

Rebels Blow Up Historic Hotel In Syria

HOMS, Syria (AP) — With a gigantic explosion, Syrian rebels on Thursday leveled a historic hotel being used as an army base in the northern city of Aleppo by detonating bomb-packed tunnels beneath it, activists and militants said.

The blast near Aleppo's medieval citadel, an imposing city landmark that was once swarming with tourists, killed an unknown number of soldiers. It turned the Carlton Hotel, known for its elegant architecture and proximity to the citadel, into a pile of rubble.

The attack was a powerful statement that the rebels could still deal heavy blows elsewhere in Syria even as they withdrew from Homs, surrendering that city to President Bashar Assad's forces.

In Homs, 95 miles south of Aleppo, army troops were poised to enter the city's old quarters after hundreds of fighters complete their evacuation, which was suspended after gunmen in northern Syria prevented trucks carrying aid from entering two villages besieged by rebels. The aid delivery was part of the cease-fire agreement allowing rebels to leave Homs for rebel-held areas farther north.

Earlier, footage from Homs broadcast by the pro-Syrian Al-Manar TV showed rebels, many of them covering their faces with masks and carrying backpacks, boarding a green bus, its windows covered with newspapers.

Okl. Court Agrees To Stay Of Execution

OKLAHOMA CITY (AP) — The Oklahoma Court of Criminal Appeals agreed Thursday to a six-month stay of execution for a death row inmate while an investigation is conducted into last week's botched lethal injection.

The court reset the execution date of inmate Charles Warner to Nov. 13. Warner's attorneys requested the delay, and state Attorney General Scott Pruitt said in a court filing Thursday he wouldn't object.

While the stay only applies to Warner, the attorney general and governor have said Oklahoma will not carry out any executions until the investigation is finished, which is expected to take at least eight weeks.

"If the state is allowed to enforce the ultimate penalty of death, it is incumbent upon this court to allow the state the time necessary to ensure that the penalty is carried out in a constitutionally sound manner," Justice Charles Johnson wrote in a specially concurring opinion.

Warner was scheduled to be executed the same night as Clayton Lockett last week in what would have been the state's first double execution since 1937. But Lockett's vein collapsed during his lethal injection, prompting prison officials to halt the execution. He later died of a heart attack.

Colo. OKs Plan For Pot Financial System

DENVER (AP) — Frustrated by the cash-heavy aspect of its new marijuana industry, Colorado is trying a long-shot bid to create the world's first financial system devoted to the pot business.

But Colorado's plan to move the weed industry away from dank-smelling cash to easily auditable banking accounts is a Hail Mary pass that won't work, industry and regulatory officials agree.

"It's definitely creative, but I don't know whether it's a solution or just a statement," said Toni Fox, owner of 3D Cannabis Center in Denver.

Here's the plan approved by state lawmakers Wednesday — state-licensed pot growers and sellers would pool their cash into uninsured financial cooperatives. The cooperatives would then ask the U.S. Federal Reserve System to let them access so-called "merchant services," a broad category that includes accepting credit cards and being able to write checks.

The Federal Reserve had no immediate response Thursday to Colorado's cooperative plan.

50 Bodies Recovered In Nigeria Town

BAUCHI, Nigeria (AP) — Residents of a Nigerian town attacked by Boko Haram criticized security forces for failing to protect them despite warnings that the Islamic militants were nearby. At least 50 bodies have been recovered, many horribly burned, in the town.

The attack on Gamboru, in remote northeastern Nigeria near the border with Cameroon, is part of the Islamic militants' campaign of terror that included the kidnapping of teenaged girls from a school, 276 of whom remain missing and believed held by Boko Haram in the vast Sambisa Forest in northeastern Nigeria.

The death toll from the Monday afternoon attack in Gamboru was initially reported by a senator to be as many as 300, but a security official said it is more likely to be around 100. Some Gamboru residents said bodies were recovered from the debris of burned shops around the town's main market, which was the focus of the attack.

The bodies were found after the market reopened on Wednesday as health workers, volunteers and traders searched for missing people, said Gamboru resident Abuwar Masta. He said most of the bodies were burned beyond recognition. Some of the victims were traders from Chad and Cameroon, he said.

Pro-Russians To Hold Vote In East Ukraine

BY PETER LEONARD
Associated Press

DONETSK, Ukraine — The pro-Russia insurgency in eastern Ukraine decided Thursday to go ahead with Sunday's referendum on autonomy despite a call from Russian President Vladimir Putin to delay it.

While Putin's call on Wednesday to postpone the vote was seen as part of an effort to step back from confrontation and negotiate a deal with the West, he fueled tensions again on Thursday by overseeing military exercises that Russian news agencies said simulated a massive retaliatory nuclear strike in response to an enemy attack. Putin said the exercise involving Russia's nuclear forces had been planned back in November, but it came as relations between Russia and the West have plunged to their lowest point since the Cold War.

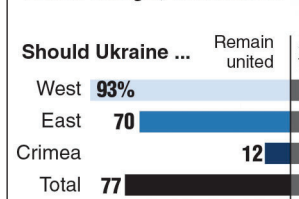
On the ground in Ukraine, many have feared that the referendum could be a flashpoint for further violence between Ukrainian troops and the pro-Russia militants who have seized government buildings in about a dozen cities in the east.

The decision to hold the vote as planned was unanimous, said Denis Pushilin, co-chairman of the so-called Donetsk People's Republic.

He said the suggestion to

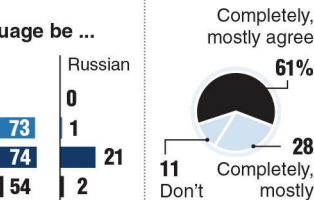
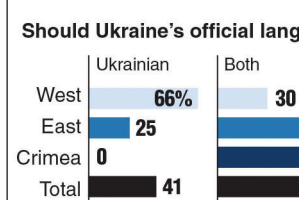
Staying as one

A majority of Ukrainians agree that their country should remain a single, unified state.



Beyond borders

Are there parts of neighboring countries that really belong to Russia?



Source: Spring Pew Global Attitudes Survey © 2014 MCT

postpone the referendum "came from a person who undoubtedly cares for the population of the southeast" of Ukraine and thanked Putin for his efforts to find a way out of the situation. "But we are just a bullhorn for the people," Pushilin said. "We just voice what the people want and demonstrate through their actions."

The question on the ballot is: "Do you support the act of proclamation of independent sovereignty for the Donetsk People's Republic?"

Despite the phrasing, the organizers have said that only

after the vote will they decide whether they want actual independence, greater autonomy within Ukraine or annexation by Russia.

Putin on Wednesday also declared that Russia has pulled its troops away from the Ukrainian border, although NATO and Washington said they have seen no signs of this.

"I have very good vision but while we've noted Russia's statement so far we haven't seen any — any — indication of troops pulling back," NATO Secretary-General Anders Fogh Rasmussen said in a post on Twitter.

Russian Deputy Defense Minister Anatoly Antonov accused NATO and the Pentagon of deliberately misrepresenting the situation on the border and urged them "to stop cynically misleading the international community," the Interfax news agency reported.

Putin also spoke more positively about the Ukrainian interim government's plan to hold a presidential election on May 25, calling it a "step in the right direction," but reiterated Russia's contention that the legitimacy of the vote depended on Ukraine ending its "punitive operations" in the east and beginning a dialogue to assure the Russian-speaking population that their rights would be guaranteed.

A poll released Thursday showed that a strong majority of Ukrainians want their country to remain a single, unified state and this was true even in the largely Russian-speaking east where the pro-Russia insurgency has been fighting for autonomy.

The poll conducted last month by the Washington-based Pew Research Center found that 77 percent of people nationwide want Ukraine to maintain its current borders, while nearly as many, or 70 percent, in the east feel the same. Only among Russian speakers does the percentage drop significantly, but it is still over half at 58 percent.

House Votes For New Benghazi Investigation

BY BRADLEY KLAPPER
AND DONNA CASSATA
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — House Republicans on Thursday rammed through a measure opening a new investigation of the deadly assault in Benghazi, Libya, vowing to dig deeper in a search for truth. Democrats declared it merely a political ploy to raise campaign cash and motivate voters.

A bitterly divided House voted 232-186 to establish the panel that Speaker John Boehner insisted would answer questions that linger almost 20 months after the Sept. 11, 2012, attack on the U.S. diplomatic mission. Seven Democrats, many facing tough re-election campaigns, broke ranks and joined Republicans in supporting the probe.

The panel's investigation will be the eighth on Benghazi and will examine the entirety of the attack that killed U.S. Ambassador Chris Stevens and three other Americans. Independent, bipartisan and GOP-led probes have faulted the State Department for inadequate security at the outpost, leading to four demotions. No attacker has yet been brought to justice.

Republicans say they're unsatisfied with explanations

so far, and they have leveled a range of accusations against President Barack Obama, former Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton and other senior administration officials. Chief among them: that the administration misled the American people about the nature of the attack during a presidential election campaign and stonewalled congressional investigators.

"We will not take any shortcuts to the truth, accountability or justice," Boehner said during House debate.

Democrats remain divided over whether to boycott the select committee. They are concerned that their participation would grant legitimacy to what they believe will be a partisan forum. But they also worry that if they avoid it they won't have the chance to counter GOP claims and defend

potential witnesses — including Clinton, a possible 2016 presidential candidate.

Party leaders will meet with their rank and file Friday morning to decide on the next step.

Republican Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen of Florida criticized the "song and dance" she said came from Clinton when House members wanted to question her about Benghazi a few months after the attack. Clinton's testimony before the House Foreign Affairs Committee was delayed when she missed a month of work toward the end of her tenure after suffering a virus, then a fall and a concussion, and then brief hospitalization for a blood clot near her brain.

Rep. Louise Slaughter, D-N.Y., said no evidence uncovered in any of the investigations thus far sug-

gests wrongdoing by the administration. Republican claims have descended into "the crass and unbelievable," she said.

Rep. Adam Schiff, D-Calif., said the questions "have been asked and answered time and time and time again," and he added: "Let's end the political circus."

Benghazi has produced 13 public hearings, the release of 25,000 pages of documents and 50 separate briefings. The select committee won't be the only inquiry, as other GOP-led congressional panels continue their probes, including a House Oversight investigation which just last week took the extraordinary step of subpoenaing a Cabinet member. Secretary of State John Kerry hasn't said when he might testify.

RTEC Sets Dates for Welding, Pretty Pots & Youth Academies

Pretty Pots - Container Gardening for Beginners:

Learn to create a blooming container garden for yourself or for someone special in this "just for fun" class from 5:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. on Friday, May 23, 2014. You'll learn what to consider when selecting the perfect plants and flowers and then roll up your sleeves and plant the pot/planter you've brought to class. No previous knowledge of plants or flowers is required, making it ideal for anyone (age 13+). Cost is \$32.50 (includes tax). Note: Participants can bring their own garden gloves and a pot/planter up to 14" in diameter. Potting soil and plants will be provided. Please specify sun or shade plants when registering. Call and sign up today so you can enjoy your creation all summer long. Class size limited to 10. Sign up today!

AWS Certification/Upgrade Welding Classes:

Applications are still being accepted for RTEC's AWS Certification/Upgrade Welding course set to begin on June 24, 2014. It will be a 48-hour night class held from 4-8 p.m. on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Contact RTEC today to learn about possible funding assistance. Next course is expected to begin in mid-August. Apply now!

Welding Basics Class:

Spots in the Welding Basics class scheduled to begin June 23, 2014, are filling up fast. Applications are being accepted for this introductory 48-hour course and for the next course expected to begin in mid-August. Contact RTEC at (605) 668-5700 for more information on possible financial assistance. Apply today!

RTEC Manufacturing Academy:

Students entering grades 9-12 in the fall can learn about the many facets of manufacturing in this hands-on, 2-week academy that runs from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. June 2-6 and June 9-13 at RTEC in Yankton. Students enrolled in Avon, Bon Homme, Gayville-Volin, Irene-Wakonda and Yankton school districts are eligible to apply. Completers receive .5 CTE high school credit, one credit from Mitchell Technical Institute and one credit from Black Hills State University. No cost to attend. Applications due May 12 or soon thereafter. Limited to 30 students.

RTEC Automotive Academy:

Students entering grades 9-12 in the fall can learn about the automotive industry and gain valuable skills during this 2-week summer academy. It runs from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. June 16-20 and June 23-27 at the Yankton High School Automotives Lab. Students enrolled in Avon, Bon Homme, Gayville-Volin, Irene-Wakonda and Yankton school districts are eligible to apply. Completers receive .5 CTE high school credit. No cost to attend. Applications due May 19. Limited to 25 students.

Please contact RTEC for more information today!



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Welcome to the World

The following babies were born at Avera Sacred Heart Hospital in April 2014:

- | | | | | |
|-----------|---------|----------|-----------|----------|
| AALIYAH | ATTICUS | EMERSON | JAXSON | PENELOPE |
| ABRIANNA | BAILEY | EMERSYN | JAYCE | PIPER |
| ACHILLES | BLAIR | HADLEY | JOHNATHAN | REED |
| ADALYN | BRAXTON | HARPER | KATE | REYNA |
| ADELYN | CADEN | HAYDEN | LEROY | SELENA |
| ALEXANDER | CODIE | HUNTER | LEVI | WESSON |
| ALI | CONNOR | ISABELLA | MACI | WESSON |
| ALLIANA | CONNOR | ISABELLE | MYA | WILLIAM |
| AMANDA | CRUE | IZAAK | NATHANIEL | XAVIER |
| AMAUNI | DRAY | JAIME | OLIVIA | ZOE |
| APRIL | ELLIE | JASE | PATRICIA | |



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