties.

The official says the U.S. now believes that Russia has complete operational

control of the Crimea peninsula, a pro-Russian area of Ukraine, and has more than 6,000 forces in the region. The official said the U.S. is also watching for ethnic skirmishes in other areas of eastern Ukraine.

A second administration official indicated that the U.S. was not weighing military action to counter Russia's advances, saying the Obama administration's efforts were focused on political, economic and diplomatic options.

The officials were not authorized to publicly discuss the situation and insisted on anonymity.

Kiev. One young girl held up a placard reading: "No Russian aggression!"

"Russia! Russia!" the crowd chanted in Moscow.

Kerry, interviewed on U.S. television news shows, talked about boycotting the G-8 summit, as well as possible visa bans, asset freezes and trade and investment penalties against Russia. All the foreign ministers he talked to were prepared "to go to the hilt" to isolate Russia, Kerry said.

President Barack Obama also spoke Sunday with German Chancellor Angela Merkel, British Prime Minister David Cameron, and Polish President Bronislaw Komorowski.

NATO issued a statement saying it "condemns Russia's military escalation in Crimea" and demanding that Russia respect its obligations under the U.N. charter. Ukraine is not a NATO member, meaning the U.S. and Europe are not obligated to come to its defense, but the country has taken part in some alliance exercises.

"We are on a very dangerous track," German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier said. But "it is still possible to turn around. A new division of Europe can still be prevented."

Faced with the Russian threat, Ukraine's new government moved to consolidate its

authority, naming new regional governors in the pro-Russian east, enlisting the support of the country's wealthy businessmen and dismissing the head of the country's navy after he declared allegiance to the pro-Russian government in Crimea.

So far, however, Ukraine's new government and the West have been powerless to counter Russia's tactics. Armed men in uniforms without insignia have moved freely about Crimea for days, occupying airports, smashing equipment at an air base and besieging a Ukrainian infantry base.

Winter Still Blasting Much Of US

BY BRETT ZONGKER
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Tourists flocked to the monuments in the nation's capital Sunday to enjoy 50-degree temperatures before yet another winter storm was expected to dump up to a foot of snow on parts of the East Coast.

In the latest blast of a harsh winter, forecasters said a layer of ice and 8 to 12 inches of snow was possible by the end of Monday in Washington and the Mid-Atlantic region, while 6 to 8 inches of snow was predicted across parts of southern Pennsylvania. Nearly a foot of snow was expected in parts of New Jersey.

"I'm over it," said Yasmon Hanks, 24, of Hampton, Va., echoing thoughts of many who've been cooped up inside this winter. Hanks visited the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial on the National Mall with her husband, Lynwood, and two young children. She was happy to be able to get outside, she said, because "I thought it was going to be way worse."

Academy Awards

Nyong'o, Leto, 'Gravity' Pace The Field

EDITOR'S NOTE: Due to deadline demands, the complete results were not final at press time.

LOS ANGELES (AP) — First-time winners Lupita Nyong'o and Jared Leto took supporting acting honors, while the 3-D spectacle "Gravity" amassed a force of technical awards in a smooth if safe Oscar ceremony Sunday punctuated by politics, pizza and photo-bombing.

Wearing Nairobi blue, the 31-year-old Nyong'o, breakout star of the historical drama "12 Years a Slave," accepted the award for best supporting actress. In her feature film debut, Nyong'o made an indelible impression as the tortured slave Patsey.

"It doesn't escape me for one moment that so much joy in my life is thanks to so much pain in someone else's, and so I want to salute the spirit of Patsey for her guidance," said Nyong'o. Glowing backstage, she

cradled her statuette: "I'm so happy to be holding this golden man."

The 86th annual Academy Awards from Los Angeles' Dolby Theatre were hosted nimbly by Ellen DeGeneres. Her second stint was a kind of amiable, light-footed correction from last year's "We Saw Your Boob"-singing host Seth MacFarlane.

After warmly needling stars in a simple, dance-free opening monologue, DeGeneres circulated freely in the crowd. She had pizza delivered, appealing to Harvey Weinstein to pitch in, and gathered stars to snap a selfie she hoped would be a record-setter on Twitter. (1.4 million tweets in an hour and still counting). One participant, Meryl Streep, giddily exclaimed: "I've never tweeted before!"

Two hours into the ceremony, Alfonso Cuaron's box-office hit and visual marvel "Gravity" had accrued six Oscars, winning for cinematography, editing, score, visual effects, sound mixing and sound

editing. If the Mexican Cuaron wins best director for the lost-in-space drama, as he's expected to, he'll be the first Latino filmmaker to take the category.

Leto won best supporting actor for his acclaimed, gaunt performance as a theatrical transgender suffering from AIDS in the Texas drama "Dallas Buyers Club." He thanked his mother, his date on the night.

Sunday's Oscars hung on a nail-biter of a finish, with the best picture race believed to be between the historical drama "12 Years a Slave," the 3-D space spectacle "Gravity" and the comedian comedy "American Hustle." DeGeneres alluded to the options in her opening monologue.

Though the ceremony lacked a big opening number, it had a steady musical beat to it. To a standing ovation, Bono and U2 performed an acoustic version of "Ordinary Love," their Oscar-nominated song from "Mandela: Long Walk to Free-

dom," a tune penned in tribute to the late South African leader Nelson Mandela. Singing his nominated "Happy" from "Despicable Me 2," Pharrell Williams had Streep and Leonardo DiCaprio dancing in the aisles.

Best documentary went to the crowd-pleasing backup singer ode "20 Feet From Stardom." One of its stars, Darlene Love, accepted the award singing the gospel tune "His Eye Is on the Sparrow": "I sing because I'm happy/ I sing because I'm free."

Disney's global hit "Frozen" won best animated film, marking — somewhat remarkably — the studio's first win in the 14 years of the best animated feature category. (Pixar, which Disney owns, has regularly dominated.) With box-office that recently passed \$1 billion globally, the film was sure to be the biggest hit to take home an Oscar on Sunday. The film's "Let It Go" won best original song.