

Gunmen Storm Into Afghan Guesthouse

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP) — Gunmen stormed a guesthouse in the Afghan capital as it hosted a party for foreigners, and authorities said five people, including an American, were killed during an hourslong siege that ended early Thursday morning. Six people were wounded and 54 hostages rescued.

Kabul Chief of Police Abdul Rahman said the attack began at 8:30 p.m. local time Wednesday, when gunmen opened fire at the restaurant of the Park Palace Hotel. He had no breakdown on the nationalities of the victims, but a U.S. Embassy spokeswoman said an American was among the dead.

Throughout the standoff, sporadic gunfire echoed around the guesthouse in a central neighborhood that is home to United Nations compounds and a foreign-run hospital. At one point two explosions could be heard and four ambulances later arrived to the scene.

Amin Habi, a U.S. citizen from Los Angeles, told The Associated Press that a party was going on at the hotel to honor a Canadian when the gunmen stormed the guesthouse. He said dozens of people, including foreigners and U.S. citizens, were inside the hotel at the time.

U.S. Embassy spokeswoman Monica Cummings said in an email statement that a U.S. citizen was killed in the attack, although she had no further details and did not identify the victim. She said the U.S. Embassy was in close contact with Afghan authorities and was working to obtain more information. "Our thoughts are with the families of the victims," she said.

Bill Ends NSA Phone Record Collection

WASHINGTON (AP) — The House voted by a wide margin Wednesday to end the National Security Agency's bulk collection of Americans' phone records and replace it with a system to search the data held by telephone companies on a case-by-case basis.

The 338-to-88 vote set the stage for a Senate showdown just weeks before the Patriot Act provisions authorizing the program are due to expire.

If the House bill becomes law, it will represent one of the most significant changes stemming from the unauthorized disclosures of former NSA contractor Edward Snowden. But many Senate Republicans don't like the measure, and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell has introduced a separate version that would keep the program as is. Yet, he also faces opposition from within his party and has said he is open to compromise.

President Barack Obama supports the House legislation, known as the USA Freedom Act, which is in line with a proposal he made last March. The House passed a similar bill last year, but it failed in the Senate.

Most House members would rather see the Patriot Act provisions expire altogether than re-authorize NSA bulk collection, said Rep. Adam Schiff, ranking Democrat on the intelligence committee. "I think the Senate is ultimately going to pass something like the USA Freedom Act," he said.

Boston Bomber: Deliberation Begins

BOSTON (AP) — Prosecutors and defense attorneys on Wednesday made their final appeals to the jury that will decide the fate of Dzhokhar Tsarnaev as jurors began deliberating whether the Boston Marathon bomber should get life in prison or the death penalty.

"The choice between these very serious alternatives is yours and yours alone to make," Judge George O'Toole Jr. told the panel.

Jurors got the case late in the day and deliberated for about 45 minutes before going home. They will return to the federal courthouse Thursday to resume their work.

The jury must be unanimous in its decision to impose the death penalty. If even a single member votes against death, Tsarnaev will get life in prison.

Prosecutor Steve Mellin said Tsarnaev wanted to cause his victims as much physical pain as possible to make a political statement.

Yemen's Cease-Fire Under Strain

SANAA, Yemen (AP) — Yemen's humanitarian cease-fire came under significant strain in its first 24 hours Wednesday, disrupted by a Saudi-led coalition airstrike, fighting between rival sides in a strategic province and shelling by coalition warships west of the port city of Aden.

The airstrike in Abyan province was in response to an attempt by the Shiite rebels, known as Houthis, to send a military convoy to reinforce their forces in Aden, according to Yemeni security officials. There were no immediate reports of casualties or damage from the airstrike.

The heaviest violence on the ground was in the southwestern province of Taiz, where the Iranian-backed rebels and their allies — forces loyal to ousted President Ali Abdullah Saleh — have for weeks been fighting forces loyal to the nation's internationally recognized president.

Yemeni officials said the Houthis shelled residential areas in Taiz, a claim supported by an Amnesty International report. The London-based rights group said Wednesday that evidence suggested the Houthis have carried out indiscriminate mortar attacks on civilians and repeatedly targeted medical workers and facilities in Aden.

Also in the south, officials and witnesses said coalition warships deployed off Aden shelled rebel forces that attempted to seize an area west of the city that is home to fuel tanks.

Second Nepal Quake Kills 79 People

KATHMANDU, Nepal (AP) — Many survivors of Nepal's most recent earthquake remain cut off by blocked roads in isolated villages, a U.N. official said Wednesday, after this Himalayan nation suffered through its second major quake in less than three weeks.

The magnitude-7.3 earthquake shook the impoverished country Tuesday, killing at least 79 people and injuring more than 2,300, just as it was beginning to rebuild from a devastating April 25 earthquake.

The most recent quake hit hardest in deeply rural parts of the Himalayan foothills, hammering many villages reached only by hiking trails and causing road-blocking landslides.

"Damaged houses were further damaged or destroyed. Houses and schools building spared before were affected yesterday, roads were damaged," said Jamie McGoldrick, a top U.N. official in Nepal.

Investigators: Amtrak Train In Deadly Wreck Was Going 106 MPH

BY GEOFF MULVIHILL

Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA — The Amtrak train that crashed in Philadelphia, killing at least seven people, was hurtling at 106 mph before it ran off the rails along a sharp curve where the speed limit drops to just 50 mph, federal investigators said Wednesday.

The engineer applied the emergency brakes moments before the crash but managed to slow the train to only 102 mph by the time the locomotive's black box stopped recording data, said Robert Sumwalt of the National Transportation Safety Board. The speed limit just before the bend is 80 mph, he said.

The engineer, whose name was not released, refused to give a statement to law enforcement and left a police precinct with a lawyer, police said. Sumwalt said federal accident investigators want to talk to him but will give him a day or two to recover from the shock of the accident.

"There's no way in the world that he should have been going that fast into the curve," Mayor Michael Nutter told CNN. "Clearly he was reckless and irresponsible in his actions. I don't know what was going on with him, I don't know what was going on in the cab, but there's really no excuse that could be offered."

More than 200 people aboard the Washington-to-New York train were injured in the wreck, which happened in a decayed industrial neighborhood not far from the Delaware River just before 9:30 p.m. Tuesday. Passengers crawled out the windows of the torn and toppled rail cars in the darkness and emerged dazed and bloody, many of them with broken bones and burns.

It was the nation's deadliest train accident in nearly seven years.

"We are heartbroken by what has happened here," Nutter said.

Amtrak suspended all service until further notice along the Philadelphia-to-New York stretch of the nation's busiest rail corridor as investigators examined the wreckage and the tracks and gathered up other evidence. The shutdown snarled the commute and forced thousands to find some other way to reach their destination.

The dead included an Associated Press employee, a midshipman at the U.S. Naval Academy and a Wells Fargo executive. At least 10 people remained hospitalized in critical condition.

Nutter said some people remained unaccounted for but cautioned that some passengers listed on the Amtrak manifest might not have boarded the train, while others might not have been checked in with authorities.

"We will not cease our efforts until we go through every vehicle," the mayor said in the afternoon. He said rescuers expanded the search area and were using dogs to look for victims in case someone was thrown from the wreckage.

The NTSB finding about the train's speed corroborated an AP analysis done earlier in the day of surveillance video from a spot along the tracks. The AP concluded from the footage that the train was speeding at approximately 106 mph moments before it entered the curve.

Despite pressure from Congress and safety regulators, Amtrak had not in-



ALEJANDRO A. ALVAREZ/PHILADELPHIA INQUIRER/TNS

Investigators examine the train derailment site on Wednesday after a northbound Amtrak train crashed in the Port Richmond area of Philadelphia Tuesday night.

stalled along that section of track Positive Train Control, a technology that uses GPS, wireless radio and computers to prevent trains from going over the speed limit. Most of Amtrak's Northeast Corridor is equipped with Positive Train Control.

"Based on what we know right now, we feel that had such a system been installed in this section of track, this accident would not have occurred," Sumwalt said.

The notoriously tight curve is not far from the site of one of the deadliest train wrecks in U.S. history: the 1943 derailment of the Congressional Limited, bound from Washington to New York. Seventy-nine people

were killed.

Amtrak inspected the stretch of track on Tuesday, just hours before the accident, and found no defects, according to the Federal Railroad Administration. In addition to the data recorder, the train had a video camera in its front end that could yield clues to what happened, Sumwalt said.

As for the engineer, Sumwalt said: "This person has gone through a very traumatic event and we want to give him an opportunity to convalesce for a day or so before we interview him. But that is certainly a high priority for us, to interview the train crew."

The crash took place

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