

Officials Abused Into Confessions

LILING, China (AP) — The local Chinese official remembers the panic he felt in Room 109. He had refused to confess to bribery he says he didn't commit, and his Communist Party interrogators were forcing his legs apart. Zhou Wanyan heard his left thigh bone snap, with a loud "ka-cha." The sound nearly drowned out his howls of pain.

"My leg is broken," Zhou told the interrogators. According to Zhou, they ignored his pleas.

China's government is under strong pressure to fight rampant corruption in its ranks, faced with the anger of an increasingly prosperous, well-educated and Internet-savvy public. However, the party's methods for extracting confessions expose its 85 million members and their families to the risk of abuse. Experts estimate at least several thousand people are secretly detained every year for weeks or months under an internal system that is separate from state justice.

In a rare display of public defiance, Zhou and three other party members in Hunan described to The Associated Press the months of abuse they endured less than two years ago, in separate cases, while in detention. Zhou, land bureau director for the city of Liling, said he was deprived of sleep and food, nearly drowned, whipped with wires and forced to eat excrement. The others reported being turned into human punching bags, strung up by the wrists from high windows, or dragged along the floor, face down, by their feet.

GOP Hopes To Contain Political Fallout

AURORA, Colo. (AP) — If the apparent slow death of immigration legislation has any political repercussions this year, they probably will be felt in the subdivisions, shopping centers and ethnic eateries wrapped around Denver's southern end.

U.S. Rep. Mike Coffman represents this fast-changing district.

He's among a few vulnerable Republican members in line to be targeted by immigrant rights advocates if the House doesn't pass an immigration bill before the November election that would offer legal status to millions of people who entered the U.S. illegally or overstayed their visas.

The issue is no easy solution for Democrats needing to gain 17 seats to win back the House majority. Democratic campaign officials are focusing on about two dozen GOP-held seats where immigration could be a factor, but they rank only nine in the top tier of possible pickups.

Immigration advocates acknowledge their impact on House races this year is limited. Most Republicans hold safe seats in districts with relatively low numbers of immigrants. Coffman is one of the most vulnerable incumbents, but the three-term lawmaker's shift on the issue illustrates the difficulties Democrats may have.

Japan Saw Record Deficit In January

TOKYO (AP) — Japan has racked up a record current account deficit in January, and is lowering its economic growth estimate for the October-December quarter.

The government said Monday the world's third-largest economy grew at an annual pace of 0.7 percent, lower than its initial real gross domestic product estimate of 1.0 percent.

Japan's current account deficit totaled 1.589 trillion yen (\$15 billion), the biggest for January since comparable records began in 1985, according to the Finance Ministry.

The government has encouraged a weak yen to help exports. That makes imports more expensive. Dependence on imported oil and natural gas has risen since the March 2011 nuclear disaster.

Reactors have been shut down for safety fears. Before the disaster, nuclear energy provided 30 percent of Japan's energy needs.

VP Says Venezuela Situation Is Alarming

SANTIAGO, Chile (AP) — U.S. Vice President Joe Biden says Venezuela's political and social situation is alarming.

In an interview published Sunday with Chile's El Mercurio newspaper, Biden also accused Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro of inventing conspiracies by Washington to divert the attention from the South American country's troubles.

Maduro has faced several weeks of nationwide student-led protests that he claims are an attempt by far-right provocateurs to overthrow him. They've been joined by mostly middle-class Venezuelans fed up with inflation that reached 56 percent last year and one of the highest murder rates in the world.

Biden and Maduro will attend Tuesday's swearing-in of Michelle Bachelet as Chile's president. Maduro is also attending the ceremony.

Mayor Gets Daylight Saving Time Wrong

TORONTO (AP) — Toronto Mayor Rob Ford is being roundly mocked on Twitter for a tweet that went out under his name that mistakenly advised people to set their clocks back an hour back instead of forward for daylight savings time.

"Rob Ford: the mayor who won't even follow the dimensional rules of time," Toronto sports writer Bruce Arthur tweeted in one response to the gaffe.

Ford, who last year acknowledged he had smoked crack cocaine, continues to draw attention for his erratic behavior, but has refused to resign and is seeking re-election.

A corrected tweet was sent out shortly after the original was erased late Saturday.

Dan Jacobs, Ford's chief of staff, said Sunday that he made the error in the original tweet that went out.

Israel: 40 Rockets Alleged In Shipment

EILAT, Israel (AP) — Israel's military says a cargo ship it intercepted in the Red Sea last week carried 40 rockets with a range of up to 160 kilometers (100 miles) and dozens of mortar shells.

Israel has alleged the shipment was orchestrated by Iran and was intended for Islamic militants in Gaza. An Egyptian security official said Sunday the rockets might also have been intended for militants in Egypt's Sinai Peninsula, which borders Gaza. Officials in Iran and Gaza militants have denied involvement with the shipment.

The Panama-flagged vessel with a Turkish crew docked in Israel's port of Eilat on Saturday and was unloaded Sunday.

Israel has used the interception to bolster claims that Iran remains dangerous and that the world powers should break off negotiations with Tehran over the country's nuclear program.

Iraqi Minister Speaks Out On Incident

BAGHDAD (AP) — Iraq's transportation minister is speaking out after a flight that his son missed out of Beirut was stopped from landing in Baghdad.

Minister Hadi al-Amiri told a news conference Sunday that he'd pay for the losses out of his own pocket and would hand his son over to authorities if the investigation proved he was behind the Middle East Airline flight being stopped from landing on Thursday.

The airline says the flight left six minutes late because it waited for al-Amiri's son.

Twenty minutes after the plane's departure, the head of MEA in Baghdad contacted the pilot, saying that Iraqi authorities would not allow the plane to land at Baghdad International Airport without al-Amiri's son on board. The plane, carrying 71 passengers, returned to Beirut.

BY EILEEN NG AND CHRIS BRUMMITT

Associated Press

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia — Vietnamese aircraft spotted what they suspected was one of the doors of a missing Boeing 777 on Sunday, while questions emerged about how two passengers managed to board the ill-fated aircraft using stolen passports.

Interpol confirmed it knew about the stolen passports but said no authorities checked its vast databases on stolen documents before the Boeing jetliner departed Saturday from Kuala Lumpur en route to Beijing with 239 people on board.

Warning "only a handful of countries" routinely make such checks, Interpol secretary general Ronald Noble chided authorities for "waiting for a tragedy to put prudent security measures in place at borders and boarding gates."

More than two days after Malaysia Airlines Flight MH370 went missing, the final minutes before its disappearance remained a mystery. The plane lost contact with ground controllers somewhere between Malaysia and Vietnam.

However, searchers in a low-flying plane spotted an object that appeared to be one of the plane's doors, the state-run Thanh Nien newspaper said, citing the deputy chief of staff of Vietnam's army, Lt. Gen. Vo Van Tuan.

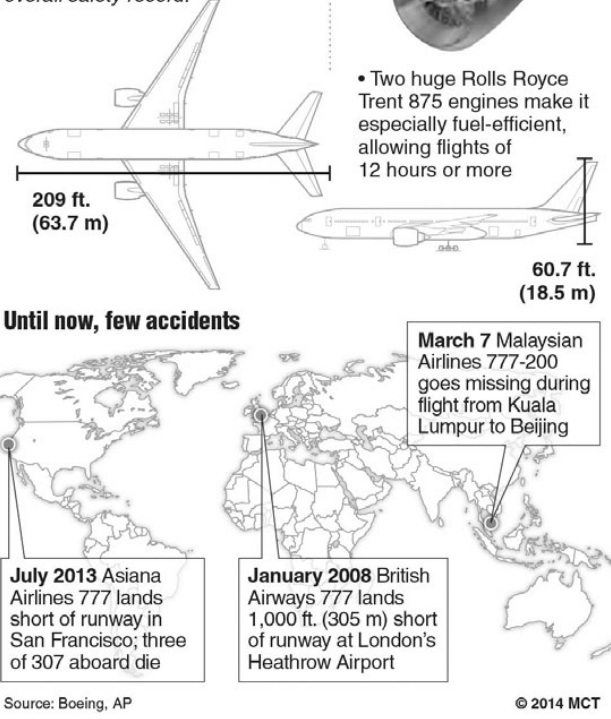
Two ships from the maritime police were headed to the site about 60 miles (90 kilometers) south of Tho Chu island in the Gulf of Thailand, the same area where oil slicks were spotted Saturday.

"From this object, hopefully (we) will find the missing plane," Tuan said.

The jetliner apparently fell from the sky at cruising alti-

Boeing 777

A Boeing 777-200 can carry between 246 to 300 passengers. Until now, it has had a very good overall safety record.



tude in fine weather, and the pilots were either unable or had no time to send a distress signal — unusual circumstances under which a modern jetliner operated by a professional airline would crash.

Authorities were checking on the identities of the two passengers who boarded the plane with stolen passports. On Saturday, the foreign ministries in Italy and Austria said the names of two citizens listed on the flight's manifest matched the names on two passports reported stolen in Thailand.

"I can confirm that we have the visuals of these two people on CCTV," Malaysian Transport Minister Hisham-

muddin Hussein said at a news conference late Sunday, adding that the footage was being examined. "We have intelligence agencies, both local and international, on board."

The thefts of the two passports — one belonging to Austrian Christian Kozel and the other to Luigi Maraldi of Italy — were entered into Interpol's database after they were stolen in Thailand in 2012 and last year, the police body said.

Electronic booking records show that one-way tickets with those names were issued Thursday from a travel agency in the beach resort of Pattaya in eastern Thailand. A person who answered the phone at the agency said she could not comment.

Putin Defends Separatist Drive In Crimea As Legal

BY JOHN-THOR DAHLBURG AND LYNN BERRY

Associated Press

KIEV, Ukraine — Russian President Vladimir Putin on Sunday defended the separatist drive in the disputed Crimean Peninsula as in keeping with international law, but Ukraine's prime minister vowed not to relinquish "a single centimeter" of his country's territory.

Over the weekend, the Kremlin beefed up its military presence in Crimea, a part of Ukraine since 1954, and pro-Russia forces keep pushing for a vote in favor of reunification with Moscow in a referendum the local parliament has scheduled for next Sunday.

President Barack Obama has warned that the March 16 vote would violate international law. But in Moscow, Putin made it clear that he supports the referendum in phone calls with German Chancellor Angela Merkel and British Minister David Cameron.

"The steps taken by the legitimate leadership of Crimea are based on the norms of international law and aim to ensure the legal interests of the population of the peninsula," said Putin, according to the Kremlin.

Following an extraordinary Sunday meeting of the Ukrainian government, Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk announced that he will meet with Obama in Washington on Wednesday on a "resolution of the situation in Ukraine," the Interfax news agency reported. The White House confirmed the meeting.

"Our country and our people are facing the biggest challenges in the history of modern independent Ukraine," the prime minister said earlier in the day. "Will we be able to deal with these challenges? There should only be one answer to this question and that is: yes."

In an emotional climate of crisis, Ukraine on Sunday solemnly commemorated the 200th anniversary of the birth of its greatest poet, Taras Shevchenko, a son of peasant serfs who is a national hero and is considered the father of modern Ukrainian literature.

"This is our land," Yatsenyuk told a crowd gathered at the Kiev statue to Shevchenko. "Our fathers and grandfathers have spilled their blood for this land. And we won't budge a single centimeter from Ukrainian land. Let Russia and its president know this."

"We're one country, one family and we're here together with our kobzar (bard) Taras," said acting President Oleksandr Turchynov.

Later, Ukrainians in the tens of thousands massed in the Kiev's center for a multi-faith prayer meeting to display unity and honor Shevchenko. One of the speakers, former imprisoned Russian tycoon

Mikhail Khodorkovsky, almost burst into tears as he implored the crowd to believe not all Russians support their country's recent actions in Ukraine.

"I want you to know there is a completely different Russia," Khodorkovsky said.

In the eastern city of Luhansk, however, people who gathered in a square to celebrate Shevchenko's birthday were attacked by pro-Russia protesters, and some were beaten up, local media reports said.

Chanting "Russia! Russia!" the demonstrators then broke through a police barricade and took over the local government building, where they raised the Russian flag and demanded a citywide referendum on joining Russia, Channel 5 and other local media reported.

But it's Crimea, a strategic peninsula in the Black Sea, that has become the chief

flashpoint in the battle for Ukraine, where three months of protests sparked by President Victor Yanukovich's decision to ditch a significant treaty with the 28-nation European Union after strong pressure from Russia led to his downfall.

A majority of people in Crimea identify with Russia, and Moscow's Black Sea Fleet is based in Sevastopol, as is Ukraine's.

In Simferopol, Crimea's capital, a crowd of more than 4,000 people turned out Sunday to endorse unification with Russia. On Lenin Square, a naval band played World War II songs as old women sang along, and dozens of tricolor Russian flags fluttered in the cold wind.

"Russians are our brothers," Crimean Parliament speaker Vladimir Konstantinov said. He asked the crowd how it would vote in the referendum a week hence.

But no authorities in Malaysia or elsewhere checked the passports against the database of 40 million stolen or lost travel documents before the Malaysian Airlines plane took off.

In a forceful statement, the Interpol chief said he hoped "that governments and airlines worldwide will learn from the tragedy."

"Now, we have a real case where the world is speculating whether the stolen passport holders were terrorists," Noble said. "Interpol is asking why only a handful of countries worldwide are taking care to make sure that persons possessing stolen passports are not boarding international flights."

Details also emerged Sunday about the itineraries of the two passengers traveling on the stolen passports.

A telephone operator on a China-based KLM hotline confirmed Sunday that passengers named Maraldi and Kozel had been booked on one-way tickets on the same KLM flight, flying from Beijing to Amsterdam on Saturday.

Maraldi was to fly on to Copenhagen, Denmark, and Kozel to Frankfurt, Germany.

She said the pair booked the tickets through China Southern Airlines, but she had no information on where they bought them.

As holders of EU passports with onward flights to Europe, the passengers would not have needed visas for China.

Interpol said it and national investigators were working to determine the true identities of those who used the stolen passports to board the flight. White House Deputy National Security Adviser Tony Blinken said the U.S. was looking into the stolen passports, but that investigators had reached no conclusions.

RTEC Announces Upcoming Training Programs & Events!

Open House & Facility Showcase:

Stop by RTEC and satisfy your curiosity during this special event to be held from **10 a.m. - 6 p.m. on Monday, March 10, 2014**. Take a tour of the facility, learn about upcoming classes and try your hand at virtual welding. You can also see how the Workforce Development Fund Drive is progressing. Public is invited to attend!

CDL Truck Driving Training:

Take advantage of Mitchell Technical Institute's truck driving training and earn your Class A CDL. Sign up for the classroom portion to be held at RTEC from **8 a.m. - 5 p.m. on March 13 & 14, 2014**. Classroom instruction (CDL Prep portion) will prepare you to obtain learner's permit. Driving times for those taking full CDL program will be arranged with instructor and held in Mitchell at a time TBD.

OSHA 10 General Industry Outreach Training:

Sign up yourself or your employees and supervisors for an introduction to OSHA policies, procedures and standards during this 10-hour training offered by Mitchell Technical Institute at RTEC. Training will run **8 a.m. - 5 p.m. on April 9, 2014, and from 8 a.m. - Noon on April 10, 2014**. Cost is \$125 plus tax per person.

Spring Hobby Welding Class:

Learn the basics of different types of welding so you can create unique welded projects. Make something for your yard or household or fashion a keepsake for a loved one in honor of a special occasion or milestone. Hobby class will be held from **7:30 a.m. - 11:30 a.m. on three Saturdays - March 29, April 5 and April 12, 2014**. Perfect for amateurs, artists and hobbyists! Cost is \$130 plus tax.

Annual Career Expo for Students:

Schools are invited to bring middle school and high school students to this one-day event held from **8 a.m. - 3:30 p.m. on Wednesday, April 23, 2014**. They'll have an opportunity to explore careers and participate in hands-on activities and demonstrations. Businesses, organizations and post-secondary schools are still welcome to contact RTEC about hosting a free booth to showcase their services, career opportunities, educational programs or products.

Basic and AWS Upgrade Welding Classes:

Applications currently are being accepted for the next available basic and upgrade welding courses set to **begin April 28 and April 29, 2014**. Both will be night classes held from 4-8 p.m. two nights per week (basic on M-W and upgrade on T-Th). Contact RTEC today to learn about possible funding assistance.

Please contact RTEC for more information today!



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