

Syrian Ally Russia Condemns Massacre

BEIRUT (AP) — A weekend massacre of more than 100 people emerged as a potential turning point in the Syrian crisis Monday, galvanizing even staunch ally Russia to take an unusually hard line against President Bashar Assad's government.

Analysts said Russia may be warning Assad that he needs to change course or lose Moscow's support, which has been a key layer of protection for the Syrian government during the uprising that began in March 2011.

Russia has grown increasingly critical of Damascus in recent months, but Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov's latest comments were unusually strong. Although he said opposition forces have terrorists among them, he put the blame for 15 months of carnage primarily on Assad's government.

"The government bears the main responsibility for what is going on," Lavrov said in Moscow following a meeting with British Foreign Secretary William Hague. "Any government in any country bears responsibility for the security of its citizens."

Pope's Butler Says He'll Cooperate With Probe

VATICAN CITY (AP) — The biggest scandal to rock the Vatican in decades widened Monday with the pope's butler, arrested for allegedly having confidential documents in his home, agreeing to cooperate with investigators — raising the specter that higher-ranking ecclesial heads may soon roll.

Few believe butler Paolo Gabriele worked alone to leak dozens of documents shedding light on power struggles, corruption and intrigue inside the highest levels of the Catholic Church. The leaks have tormented the Vatican for months and painted a picture of a church hierarchy in utter disarray.

Gabriele, the pope's personal butler since 2006, was arrested Wednesday evening after Holy See documents were found inside his Vatican City apartment, adding an unfathomable Hollywood twist to the already sordid Vatileaks scandal. He remains in custody in a Vatican detention facility, accused of theft, and has met with his wife and lawyers.

Gabriele's lawyer, Carlo Fusco, said Monday his client was "very serene and calm," despite the whirlwind of speculation surrounding his arrest. He said Gabriele himself had told the Vatican judge investigating the case that he would "respond to all the questions and will collaborate with investigators to ascertain the truth."

95 Buildings Destroyed By Michigan Wildfire

NEWBERRY, Mich. (AP) — Homes and cabins make up a third of the nearly 100 structures destroyed by a wildfire burning across more than 30 square miles of Michigan's Upper Peninsula, officials said Monday.

The lost property includes Pike Lake Resort near Pike Lake in Luce County.

"I was still hoping that they would stop it," owner Diane Ricketts said of the fire. "With my husband gone, I'm not going to rebuild. We're just going to go on and take it day by day and see what's going to happen."

The Duck Lake Fire began with a lightning strike last week and burned more than 22,000 acres, or 34 square miles, but was 51 percent contained by Monday, according to the Department of Natural Resources.

Parts of Michigan are extremely dry and thirsty for rain. Fireworks and outdoor burning are banned in 49 of the state's 83 counties, especially in northern Michigan.

Tuna Caught Off Calif. Reveal Japan Radiation

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Across the vast Pacific, the mighty bluefin tuna carried radioactive contamination that leaked from Japan's crippled nuclear plant to the shores of the United States 6,000 miles away — the first time a huge migrating fish has been shown to carry radioactivity such a distance.

"We were frankly kind of startled," said Nicholas Fisher, one of the researchers reporting the findings online Monday in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences.

The levels of radioactive cesium were 10 times higher than the amount measured in tuna off the California coast in previous years. But even so, that's still far below safe-to-eat limits set by the U.S. and Japanese governments.

Previously, smaller fish and plankton were found with elevated levels of radiation in Japanese waters after a magnitude-9 earthquake in March 2011 triggered a tsunami that badly damaged the Fukushima Dai-ichi reactors.

But scientists did not expect the nuclear fallout to linger in huge fish that sail the world because such fish can metabolize and shed radioactive substances.

Muslim Brotherhood Scrambling For Support

CAIRO (AP) — The Muslim Brotherhood is scrambling to broaden its appeal to liberals, leftists and Christians after official results Monday showed that the Islamist group's candidate will face ousted autocrat Hosni Mubarak's last prime minister in next month's runoff for president of Egypt.

Violence flared late Monday when several hundred people ransacked the Cairo campaign headquarters of the ex-premier, Ahmed Shafiq. They smashed windows, threw out campaign signs, tore up posters and set the building on fire, according to witnesses and security. No one was hurt. The office is in a Cairo residential neighborhood.

The Brotherhood's candidate, Mohammed Morsi, will go head-to-head against Shafiq, also a former air force commander, in the June 16-17 runoff. They were the top vote-getters in last week's first round of voting.

Announcing the final results, election commission chief Farouq Sultan said that Morsi won close to 5.8 million votes, or almost 25 percent, while Shafiq garnered 5.5 million votes, or nearly 24 percent. Finishing third was leftist candidate Hamdeen Sabahi with 4.8 million votes, or about 21 percent.

To get the support it needs, the Brotherhood must tone down its religious rhetoric and offer far-reaching concessions, such as protecting the right to protest and strike, election-watchers said.

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Memorial Day 2012

Fallen Troops Honored By Nation

President Declares To Returning Soldiers: 'We Will Be There For You'

BY KEN THOMAS
Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Barack Obama paid tribute Monday to the men and women who have died defending America, pointing to Vietnam veterans as an under-appreciated and sometimes maligned group of war heroes who remained true to their nation despite an unwelcome homecoming.

"You were sometimes blamed for the misdeeds of a few," Obama said at the Vietnam War Memorial. "You came home and were sometimes denigrated when you should have been celebrated. It was a national shame, a disgrace that should have never happened."

"Even though some Americans turned their backs on you, you never turned your back on America," Obama said.

Marking Memorial Day at both the black granite wall honoring more than 58,000 soldiers who died in the Vietnam War and earlier at Arlington National Cemetery across the Potomac River from the capital, Obama noted that for the first time in nine years, "Americans are not fighting and dying in Iraq," and the nation was winding down its role in the conflict in Afghanistan.

"After a decade under the dark cloud of war, we can see the light of the new day on the horizon," Obama said to an audience gathered at the Arlington amphitheater lined with American flags under a warm, brilliant sun.

In this election year, Obama said the nation must remain committed to providing for the families of fallen soldiers and help returning service members seeking a job, higher education or health care benefits.

"As long as I'm president, we will make sure you and your loved ones will receive the benefits you've earned and the respect you deserve," Obama said. "America will be there for you."

Obama said sending troops into harm's way was "the most wrenching decision that I have to make. And I can promise you I will never do so



THE STATE/MCT
Lucas James Maxwell Birch, 1, walks around Fort Jackson National Cemetery prior to the Memorial Day service Monday in Columbia, S.C. His grandfather, Infantry Colonel Darrell James Birch, is buried in the cemetery.

unless it's absolutely necessary."

As he seeks re-election, Obama has reminded audiences about the end of the war in Iraq and the move to bring all troops home from Afghanistan by 2014. And in a campaign ad released last week, he credits U.S. servicemen who helped in the raid that killed Osama bin Laden.

Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney, meantime, promised to maintain an American military "with no comparable power anywhere in the world."

The presumptive Republican presidential nominee appeared with Sen. John McCain of Arizona, the GOP's 2008 presidential candidate, before a crowd in San Diego estimated at 5,000 in what was billed as a Memorial Day service, not a campaign event.

But Romney nevertheless drew clear contrasts with Obama. The former Massachusetts governor warned against shrinking America's military in Europe's image and said the nation must have the world's strongest military to win wars and prevent them.

Veterans could play a significant role in the

2012 election. Exit polls in 2008 showed that Obama was supported by about 44 percent of voters who said they served in the military, while 54 percent voted for McCain, a former Navy pilot who was a prisoner of war for more than five years during the Vietnam War.

A poll released Monday by Gallup found that 58 percent of veterans support Romney and 34 percent back Obama. The results were based on a sample of 3,327 veterans who are registered voters and had a margin of error of 2 percentage points.

Several closely watched states in the election have large blocs of military voters. Florida, home to several military installations, has more than 1.6 million veterans, according to the Veterans Administration. Pennsylvania has nearly 1 million veterans, while Virginia and North Carolina each have about 800,000 veterans living in their states.

The president and first lady Michelle Obama started the day with a breakfast at the White House for families who have lost loved ones in combat.

Quebec Govt., Students Aim To End Dispute

OTTAWA, Ontario (AP) — Quebec college and university students and the provincial government returned to the bargaining table on Monday in an attempt to put an end to a months-long dispute over tuition hikes that has led to clashes with police and mass arrests.

Student leaders said Monday the tuition hike and an emergency law put in place to limit protests would have to be on the table. The two sides are meeting in Quebec City.

Students have called for a tuition freeze, but the government has ruled out that possibility.

The French-speaking province's average undergraduate tuition — \$2,519 a year — is the lowest in Canada, and the proposed hike — \$254 per year over seven years — is tiny by U.S. standards. But opponents consider the raise an affront to the philosophy of the 1960s reforms dubbed the Quiet Revolution that set Quebec apart not only from its U.S. neighbor but from the rest of Canada.

Analysts have said Quebecers don't compare their tuition rates to those in the U.S. or English-speaking Canada, but to those in European countries, where higher education is free.

More than 2,500 students have been arrested since the demonstrations began, including nearly 700 this past Wednesday, but arrests are down markedly since.

Student leader Gabriel Nadeau-Dubois said his group wasn't going to rush a decision and would take the time to ponder any agreement. He said if the government refused to budge on the two issues, his group would reconsider participating in negotiations. "Since the beginning of the strike the organizations agree on the objective to cancel tuition hikes," he said. Student leaders Leo Bureau-Blouin and Martine Desjardins agreed tuition fees have to be on the table and said the ball was in the government's court.

Education Minister Michelle Courchesne said she was showing up at the meeting "open" to discussions

but didn't know how long meetings would last.

Quebec Premier Jean Charest, who has vowed to shake up the debt-ridden province's finances since he was elected nearly a decade ago, has refused to cave in.

Charest's government passed emergency legislation on May 18 restricting protests and closing striking campuses until August.

The law requires that police be informed eight hours before a protest begins, including details on the route of any demonstration of 50 or more people. It also prohibits demonstrations within 50 meters (165 feet) of a college and declares that anyone who incites or helps another person break the new protest regulations can be fined.

Amnesty International says the law breaches Canada's international human rights obligations and called for it to be rescinded by Quebec's legislature.

The latest round of talks comes at a crucial time for the Quebec government, with thousands taking to the streets nightly in protest and Montreal's peak tourism season fast approaching, a period of international events such as the Grand Prix F-1 race and international jazz and comedy festivals that bring millions in revenue.

Event organizers have expressed concern about the impact the continuing protests could have on the festivals, which include nightly outdoor shows on stages surrounded by lucrative concession stands that draw thousands into the streets for weeks.

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