

Syrian Rebels Down Regime Helicopter

BEIRUT (AP) — Syrian rebels shot down a military helicopter in the country's east, killing eight government troops on board as President Bashar Assad's troops battled opposition forces inside a sprawling military air base in the north for the second straight day, activists said Monday.

The downing of the helicopter was a welcome victory for rebels fighting to oust Assad as the two sides remain locked in stalemate in the more than 2-year-old conflict.

In Geneva, a U.N. commission probing alleged war crimes and other abuses in Syria on Monday distanced itself from claims by one of its members that Syrian rebels have used the nerve agent sarin, but not the regime.

The panel said it has no conclusive evidence about the alleged use of sarin as chemical weapons.

In Washington, White House spokesman Jay Carney said it's highly likely that the Assad regime and not the Syrian opposition was behind any chemical weapons use in Syria.

Israeli Airstrikes Send A Broader Message

BEIRUT (AP) — From Israel's perspective, its airstrikes near Damascus were more about Iran than Syria: Tehran's shipment of guided missiles destroyed in the weekend attacks would have posed a potent threat had the weapons reached Iranian proxy Hezbollah in Lebanon.

While Israel says it has no interest getting involved in the Syrian civil war, it could find itself drawn into the conflict if Syrian leader Bashar Assad's Iranian patrons continue to use his territory to ship arms to Hezbollah.

Repeated Israeli strikes would almost certainly prompt Syrian retaliation, yielding a nightmare scenario in which Israel finds itself in a Syrian morass teeming with jihadi rebels, sectarian hatred and chemical weapons.

For the West, it offers another compelling argument that the Syrian war must somehow be brought to an end.

Since the uprising in Syria began in March 2011, Israel has carefully avoided taking sides.

Friend Of Boston Bombing Suspect Released

BOSTON (AP) — A friend of Boston Marathon bombing suspect Dzhokhar Tsarnaev has been released from federal custody while he awaits trial for allegedly lying to federal investigators probing the April 15 bombings.

Robel Phillipos was charged last week and faces up to eight years in prison if convicted. The 19-year-old was a student at the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth with Tsarnaev.

Prosecutors initially asked that Phillipos be held while he awaits trial, arguing that he poses a serious flight risk.

But prosecutors and Phillipos' lawyers said Monday in a joint motion they now agree that Phillipos can be released under strict conditions, including home confinement, monitoring with an electronic bracelet and a \$100,000 secured bond.

Magistrate Judge Marianne Bowler agreed to the request during a hearing Monday afternoon.

Study On Immigration Bill's Cost Sets Off Tiff

WASHINGTON (AP) — A bipartisan Senate immigration bill would cost the government a net \$6.3 trillion over the next 50 years to provide benefits for millions of people now living in the U.S. illegally, the Heritage Foundation said in a report Monday, setting off a fierce dispute with fellow conservatives who attacked the study as flawed and political.

The Heritage study said immigrants granted new legal status under the bill would eat up more than \$9 trillion in health, education, retirement and other benefits over their lifetime, while contributing only around \$3 trillion in taxes. Republicans and conservative groups who support the bill quickly countered that the study failed to measure broader economic benefits from an immigration overhaul, including a more robust workforce that would boost the gross domestic product.

"The Heritage Foundation document is a political document; it's not a very serious analysis," said former Mississippi Gov. Haley Barbour, a Republican who's part of a task force with the nonprofit Bipartisan Policy Center that supports the bill. "This study is designed to try to scare conservative Republicans into thinking the cost here is going to be so gigantic that you can't possibly be for it."

Former Sen. Jim DeMint, R-S.C., the Heritage Foundation's new president, dismissed such criticism.

"It's clear a number of people in Washington who might benefit from an amnesty, as well as a number of people in Congress, do not want to consider the costs," DeMint said. "No sensible thinking person could read this study and conclude that over 50 years that it could possibly have a positive economic impact."

Answers Sought In Deadly Calif. Limo Fire

REDWOOD CITY, Calif. (AP) — Authorities searched for answers Monday in the fire that roared through a stretch limo packed with women on a girls' night out, hoping to learn what sparked the blaze and why five of the victims could not escape the fast-spreading flames.

The women who were killed were found pressed up against the partition behind the driver, apparently because smoke and fire kept them from the rear exits of the extended passenger compartment.

The position of the bodies suggested they were trying to get away from the fire, said San Mateo County Coroner Robert Foucault. His office planned to begin autopsies later Monday.

The women were celebrating the wedding of a newlywed friend when the rear portion of the Lincoln Town Car went up in flames Saturday night on the San Mateo-Hayward Bridge over San Francisco Bay. The driver and four women were able to escape. The newlywed was among the dead.

The driver, Orville Brown, 46, of San Jose, said at first he misunderstood what one of the passengers in the back was saying when she knocked on the partition between the passenger area and the driver and complained about smelling smoke.

Closed Pretrial Hearing In WikiLeaks Case

FORT MEADE, Md. (AP) — Government secrecy reaches a new level this week in the court-martial of Army Pfc. Bradley Manning, an intelligence analyst who sent 700,000 classified U.S. documents to the WikiLeaks website.

A military judge, Col. Denise Lind, has ordered what prosecutors say is an unprecedented closed hearing Wednesday at Fort Meade to help her decide how much of Manning's upcoming trial should be closed to protect national security.

An unidentified prosecution witness will testify during that closed hearing in a "dry run." Defense attorneys say that could allow the judge to find ways to avoid closing the courtroom to the public during the presentation of classified evidence. Lind and attorneys for both sides have suggested there are a number of options to shield sensitive material, including closing parts of the trial; redacting documents; using written summaries as evidence to omit sensitive details; or even using code words for classified information.

The sensitive evidence includes Iraq and Afghanistan battlefield reports and State Department cables Manning has acknowledged leaking, along with official communications about those classified documents. The government says the leaks in 2009 and 2010 endangered lives and security. Manning's lawyers contend there was little to no damage.

Lind's decision to hold the practice run out of public view has drawn mixed reactions from national security and legal experts. Air Force Reserve Lt. Col. David Frakt, who teaches at the University of Pittsburgh law school, called it a "great idea" for minimizing disruptions such as those at U.S. military commissions' cases involving terrorism detainees at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. Frakt defended Guantanamo detainees Mohammed Jawad and Ali Hamza al Bahlul in 2008 and 2009.

Bill Would Let States Tax Internet Purchases

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Senate is aiming to help traditional retailers and financially strapped state and local governments with a vote Monday that would widely subject online shopping — for years a largely tax-free frontier — to state sales taxes.

Support for the Senate legislation crosses party lines and it was expected to pass. But opposition from some conservatives who view it as a tax increase will make it a tougher sell in the House. President Barack Obama has conveyed his support for the measure.

Under current law, states can only require retailers to collect sales taxes if the store has a physical presence in the state.

That means big retailers with stores all over the country like Wal-Mart, Best Buy and Target collect sales taxes when they sell goods over the Internet. But online retailers like eBay and Amazon don't have to collect sales taxes, except in states where they have offices or distribution centers.



MICHAEL ROBINSON CHAVEZ/LOS ANGELES TIMES/MCT
Crews inspect burned areas in Newbury Park, Calif., Sunday. Recent wildfires in California are part of a rising fire threat in the West, prompting the U.S. Forest Service to bolster its fleet of firefighting aircraft.

Feds Add Bigger, Faster Planes To Wildfire Fleet

BY JEFF BARNARD
 Associated Press

GRANTS PASS, Ore. — As the wildfire season ramps up across the West, the U.S. Forest Service is adding bigger, faster planes to its fleet to fight the fires.

The forest service announced Monday that it has selected contractors to provide seven air tankers that fly faster and drop a larger payload of fire retardant than other planes in its firefighting fleet.

The agency will spend nearly \$160 million over five years for access to several models of aircraft, including a converted DC-10 jumbo jet, which can carry about five times as much flame-resistant liquid as any aircraft in regular use. The cost is about double the amount spent in past years, but the planes are expected to provide better service, said forest service fire and aviation director Tom Harbour. They also require less maintenance.

Each of the planes can carry more than 3,000 gallons of slurry and fly faster than 350 mph, the Forest Service says. The DC-10 can hold as much as 11,600 gallons.

The newer planes are set to join the aging fleet of eight large tankers, mostly Korean War-era submarine chasers, known as PV2s, which can fly about 165 mph and hold about 2,000 gallons of fire retardant. Several such planes have been involved in fatal crashes re-

cently, reducing the size of the fleet.

Just when the new tankers would start fighting wildfires is not clear. Unsuccessful bidders have a chance to file protests challenging the choices, and various factors will determine how long that takes, the Forest Service said.

Forest Service Chief Tom Tidwell said in a statement it is "critical" to complete the effort "as quickly as possible as we face the prospect of another challenging wildfire season with a dwindling legacy air tanker fleet."

Sen. Mark Udall, D-Colo., urged bidders not to delay the process by filing protests, which prevented the Forest Service from adding new planes last fire season.

Last week, the first 2013 fire season outlook from the National Interagency Fire Center said a dry winter and a warm spring put the wildfire potential above normal across the West.

The effort to boost the air tanker fleet comes as the Forest Service enters fire season with 500 fewer firefighters and 50 fewer fire engines than last year due to budget cuts mandated by Congress under what is known as the sequester. The firefighting budget stands at about \$2 billion.

Forest Service Fire and Aviation Director Tom Harbour said the department will compensate by repositioning crews and equipment to areas of the highest risk.

Biden Asks Clergy To Make Moral Argument On Guns

WASHINGTON (AP) — Vice President Joe Biden wants pastors, rabbis and nuns to tell their flocks that enacting gun control is the moral thing to do. But another vote may have to wait until Congress wraps up work on an immigration overhaul.

Biden met for two-and-a-half hours Monday with more than a dozen leaders from various faith communities — Christian, Jewish, Muslim and Sikh, to name a few. Both Biden and the faith leaders encouraged each other not to give up on what has been an arduous and thus far fruitless effort by Biden and President Barack Obama to pass new gun laws in the wake of December's schoolhouse shooting in Connecticut.

Around a large, circular table in a conference room on the White House grounds, Biden waxed optimistic about prospects for passing a bill, according to four participants who spoke to The Associated Press after the meeting. Biden's chief of staff, Bruce Reed, joined the group, as did a handful of Obama aides who work on faith-based outreach. The meeting closed with a meditation and a prayer for action.

But don't expect a vote any time soon.

"The conversation presumed the vote would happen first on immigration," said Rabbi David Saperstein, who directs the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism. "That seemed to be the back-and-forth on both sides — that immigration was a key priority right now. When that vote took place, it would be an opportunity to refocus on this."

A far-reaching immigration overhaul is in the early stages of advancing through the Senate. Obama said last week he's optimistic it can be completed this year.

Although momentum on gun control stalled in the Senate last month, Biden has insisted the issue is very much alive, and has been meeting regularly with gun violence victims and law enforcement to build support for a second go at legislation to expand background checks, improve mental health care and take other steps to reduce gun violence. Monday's session reflects an attempt to broaden the coalition calling for new gun laws to include a wide array of religious groups — including evangelicals and conservative faith communities.

Without naming names, Biden

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With Fondest Memories

We remember those who have passed away and are especially dear to us.

On Saturday, May 25th we will publish in print and online at Yankton.net a Memorial Day section devoted to those who are gone but not forgotten.

Aneta Burrows
 Dec. 30, 1960-Nov. 8, 2002

Your courage and bravery still inspire us all, and the memory of your smile fills us with joy and laughter.

Dan, Ann & Sarah

Select one of the verses below to accompany your tribute.

- We hold you in our thoughts and memories forever.
- May God cradle you in his arms, now and forever.
- Forever missed, never forgotten. May God hold you in the palm of His hand.
- Thank you for the wonderful days we shared together. My prayers will be with you until we meet again.
- The days we shared were sweet. I long to see you again in Gods heavenly glory.
- Your courage and bravery still inspire us all, and the memory of your smile fills us with joy and laughter.
- Though out of sight, you'll forever be in my heart and mind.
- May the light of peace shine on your face for eternity.
- May God's angels guide you and protect you throughout time.
- You were a light in our life that burns forever in our hearts.
- May God's graces shine over you for all time.
- You are in our thoughts and prayers from morning to night and from year to year.
- We send this message with a loving kiss for eternal rest and happiness.
- May the Lord bless you with His graces and warm, loving heart.
- I have written my own message and it is included.

To remember your loved one in this special way, send \$12.00 per listing, up to 25 word verse and \$5 for photo.

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