

Syrian Regime Troops Score Gains

BEIRUT (AP) — Syrian troops pushed into a rebel-held town near the Lebanese border on Sunday, fighting house-to-house and bombing from the air as President Bashar Assad tried to strengthen his grip on a strategic strip of land running from the capital to the Mediterranean coast.

With the regime scoring gains on the battlefield, the U.S. and Russia could face an even tougher task persuading Assad and his opponents to attend talks on ending Syria's 26-month-old conflict. Washington and Moscow hope to start talks with an international conference as early as next month, though no date has been set.

Government forces launched the offensive on the town of Qusair just hours after Assad said in a newspaper interview that he'll stay in his job until elections — effectively rejecting an opposition demand that any talks on a political transition lead to his ouster.

Even though the regime and the main opposition group have not yet committed to attending the conference, U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki-moon said Sunday that he is hopeful it can take place "very soon," possibly in early June. In addition to the U.S. and Russia, he said he has spoken with Britain, France, China and other key parties.

Previous diplomatic initiatives have failed, in part because of divisions within the international community and because the regime and the armed opposition believed they could achieve more on the battlefield than in talks. Russia and the U.S. have backed opposite sides in Syria.

Still, neither regime forces nor rebel fighters have been able to create significant momentum since the uprising against Assad erupted in March 2011 and last year escalated into a full-fledged civil war.

Driver In Parade Crash Likely Had Condition

DAMASCUS, Va. (AP) — Authorities believe the driver who plowed into dozens of hikers marching in a Virginia mountain town parade suffered from a medical condition and did not cause the crash intentionally, an emergency official said Sunday.

Officials did not have a formal confirmation or any specifics on the condition, but based on the accounts of authorities and witnesses on the scene, they are confident the issue was medical, according to Pokey Harris, Washington County's director of emergency management. "There is no reason to believe this was intentional," she said.

In what witnesses called a frantic scene at the parade, about 50 to 60 people suffered injuries ranging from critical to superficial Saturday. No fatalities were reported. Three of the worst injured were flown by helicopter to area hospitals.

Two people were kept at hospitals overnight, but their injuries were not critical as of Sunday, Harris said. "For the most part, everyone was treated and released," she said.

The crash happened around 2:10 p.m. Sunday during the Hikers Parade at the Trail Days festival, an annual celebration of the Appalachian Trail in Damascus, near the Tennessee state line about a half-hour drive east of Bristol.

Crews To Working To Rebuild Metro-North Line

BRIDGEPORT, Conn. (AP) — Tens of thousands of commuters are bracing for a difficult trip around southwest Connecticut and to New York City beginning Monday as workers repair the Metro-North commuter rail line crippled by a derailment and crash.

Crews will spend days rebuilding 2,000 feet of track, overhead wires and signals following the collision between two trains Friday evening that injured 72 people, Metro-North President Howard Permut said Sunday. Nine remained hospitalized.

"This amounts to the wholesale reconstruction of a two-track electrified railroad," he said.

Several days of around-the-clock work will be required, including inspections and testing of the newly rebuilt system, Permut said. The damaged rail cars were removed from the tracks on Sunday, the first step toward making the repairs.

Service disruptions on the New Haven line between South Norwalk and New Haven are expected to continue "well into the coming week," Permut said.

AP CEO: Government Seizure 'Unconstitutional'

WASHINGTON (AP) — The president and chief executive officer of The Associated Press on Sunday called the government's secret seizure of two months of reporters' phone records "unconstitutional" and said the news cooperative had not ruled out legal action against the Justice Department.

Gary Pruitt, in his first television interviews since it was revealed the Justice Department subpoenaed phone records of AP reporters and editors, said the move already has had a chilling effect on journalism. Pruitt said the seizure has made sources less willing to talk to AP journalists and, in the long term, could limit Americans' information from all news outlets.

Pruitt told CBS' "Face the Nation" that the government has no business monitoring the AP's newsgathering activities.

"And if they restrict that apparatus ... the people of the United States will only know what the government wants them to know and that's not what the framers of the Constitution had in mind when they wrote the First Amendment," he said.

In a separate interview with the AP, Pruitt said the news cooperative had not decided its next move but had not ruled out legal action against the government. He said the Justice Department's investigation is out of control and President Barack Obama should rein it in.

Obama Exhorts Good Deeds
By College's Graduates

BY DARLENE SUPERVILLE
Associated Press

ATLANTA — President Barack Obama, in a soaring commencement address on work, sacrifice and opportunity, on Sunday told graduates of historically black Morehouse College to seize the power of their example as black men graduating from college and use it to improve people's lives.

The president said his success was due to "the special obligation I felt, as a black man like you, to help those who need it most, people who didn't have the opportunities that I had — because there but for the grace of God, go I. I might have been in their shoes. I might have been in prison. I might have been unemployed. I might not have been able to support a family. And that motivates me."

Noting the Atlanta school's mission to cultivate, not just educate, good men, Obama said graduates should not be so eager to join the chase for wealth and material things, but instead should remember where they came from and not "take your degree and get a fancy job and nice house and nice car and never look back."

"So yes, go get that law degree. But if you do, ask yourself if the only option is to defend the rich and powerful, or if you can also find time to defend the powerless," Obama said. "Sure, go get your MBA, or start that business, we need black businesses out there. But ask yourself what broader purpose your business might serve, in putting people to work, or transforming a neighborhood."

"The most successful CEOs I know didn't start out intent on making money. Rather, they had a vision of how their product or service would change things, and the money followed," he said.

For those headed to medical school, Obama said, "Make sure you heal folks in underserved communities who really need it, too."

Before Obama arrived in Atlanta, thunderstorms drenched hundreds of people who gathered on the campus lawn for the outdoor



CURTIS COMPTON/ATLANTA JOURNAL-CONSTITUTION/MCT
President Barack Obama delivers the commencement speech at Morehouse College on Sunday in Atlanta.

ceremony, forcing many guests to wear clear plastic ponchos over what amounted to their Sunday-best clothes. Rain began falling again, accompanied by more thunder and lightning, minutes after Obama began to speak.

"I also have to say you all are going to get wet," he said. "I would be out there with you if I could. But Secret Service gets nervous, so I'm going to have to stay here, dry. But know that I'm with you in spirit."

Obama urged graduates to "inspire those who look up to you to expect more of themselves."

Obama used the speech to once again share his personal story of growing up without a father, confessing that along the way he made unspecified bad personal choices "like too many men in our community."

"Sometimes I wrote off my own failings as

just another example of the world trying to keep a black man down," he said. "I had a tendency to make excuses for me not doing the right thing. But one of the things that all of you have learned over the last four years is, there's no longer any room for excuses."

Speaking in personal terms as he often does when addressing predominantly black audiences, particularly of black males, the nation's first black president also spoke intimately of his desire to be a better father to daughters Malia and Sasha than his absent father was to him, and to be a better husband to his wife, Michelle.

He told the graduates to pay attention to their families, saying success in every other aspect of life means nothing without success at home.

Small Fla. City Wonders Who Won Powerball Jackpot

BY TAMARA LUSH
AND BARBARA RODRIGUEZ
Associated Press

ZEPHYRHILLS, Fla. — Some lucky person walked into a Publix supermarket in suburban Florida over the past few days and bought a ticket now worth an estimated \$590.5 million — the highest Powerball jackpot in history.

But it wasn't Matthew Bogel. On Sunday, he loaded groceries into his car after shopping at the Publix. He shook his head when asked about the jackpot.

"It's crazy, isn't it?" he said. "That's so much money."

It's an amount too high for many to imagine. Compare it to the budget for the city of Zephyrhills: This year's figure is just more than \$49 million. The winning Powerball jackpot is 12 times that.

Whoever has the ticket hadn't come forward as of Sunday morning.

"This would be the sixth Florida Powerball winner and right now, it's the sole winner of the largest ever Powerball jackpot," Florida Lottery executive Cindy O'Connell told The Associated Press. "We're delighted right now that we have the sole winner."

Publix spokeswoman Maria Brous said that there are a lot of rumors about who won, but the store doesn't know. "We're excited

for the winner or winners," she said.

O'Connell said Florida has had more Powerball winners than any other state but did not give any indication whether anyone had stepped forward with the winning ticket in Saturday's drawing.

But plenty of people in Zephyrhills — population 13,337 — are wondering whether it's someone they know.

Joan Albertson drove to the Publix early Sunday morning with her camera in hand, in case the winner emerged. She said she had bought a ticket at a store across the street, and the idea of winning that much money was still something of a shock.

"Oh, there's so much good that you could do with that amount of money," Albertson said. "I don't even know where to begin."

Zephyrhills is a small city in Pasco County, about 30 miles northeast of downtown Tampa.

Once a rural farming town, it's now known as a hotbed for sky-diving activity, and the home to large retiree mobile home parks and Zephyrhills bottled water.

And now, one lucky lottery ticket.

"I'm getting text messages and messages from Facebook going, 'uh, did you win the lottery?'" Sandra Lewis said. "No, I didn't win, guys. Sorry."

Sara Jeltis said her parents in Michigan texted her with the news Sunday morning.

"Well, it didn't click till I came here," she said, gesturing to the half-dozen TV live trucks humming in the Publix parking lot. "And I'm like, wow I can't believe it, it's shocking! Out of the whole country, this Publix, in little Zephyrhills would be the winner."

With four out of every five possible combinations of Powerball numbers in play, lottery execu-

tives said Saturday that someone was almost certain to win the game's highest jackpot, a windfall of hundreds of millions of dollars — and that's after taxes.

The winning numbers were 10, 13, 14, 22 and 52, with a Powerball of 11.

Estimates had earlier put the jackpot at around \$600 million. But Powerball's online site said Sunday that the jackpot had reached an estimated \$590.5 million.

The world's largest jackpot was a \$656 million Mega Millions jackpot in March 2012.

Terry Rich, CEO of the Iowa Lottery, initially confirmed that one Florida winning ticket had been sold. He told AP that following the Florida winner, the Powerball grand prize was being reset at an estimated jackpot of \$40 million, or about \$25.1 million cash value.



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JPMorgan CEO
Fighting For
Chairman job

NEW YORK (AP) — Jamie Dimon, chairman and CEO of the country's biggest bank, faces a key test this week: His shareholders are voting on whether to let him keep both jobs.


It's been just more than a year since his bank, JPMorgan Chase, revealed a surprise trading loss that tarnished its usually stellar reputation in Washington and on Wall Street, and what a difference it has made. Shareholder groups are calling for the bank to strip him of his chairman job, a move that would be a bruising referendum against a man who's normally chieftain even among other big-bank CEOs. They're also lobbying to kick out multiple long-time board members, saying they should have done more to detect or prevent the trading loss.

In all, it's a powerful reminder of how fortunes can quickly shift in the banking industry, and how banks, supposedly chastened by the financial crisis, are still stumbling through regulatory and legal crises.

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