

Tornado Brushes Moore, Oklahoma

OKLAHOMA CITY (AP) — A tornado grazed Oklahoma City and its suburbs Wednesday, threatening rush-hour drivers and prompting schools to hold children in safe rooms until the danger passed.

Forecasters declared a tornado emergency for Moore, where 24 people died in a storm two years ago, but Wednesday's storm lacked the same punch as the 2013 storm. No injuries were reported; television video showed brick facades off some buildings but no widespread destruction.

The Storm Prediction Center had warned that severe storms could hit much of Tornado Alley on Wednesday. Twisters were also reported north of Wichita, Kansas, and along the Kansas-Nebraska border.

Will Rogers World Airport sent several hundred people to a tunnel connecting the terminal with a parking garage as the storm approached. Passengers had to be re-screened because the safety area was outside the security zone, said spokeswoman Karen Carney. Some flights landed as the storm approached, but luggage service was delayed.

National Weather Service meteorologist Angela Pfannkuch said the rural town of Roseland, Nebraska, near Grand Island, was hit at 4:22 p.m. Wednesday. At least 10 to 15 homes in and around the town were damaged, but no injuries had been reported by 6 p.m.

Texas Incident Fuels Concern About ISIS

NEW YORK (AP) — The attempted attack on a provocative cartoon contest in Texas appears to reflect a scenario that has long troubled national security officials: a do-it-yourself terror plot, inspired by the Islamic State extremist group and facilitated through the ease of social media.

Trying to gauge which individuals in the United States pose such threats — and how vigorously they should be monitored — is a daunting challenge for counterterrorism agencies. Some experts caution that a limited number of small-scale attacks are likely to continue.

Michael McCaul, chairman of the House Homeland Security Committee, said federal authorities are aware of "thousands" of potential extremists living in the U.S., only a small portion of whom are under active surveillance.

Concerns have been intensifying since the rise of Islamic State group and were heightened this week after two gunmen were shot dead while trying to attack the event in Garland, Texas, that featured cartoon images of the Prophet Muhammad. One of the men, 31-year-old Elton Simpson of Phoenix, was arrested in 2010 after being the focus of a four-year terror investigation; investigators are trying to determine the extent of any terror-related ties involving him or his accomplice, Nadir Soofi.

At the White House, Press Secretary Josh Earnest said Wednesday that intelligence officials would be investigating Islamic State's claim of responsibility for the incident.

New Evidence: Co-Pilot Practiced Crash

PARIS (AP) — The co-pilot of Germanwings Flight 9525 appears to have practiced sending the jetliner into a deadly descent on another flight, just two hours before he intentionally crashed it into the French Alps, investigators said Wednesday.

The revelation appeared to support the theory that the Germanwings crash was not only deliberate but premeditated. It came in a 30-page interim report from the French accident investigation agency BEA.

Authorities are still puzzling over why Andreas Lubitz, who had suffered from suicidal tendencies and depression in the past, locked the captain out of the cockpit on March 24 and sent the Airbus A320 hurtling into a mountain, killing all 150 people on board.

Lubitz seemed to be toying with the airplane's settings on the earlier flight from Duesseldorf to Barcelona, programming it for a sharp descent multiple times in a 4 1/2-minute period while the pilot was out of the cockpit before resetting the controls, the report said. Unlike the later flight, he did not lock the pilot out of the cockpit.

The plane's "selected altitude" changed repeatedly and several times was set as low as 100 feet (30 meters) above sea level. The report says Lubitz also put the engines on idle, which gives the plane the ability to quickly descend.

Troubles With Israeli Allies Loom Ahead

JERUSALEM (AP) — Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu completed the formation of a new coalition late Wednesday, putting him at the helm of a hard-line government that appears to be set on a collision course with the U.S. and other key allies.

Netanyahu reached a deal with the nationalist Jewish Home party shortly before a midnight deadline, clinching a slim parliamentary majority and averting an embarrassing scenario that would have forced him from office. But with a government dominated by hard-liners that support increased West Bank settlement construction and oppose peace moves with the Palestinians, he could have a hard time rallying international support. Controlling just 61 of 120 parliamentary seats, the narrow coalition could also struggle to press forward with a domestic agenda.

After Netanyahu's Likud Party won March 17 elections with 30 seats, it seemed he would have a relatively easy time forming a coalition and serving a fourth term as prime minister. But the six-week negotiating process, which expired at midnight, turned out to be much more difficult than anticipated as rival coalition partners and members of the Likud jockeyed for influential Cabinet ministries.

"I am sure that nobody is surprised that the negotiations continued with all the factions and nobody is surprised it ended at the time it did," Netanyahu said late Wednesday.

He vowed to install "a strong and stable government for the people of Israel" by next week, yet also hinted he would court additional partners in the near future.

Hillary Clinton challenges Jeb Bush

WASHINGTON (AP) — Hillary Rodham Clinton has injected new fire into the immigration debate with her call to allow people in the country illegally to gain citizenship, challenging a centerpiece of Republican presidential prospect Jeb Bush's likely candidacy.

The elevated focus on immigration shines new light on the growing willingness of Republican presidential contenders — including past opponents of an immigration overhaul in Congress — to let such immigrants stay in the U.S. Such a position is regarded as "amnesty" by the GOP's tea party wing, yet it is quietly becoming the majority view in a 2016 Republican presidential class eager to attract Hispanic voters.

Clinton is just as eager to protect the Democrats' advantage with that key voting bloc. "This will be a defining issue in the election," Clinton campaign manager Robby Mook told CNBC on Wednesday.

The day before, Clinton drew a sharp distinction between herself and the Republicans, like Bush, who support a pathway to legal status that stops short of citizenship.

"When they talk about legal status, that is code for second-class status," Clinton charged.

NFL: Patriots Employees Deflated balls

Tom Brady: Unbelievable. The 243-report on "Deflategate" came out Wednesday and stopped barely short of calling the Patriots star quarterback a cheater. It did, however, call some of his claims "implausible" and left little doubt that he had a role in having footballs deflated before New England's AFC title game against Indianapolis in January and probably in previous games.

In his report, attorney Ted Wells said the quarterback "was at least generally aware" of all the plans to prepare the balls to his liking, below the league-mandated minimum of 12.5 pounds per square inch. Wells said it was "more probable than not" that two Patriots employees — officials' locker room attendant Jim McNally and equipment assistant John Jastremski — executed the plan.

Baltimore Mayor Asks For Federal Civil-Rights Probe Of Police

BY DAVID DISHNEAU
Associated Press

BALTIMORE — Baltimore's mayor was emphatic last week: She did not want federal oversight of her police department.

"Nobody wants the Department of Justice to come in here and take over our city," Stephanie Rawlings-Blake declared as the National Guard enforced a 10 p.m. curfew.

But it was hard to find any opposition Wednesday after she softened her tone and asked the U.S. Justice Department to launch a broad civil rights investigation that could eventually force the city to make changes under the oversight of an outside monitor.

The Democratic mayor now says she'll accept outside intervention to rebuild public trust in a city torn by riots over the death of Freddie Gray, a black man who suffered a fatal spinal injury in police custody.

"I am determined not to allow a small handful of bad actors to tarnish the reputation of the overwhelming majority of police officers who are acting with honor and distinction," she wrote in a letter to the new U.S. attorney general, Loretta Lynch.

The mayor's announcement came the day after her closed-door meeting at City Hall with Lynch, who pledged to improve the police department and told faith and community leaders that "we're here to hold your hands and provide support."

Lynch has received the mayor's request and is considering it, Justice Department spokeswoman Dena Iverson said Wednesday.

"I think that's probably a step in the right direction," Republican Gov. Larry Hogan said.

The city's police union and City Council presi-



KIM HAIRSTON/BALTIMORE SUN/TNS
Baltimore Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake announces that she requested a Department of Justice probe into the Baltimore police department during a news conference on Wednesday in Baltimore.

dent also welcomed the development.

A key figure who didn't immediately respond was Police Commissioner Anthony Batts, brought in from Oakland, California, by the mayor 2 1/2 years ago to reform the department.

The mayor's request could put Batts' leadership under a microscope. A police spokesman had no immediate response to requests for the commissioner's reaction. An email and a text message were not immediately returned.

Baltimore suffered days of unrest after Gray died April 19 after a week in a coma following his arrest.

Protesters threw bottles and bricks at police the night of his funeral on April 27, injuring nearly 100 officers. More than 200 people were

arrested as cars and businesses burned.

Baltimore has already been participating in a voluntary Justice Department review, requested by Rawlings-Blake and Batts last fall. It would enable police to implement reforms without a court order or independent monitor.

But City Council President Jack Young said he's been warning since October that police won't change unless they're forced to.

"The police commissioner could have said, 'Well, now, I don't want to do that,' and he didn't have to do it," Young said. "In my opinion, it was a toothless tiger."

The Justice Department also is investigating whether Gray's civil rights were violated, a much narrower review than what Rawlings-

Blake sought Wednesday.

Meanwhile, six officers face state charges ranging from assault to second-degree murder in Gray's death. At least two of them have filed motions challenging the prosecutor's assertion that Gray was arrested illegally.

The investigation the mayor now wants is a wide-ranging civil-rights probe, examining how police use force, and search and arrest suspects. A similar investigation followed the shooting of an unarmed, 18-year-old black man by a white police officer in Ferguson, Missouri. The department ultimately concluded that Ferguson's police and courts engaged in patterns of racial profiling, bigotry and profit-driven law enforcement, and directed local authorities to make changes. Local authorities still insist they did nothing wrong.

At least 20 police departments have been investigated this way for a variety of suspected systemic misconduct in the past five years, more than twice the number of cases opened in the previous five years, the Justice Department said when it opened the Ferguson inquiry.

Baltimore police union president Gene Ryan said the union also has "issues with many of the current policies and procedures of the department," and pledged to cooperate with any investigation that could lead to improvement in the department and officers' morale.

City Council Member Brandon Scott also welcomed the federal involvement.

"Like they have in most places, they're going to find some things we're doing well, they're going to find some things we're doing not so well, and they're going to have to be stern and hard on our city to correct those," Scott said.

Wright, A Early Casualty Of Rising US House Partisanship

BY DOUGLASS K. DANIEL
AND DAVID WARREN
Associated Press



Wright

DALLAS — As a member of what he called "the people's house" for more than a generation, Texas Democrat Jim Wright was known for his rich oratorical skills in the U.S. House. He never relied on them more than the day in 1989, when he told those who had elected him speaker about two years earlier that he was prepared to resign after being accused of violating ethics rules dozens of times.

The congressman had been fighting such allegations for months, the controversy beginning in his second year as speaker and stretching into his third with no end in sight. At stake was the ignominy of becoming the first speaker in history to be driven out of office in mid-term.

At first Wright cited the support he enjoyed in his Fort Worth-area district and his love for the institution in which he had served for 34 years. He offered only a mea-

ger defense of his actions, quickly turning to questioning his accusers' motives and decrying what he called "this manic idea of a frenzy of feeding on other people's reputation."

His voice broke at times and tears appeared during his speech.

"It is grievously hurtful to our society when vilification becomes an accepted form of political debate, when negative campaigning becomes a full-time occupation, when members of each party become self-appointed vigilantes carrying out personal vendettas against members of the other party," Wright lamented. "In God's name, that's not what this institution is supposed to be about."

In the end, Wright offered to resign to spare the House what he called "distractions" and asked that both sides resolve to "bring this period

of mindless cannibalism to an end."

He was out of office in a week, an early casualty of the rising partisanship within the House and the personal attacks between House members that would mark the chamber for the last quarter-century. Critics would say Wright himself had helped fuel the ill will between the parties by generally ignoring Republicans as he and other Democrats tended to House business.

Wright — who died early Wednesday in Fort Worth at age 92 — was first elected to the House in 1954. He was the Democratic majority leader for a decade, rising to the speakership in January 1987, to replace Tip O'Neill.

Three House speakers had resigned in the nation's history before Wright stepped down. But they served during the 19th century, and none before Wright had been under fire and facing judgment in the House for breaking its ethics rules.

The House Ethics Committee investigated Wright's financial affairs at the prod-

ding of a little-known Georgia congressman, Republican Newt Gingrich, who publicly branded Wright a "crook." The bipartisan committee charged Wright with 69 violations of House rules on reporting of gifts, accepting gifts from people with an interest in legislation, and limits on outside income.

The committee accused Wright of scheming to evade limits on outside earnings by self-publishing a book, "Reflections of a Public Man," he then sold in bulk. He was also accused of improperly accepting \$145,000 in gifts over 10 years from a Fort Worth developer. In response, Wright said he had not violated any House rules and vowed to fight the charges. But his support among fellow Democrats quickly eroded.

House Republicans chose Gingrich as their whip just months before Wright's resignation, and the Georgia congressman later became speaker for four years, beginning in 1995, until his own ethical lapses led to his departure.

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