

Ukraine

# Eastern Insurgents Declare Independence

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DONETSK, Ukraine — Pro-Moscow insurgents in eastern Ukraine declared independence Monday and sought to join Russia, undermining upcoming presidential elections, strengthening the Kremlin's hand and putting pressure on Kiev to hold talks with the separatists following a referendum on self-rule.

Russia signaled it has no intention of subsuming eastern Ukraine the way it annexed Crimea in March. Instead, Moscow is pushing to include eastern regions in negotiations on Ukraine's future — suggesting that Russia prefers a political rather than a military solution to its worst standoff with the West since the Cold War.

Such talks are central to a potential path toward peace outlined Monday by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

The plan laid out by Swiss President Didier Burkhalter calls on all sides to refrain from violence and urges immediate amnesty, talks on decentralization and the status of the Russian language. That's a key complaint of insurgents who have seized power in eastern regions and clashed with government troops and police.

But it's up to the Ukrainian government to take the next step.

Acting Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk pledged to hold a dialogue with Ukraine's east. But he gave no specifics and stopped short of addressing Sunday's referendum and the declarations of independence in the pro-Moscow regions of Donetsk and Luhansk.

"We would like to launch the broad national dialogue with the east, center, the west, and all of Ukraine," Yatsenyuk told a news conference in Brussels, adding that the agenda for talks should include changes to the constitution that would give more powers to the regions.

Ukraine's central government and the West say the Kremlin has encouraged weeks of un-

rest in eastern Ukraine in a possible attempt to grab more land. Russia says that's not so, and accuses the West of meddling in a region that Moscow sees as its backyard.

The Ukrainian government's room to maneuver is shrinking.

With national presidential elections scheduled for May 25, the regions of Donetsk and Luhansk declared independence Monday, and those in Donetsk even asked to join enormous neighbor Russia instead. The sprawling areas along Russia's border, home to about 6.6 million people, form Ukraine's industrial heartland.

"We, the people of the Donetsk People's Republic, based on the results of the May 11, 2014, referendum, declare that henceforth the Donetsk People's Republic will be deemed a sovereign state," Denis Pushilin, co-chairman of the insurgent government, said to applause Monday.

Wearing an ill-fitting suit and reading his speech from a Mac laptop, he continued, "The

people of Donetsk have always been part of the Russian world, regardless of ethnic affiliation. For us, the history of Russia is our history."

A day earlier, both regions held a slapdash referendum that Ukraine's acting president called a "sham" and Western governments said violated international law.

White House spokesman Jay Carney says the United States does not recognize the results of the vote, and is focusing on making sure Ukraine's presidential election takes place as planned in 13 days.

But that is starting to look in doubt: Luhansk spokesman Vasily Nikitin said his region will not take part.

The interim government in Kiev had been hoping the presidential vote would unify the country behind a new, democratically chosen leadership. Ukraine's crisis could grow even worse if regions start rejecting the presidential election. Dozens of people have been reported killed since Ukrainian forces began trying to retake some eastern cities.

## Boko Haram Leader Issues Threat

LAGOS, Nigeria (AP) — Under the guns of their captors, dozens of barefoot girls sat huddled together wearing gray Muslim veils as they chanted Quranic verses in Arabic. Some Christians among them said they had converted to Islam.

"I swear to almighty Allah, you will not see them again until you release our brothers that you have captured," the leader of the Boko Haram terrorist network threatened, an assault rifle slung across his chest.

A video released by the group Monday offered the first public glimpse of what it claimed were some of the nearly 300 Nigerian schoolgirls kidnapped a month ago. The girls' plight has spurred a global movement to secure their freedom.

It is not known how many suspected Boko Haram members are detained by security forces. Hundreds were killed last month when leader Abubakar Shekau's fighters stormed the military's main northeastern barracks in Maiduguri, the terror group's birthplace and the headquarters of a year-old military state of emergency to put down the 5-year-old Islamic uprising.

In the video, two of the girls were singled out for questioning.

## Arkansas: Gay Couples Seek Nuptials

LITTLE ROCK, Ark. (AP) — Dozens of gay couples, some of whom waited in line overnight, received licenses to marry from county clerks Monday, while lawyers for the state of Arkansas asked its highest court to suspend an order gutting a constitutional amendment that bans same-sex marriage.

"When we heard the news in Arkansas, we had to jump in the car to get here," 51-year-old Shelly Butler of Dallas said shortly before receiving the first license in Little Rock, the state's largest city. Butler met her partner, 48-year-old Susan Barr, at Southern Arkansas University in 1985. They arrived at the courthouse at 6:30 a.m. and were allowed to go to the front of the line because Butler has muscular dystrophy and is in a wheelchair.

"I am just in shock, I think. You go from being so private and hidden to such a public display of commitment. It's just so nice," Barr said.

Pulaski County Circuit Judge Chris Piazza tossed out Arkansas' gay marriage ban after business hours Friday, setting up Monday's run on courthouses in Little Rock and Fayetteville as same-sex marriage arrived in the Bible Belt. As he arrived at work Monday, Piazza walked up to a colleague performing same-sex weddings in the courthouse rotunda and shook his hand. Piazza declined to talk to reporters.

"I have already spoken my opinion," Piazza said.

## NC Entrepreneur In Close Primary Dies

ASHEBORO, N.C. (AP) — The North Carolina entrepreneur who was locked in a too-close-to-call Democratic Party primary with former "American Idol" singer Clay Aiken died Monday, said the president of the textile company he founded.

Keith Crisco, 71, died from "some type of fall" at his home, according to Robert Lawson, president of AEC Narrow Fabrics. Crisco's sons, who work for the company, told Lawson about their dad's death.

It wasn't immediately clear what will happen in the Democratic primary. Fewer than 400 votes separated Crisco and Aiken, who was leading, after the contest last Tuesday. The spokesman and the executive director of the State Board of Elections did not return messages.

The winner will face Republican incumbent Renee Ellmers in November in the GOP-leaning 2nd Congressional District.

## Apple CEO Makes Break From Jobs

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — "Think different" became Apple's creed during the late Steve Jobs' reign as CEO. Now, chief executive Tim Cook is embracing the idea while making decisions that would have seemed crazy to his fabled predecessor.

Apple's pending purchase of headphone maker and streaming music company Beats Electronics for \$3.2 billion is just the latest example of Cook's deviation from Jobs, who had so much confidence in his company's innovative powers that he saw little sense in spending large amounts of money on acquisitions.

Cook became chief executive in late August 2011, roughly six weeks before Jobs died. But in a number of ways, he is just beginning to put his own imprint on Apple. Cook is straying from Jobs' cash-hoarding habits by committing to return \$130 billion to shareholders through dividends and stock buybacks. He has orchestrated a company stock split and agreed to match employees' charitable contributions up to \$10,000 annually.

Under Cook's leadership, Apple also has displayed more social responsibility by working to improve labor conditions in the overseas factories that assemble its devices and taking steps to reduce pollution caused by its data centers and gadgets.

The shift in management philosophy has resulted in an odd twist: Apple Inc.'s pace of innovation has slowed and it now looks more like a conventional company than the corporate rebel Jobs tried to cultivate. Instead of releasing revolutionary gadgets such as the iPod, iPhone and iPad, Apple has been mostly upgrading existing products and figuring out ways to manage its bulging bank account since Cook took over.

## Immigrant Spurs Growth in Training

PORTLAND, Ore. (AP) — After immigrating to Oregon from the Mexican state of Oaxaca more than two decades ago, Paula Asuncion worked on farms and in minimum wage jobs at fast-food restaurants — a widow struggling to feed six children, sharing cramped apartments with other families.

Her prospects changed two years ago after she joined a program that helps immigrants open small culinary businesses. After training with the microbusiness incubator at Portland nonprofit Hacienda CDC, Asuncion now runs a catering service, employs other immigrants, and has bought a home for her family.

Asuncion's story is not uncommon. Experts say the economic downturn brought new interest in self-employment from people having a difficult time finding well-paying jobs, and that has spurred significant growth in microbusiness development programs that teach skills such as business plan writing, marketing and accounting.

Interest in opening a business is especially high among immigrants and refugees. Many have low incomes and less access to employment opportunities than the general population because they have limited English language skills, lack reliable transportation or an American diploma, and are still learning how American society works.

## Back In Business



OLIVIER DOULIERI/ABACA PRESS/MCT  
The Washington Monument has finally reopened Monday after it was closed nearly three years after a 5.8-magnitude earthquake.

# Washington Monument Reopens After Earthquake

WASHINGTON (AP) — The towering symbol that honors the nation's first president reopened to the public Monday, nearly three years after an earthquake cracked and chipped the 130-year-old stone obelisk.

After fences were dismantled and construction equipment removed, the Washington Monument drew a cross section of Americans who wanted to be among the first to visit the newly reopened historic site. For many of them, it was their first chance to see the 555-foot-tall monument's interior and the nation's capital from its highest point.

"I've seen pictures of it, but I've never been here to see it," said Brandon Hillock, 22, from near Salt Lake City, visiting after a two-year Mormon mission in Virginia. "It's really cool to come here and experience what this is all about and the history behind it."

Engineers have spent nearly 1,000 days on an extensive analysis and restoration of what was once the tallest structure in the world. A 5.8-magnitude quake in August 2011 caused widespread damage. It shook some stones loose and caused more than 150 cracks. From massive scaffolding built around the monument after the quake, engineers and stone masons made repairs stone by stone.

Now, new exhibits have been installed at the top, and visitors can once again ride an eleva-

tor to look out over the National Mall. The National Park Service is offering extended hours through the summer for daytime and evening visits. Tickets can be reserved online, but they're already booked into June.

Kourtney Butler of Miami just graduated from Howard University, but the monument has been closed and under construction for most of her four years living in Washington.

"I wanted to get a chance to see it," she said. "I really like the monuments and the national mall. I think I've been to all the Smithsonian museums and art exhibits. So it was the last one I hadn't seen."

Kristopher Lewis of Augusta, Georgia, and his wife, Mary Lewis, were visiting Washington for a conference.

"I played in front of the monument when I was in the eighth-grade band, so I wanted to come back and see it," Mary Lewis said.

For Kristopher Lewis, it was his first visit. Looking up, he said he felt patriotic.

"There's so many amazing historical sites in Washington, D.C., and just to be able to go up to the top of the monument and to look around and see all the city from that vantage point, not to mention the history of the monument itself, I think will be wonderful," he said.

## Budget Deficit Is Shrinking Fast

WASHINGTON — The U.S. government ran a big surplus in April, thanks to a flood of tax payments that helped keep the budget on track for the lowest annual deficit in six years.

The Treasury Department said Monday that April's surplus totaled \$106.9 billion, down slightly from last April's \$112.9 billion surplus. The government typically runs a surplus during April, when individual tax returns are due and corporations make quarterly tax payments.

Through the first seven months of the 2014 budget year, which began Oct. 1, the deficit totals \$306.4 billion. That's down 37 percent from the same period last year.

The Congressional Budget Office is forecasting a deficit of \$492 billion for the full budget year. That would be the narrowest gap since 2008.

In 2008, the government recorded a deficit of \$458.6 billion, which was the deficit up to that time. But that record was soon eclipsed as the government ran annual deficits surpassing \$1 trillion for the next four years.

Those deficits reflected a deep recession. The downturn reduced tax revenue and increased government spending to stabilize the financial system and pay benefits for people who had lost jobs.

So far this budget year, revenue totals \$1.74 trillion, up 8.2 percent from the same period in 2013. Revenue has been boosted by a stronger economy, which means more people working and paying taxes, thereby reducing the deficit.

Government spending totals \$1.6 trillion, down 8.2 percent from a year ago. The decline reflects efforts by

Congress and the administration to trim spending.

After peaking at \$1.4 trillion in 2009, the deficit has been falling. Last year, it dropped to \$680.2 billion.

## Energy Bill Fails Amid Election Politics

WASHINGTON (AP) — A widely popular, bipartisan energy savings bill fell victim in the Senate on Monday to election-year politics and the Obama administration's continued indecision on the Keystone XL oil pipeline.

A procedural motion to end debate and bring the measure to a floor vote without amendments fell five votes short of the 60 votes needed for approval.

The legislation would tighten efficiency guidelines for new federal buildings and provide tax incentives to make homes and commercial buildings more efficient. It easily cleared a procedural hurdle last week but stalled after Republican demand for votes on the Canada-to-Texas pipeline and on new administration-proposed greenhouse gas limits for coal-burning power plants.

Republicans are united in favor of the pipeline and against the new power plant regulations, while Democrats are deeply divided on both. Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, D-Nev., used a parliamentary maneuver to block Senate votes on the pipeline and power plant rules as part of the energy savings bill.

Reid said Monday that Republicans were "still seeking a ransom" on the energy bill by insisting on the Keystone amendment and other votes. He said he had agreed to a long-standing request from pipeline supporters for a separate vote on the pipeline if its supporters would let the efficiency bill sail through unamended.

Minority Whip John Cornyn, R-Texas, called Reid's maneuver disappointing. "The Senate used to be a place of great debate and accomplishment. Now it is run like a dictatorship shutting out the voices of millions of Americans," he said.

## Memorial Day Deadlines

The Yankton Daily Press & Dakotan will be closed Monday, May 26th, for the Memorial Day holiday.

The following deadlines will apply:

- Out On The Town — 5 p.m., Wednesday, May 21
- Tuesday, May 27 newspaper — 5 p.m., Wednesday, May 21
- Wednesday, May 28 newspaper — 5 p.m., Thursday, May 22
- Thursday, May 29 newspaper — 5 p.m., Friday, May 23

There will be no newspaper on Monday, May 26, 2014.

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