

A Coordinated Effort

Nations Expel Syrian Envoys Over Massacre

BY ELIZABETH A. KENNEDY
Associated Press

BEIRUT — Eyewitness accounts from the Syrian massacre emerged Tuesday, describing shadowy gunmen slaughtering whole families in their homes and targeting the most vulnerable in poor farming villages. Western nations expelled Syrian diplomats in a coordinated move against President Bashar Assad's regime over the killing of more than 100 people.

U.N. special envoy Kofi Annan met with Assad in Damascus to try to salvage what was left of a peace plan, which since being brokered six weeks ago has failed to stop any of the violence on the ground.

Survivors of the Houla massacre blamed pro-regime gunmen for at least some of the carnage as the killings reverberated inside Syria and beyond, further isolating Assad and embarrassing his few remaining allies.

"It's very hard for me to describe what I saw, the images were incredibly disturbing," a Houla resident who hid in his home during the massacre told The Associated Press on Tuesday. "Women, children without heads, their brains or stomachs spilling out."

He said the pro-regime gunmen, known as shabiha, targeted the most vulnerable in the farming villages that make up Houla, a poor area in Homs province. "They went after the women, children and elderly," he said, asking that his name not be used out of fear of reprisals.

Assad's government often deploys fear-some militias that provide muscle for the regime and carry out military-style attacks.



AUSTIN TICE/MCT

Mourners attend the funeral of one of the boys killed in the shelling, May 27, 2012 in Idlib, Syria. As this funeral ended, the funeral of the other boy began. According to the anti-al-Assad group, six people were killed by government forces' fire in the Damascus suburbs, the northern province of Idlib, and the central provinces of Homs and Hama.

They frequently work closely with soldiers and security forces, but the regime never acknowledges their existence, allowing it to deny responsibility for their actions.

U.N. peacekeeping chief Herve Ladsous said there are strong suspicions that pro-Assad fighters were responsible for some of the killings, adding that he has seen no reason to believe that "third elements" — or outside forces — were involved, although he did not rule it out.

The Syrian regime has denied any role in the massacre, blaming the killings on "armed terrorists" who attacked army positions in

the area and slaughtered innocent civilians. It has provided no evidence to support its narrative, nor has it given a death toll.

Following his meeting with Assad, Annan called on the government and "all government-backed militias" to stop military operations and show maximum restraint. He also called on the armed opposition to stop all violence.

"We are at a tipping point," Annan told reporters in Damascus. "The Syrian people do not want the future to be one of bloodshed and division."

Romney Clinches GOP Nomination

BY STEPHEN OHLEMACHER
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Mitt Romney clinched the Republican presidential nomination Tuesday with a win in the Texas primary, a triumph of endurance for a candidate who came up short four years ago and had to fight hard this year as voters flirted with a carousel of GOP rivals.

According to the Associated Press count, Romney surpassed the 1,144 delegates needed to win the nomination by winning at least 88 delegates in the Texas primary.

The former Massachusetts governor has reached the nomination milestone with a steady message of concern about the U.S. economy, a campaign organization that dwarfed those of his GOP foes and a fundraising operation second only to that of his Democratic opponent in the general election, President Barack Obama.

"I am honored that Americans across the country have given their support to my candidacy and I am humbled to have won enough delegates to become the Republican Party's 2012 presidential nominee," Romney said in a statement.



Romney

"Our party has come together with the goal of putting the failures of the last three and a half years behind us," Romney said. "I have no illusions about the difficulties of the task before us. But

whatever challenges lie ahead, we will settle for nothing less than getting America back on the path to full employment and prosperity."

Romney must now fire up conservatives who still doubt him while persuading swing voters that he can do a better job fixing the nation's struggling economy than Obama. In Obama, he faces a well-funded candidate with a proven campaign team in an election that will be heavily influenced by the economy.

"It's these economic indicators that will more or less trump any good or bad that Romney potentially got out of primary season," said Josh Putnam, an assistant political science professor at Davidson College who writes the political blog Frontloading HQ.

Firing

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Tuesday night to uphold Mayor Brad Peitz's termination of Nieman.

Council members Cody Christensen, Gary Kruse and Deb Addison voted in favor of the resolution backing Peitz's decision.

Councilman Tim Burbach abstained from the vote, citing his conflict of interest as the "primary witness" in the action lead-

ing to Nieman's termination.

The council didn't discuss the reason for Nieman's termination during Tuesday's meeting. However, the Cedar County News previously reported the council read a statement, stating Nieman had been terminated because a tape recorder had been found after a motion had been made to go into executive session at the end of the April 23 council meeting.

At Tuesday night's meeting, City Attorney Steve Pier briefed the council on its options before the vote was taken. He had prepared a number of resolutions for council action, depending on which course of action

was taken.

After the council upheld Peitz's termination of the police chief, Pier said he would "communicate the decision," presumably to Nieman.

You can follow Randy Dockendorf on Twitter at twitter.com/RDockendorf

Every Child Should Have a Chance to Hear



Technology is everywhere. But I bet you didn't know that with advancements in technology, infants less than a day old can be screened for a hearing loss. Audiologists are using Early Hearing Detection and Intervention to detect hearing loss and fit infants with hearing aids. Through this early detection, infants are receiving the care they need to ensure proper speech and language development. If you or someone you know is about to give birth, make sure they have their infant screened. For more information, contact us.



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NWS Financial Storm Leaves Agency Hurting

WASHINGTON (AP) — The head of the National Weather Service has suddenly retired and the agency is seeking an emergency \$35.6 million from Congress because of allegations of financial mismanagement and money shifting within the agency.

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration chief Jane Lubchenco, who oversees the weather service, said in a memo investigators found that agency officials moved tens of millions of dollars around without congressional approval, as required by law. The money went from being appropriated for technology improvements to meeting shortfalls in payroll and operations at local weather offices.

Weather service director Jack Hayes retired Friday. His chief financial officer was already on administrative leave.

Agency spokesman Scott Smullen said investigators found no evidence of corruption or personal financial gain. The agency will soon release a report on the issue.

Iran, Mideast States Hit By Computer Virus

LONDON (AP) — Iran and other Middle East countries have been hit with a cunning computer virus that can eavesdrop on computer users and their co-workers and filch information from nearby cell-phones, cybersecurity experts said Tuesday. And suspicion immediately fell on Israel as the culprit.

The Russian Internet security firm Kaspersky Lab ZAO said the "Flame" virus is unprecedented in size and complexity, with researcher Roel Schouwenberg marveling at its versatility.

"It can be used to spy on everything that a user is doing," he said.

Computers in Iran appear to have been particularly affected, and Kaspersky's conclusion that the virus was crafted at the behest of a national government fueled speculation it could be part of an Israeli-backed campaign of electronic sabotage against the Jewish state's archenemy.

The virus can activate a computer's audio systems to listen in on Skype calls or office chatter. It can also take screenshots, log keystrokes and — in one of its more novel functions— steal data from Bluetooth-enabled cellphones.

Officials: 2 Roman Wrecks Found Near Greece

ATHENS, Greece (AP) — Two Roman-era shipwrecks have been found in deep water off a western Greek island, challenging the conventional theory that ancient shipmasters stuck to coastal routes rather than risking the open sea, an official said Tuesday.

Greece's culture ministry said the two third-century wrecks were discovered earlier this month during a survey of an area where a Greek-Italian gas pipeline is to be sunk. They lay between 1.2 and 1.4 kilometers (0.7-0.9 miles) deep in the sea between Corfu and Italy.

That would place them among the deepest known ancient wrecks in the Mediterranean, apart from remains found in 1999 of an older vessel some 3 kilometers (1.8 miles) deep off Cyprus.

Angeliki Simossi, head of Greece's underwater antiquities department, said sunken ancient ships are generally found 30-40 meters (100-130 feet) deep.

Most scholars believe that ancient traders were unwilling to veer far offshore, unlike warships which were unburdened by ballast and cargo.

Elaborate Wedding Proposal Video Goes Viral

PORTLAND, Ore. (AP) — Isaac Lamb acknowledges that his five-minute, block-long choreographed build-up to a marriage proposal has upped the stakes for everyone who follows.

"Guys, I'm sorry," he said on NBC's "Today" show Tuesday. "That wasn't my intention."

The Portland-area thespian's creative proposal last week to girlfriend Amy Frankel featured about 60 people dancing on a small street near his parents' home. Video of the performance has gone viral, notching more than 6 million YouTube hits so far.

Lamb is pitching it as the world's first lip-synched proposal, and there don't appear to be any challengers.

The video begins with Lamb's brother putting headphones over Frankel's ears as she sits facing out the back of an SUV, her legs dangling over the rear bumper.

8 States Get Waiver From No Child Left Behind

ATLANTA (AP) — Federal officials are granting another eight states flexibility from the Bush-era No Child Left Behind law.

U.S. Education Secretary Arne Duncan said in a call with reporters Tuesday that he has approved waivers for Connecticut, Delaware, Louisiana, Maryland, New York, North Carolina, Ohio and Rhode Island.

The Obama administration is granting waivers in exchange for promises from states to improve how they prepare and evaluate students. In all, 11 states have been given waivers so far.

Officials say 26 states and Washington, D.C., applied for flexibility in this round.

The waivers are a stopgap measure until Congress can rewrite the decade-old law, which has been up for renewal since 2007. Federal lawmakers agree the law needs to be changed, but they've bickered over how to do that.

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