

WH Defends Ferguson No-Fly Zone

WASHINGTON (AP) — The White House said Monday a no-fly zone the U.S. government imposed over Ferguson, Missouri, for nearly two weeks in August should not have restricted helicopters for news organizations that wanted to operate in the area to cover violent protests there.

Audio recordings obtained by The Associated Press showed the Federal Aviation Administration working with local authorities to define a 37-square-mile flight restriction so that only police helicopters and commercial flights could fly through the area, following demonstrations over the shooting death of 18-year-old Michael Brown.

The Obama administration's defense of its actions centered on a provision of obscure federal regulations intended to allow press flights as long as they meet certain conditions. White House spokesman Josh Earnest sidestepped questions about conversations on the tapes showing police working with the FAA to keep media away.

"In this case, what the FAA says is that they took the prudent step of implementing the temporary flight restriction in the immediate aftermath of reports of shots fired at a police helicopter, but within 12 to 14 hours, that flight restriction was updated in a way to remove restrictions for reporters who were seeking to operate in the area," Earnest said.

On the tapes, an FAA manager is heard assuring a St. Louis County Police Department official that the updated restrictions would allow planes to land at nearby Lambert-St. Louis International Airport but, "It will still keep news people out. ... The only way people will get in there is if they give them permission in there anyway so ... it still keeps all of them out."

Gulf Arab Allies Considering Alliance

CAIRO (AP) — Egypt, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Kuwait are discussing the creation of a military pact to take on Islamic militants, with the possibility of a joint force to intervene around the Middle East, The Associated Press has learned.

The alliance would also serve as a show of strength to counterbalance their traditional rival, Shiite-dominated, Iran. Two countries are seen as potential theaters for the alliance to act, senior Egyptian military officials said: Libya, where Islamic militants have taken over several cities, and Yemen, where Shiite rebels suspected of links to Iran have seized control of the capital.

The discussions reflect a new assertiveness among the Middle East's Sunni powerhouses, whose governments — after three years of post-Arab Spring turmoil in the region — have increasingly come to see Sunni Islamic militants and Islamist political movements as a threat.

The U.S. Arab allies' consideration of a joint force illustrates a desire to go beyond the international coalition that the United States has put together to wage an air campaign against the Islamic State group in Iraq and Syria. Saudi Arabia and the UAE have participated in those strikes in Syria. The officials said the alliance under consideration was not intended to intervene in Iraq or Syria but to act separately to address other extremist hot spots.

Three Egyptian military officials discussed details of the talks and a fourth confirmed their comments.

Court Has Questions In Passport Case

WASHINGTON (AP) — Middle Eastern politics infused the Supreme Court's arguments Monday over a disputed law that would allow Americans born in Jerusalem to list their birthplace as Israel on their U.S. passports.

The justices appeared divided over whether the law should be struck down as unconstitutional, as the Obama administration wants, or put into effect as a result of a lawsuit filed by the parents of Jerusalem-born Menachem Zivotofsky.

Twelve-year-old Menachem, a baby when the case began in 2003, and his parents sat through the hour-long argument that saw justices wrestle with questions of the president's primacy in matters of foreign affairs and the effect the court's eventual decision could have on simmering tensions between Israelis and Palestinians.

Justice Elena Kagan called Jerusalem a "tinderbox" at the moment and said the outcome of the case would be watched closely. "History suggests that everything is a big deal with respect to the status of Jerusalem," Kagan said.

On the other side, Justice Antonin Scalia said of the law, "If it is within Congress' power, what difference does it make whether it antagonizes foreign countries?"

Resurrection: World Trade Center Opens

NEW YORK (AP) — Thirteen years after the 9/11 terrorist attack, the resurrected World Trade Center has opened for business — marking an emotional milestone for both New Yorkers and the nation.

Some staffers of publishing giant Conde Nast began working at 1 World Trade Center on Monday. The 104-story, \$3.9 billion skyscraper dominates the Manhattan skyline. The publishing giant becomes the first commercial tenant in America's tallest building.

It's the centerpiece of the 16-acre site where the decimated twin towers once stood and where more than 2,700 people died on Sept. 11, 2001, buried under smoking mounds of fiery debris.

"The New York City skyline is whole again, as 1 World Trade Center takes its place in Lower Manhattan," said Patrick Foye, executive director of the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, which owns both the building and the World Trade Center site.

The agency began moving into neighboring 4 World Trade Center last week.

ISIS Slaughters More Families In Iraq

BAGHDAD (AP) — Islamic State group militants shot and killed 36 Sunni tribesmen, women and children in public Monday, an Iraqi official and a tribal leader said, pushing the total number of members slain by the extremists in recent days to more than 200.

Sheik Naim al-Gaoud, a senior figure in the Al Bu Nimr tribe, said the militant group killed 29 men, four women and three children, lining them up in the village of Ras al-Maa, north of Ramadi in Anbar province.

The tribal leader said that 120 families were still trapped there.

"These massacres will be repeated in the coming days unless the government and its security forces help the trapped people," al-Gaoud said.

An official with the Anbar governor's office corroborated the account of Monday's killings. He spoke on condition of anonymity as he was not authorized to brief journalists.

Decision 2014

Midterm Elections Carry High Stakes For Economy

BY JOSH BOAK
AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON — The midterm slught for control of the U.S. Senate could have far-reaching effects on the economy.

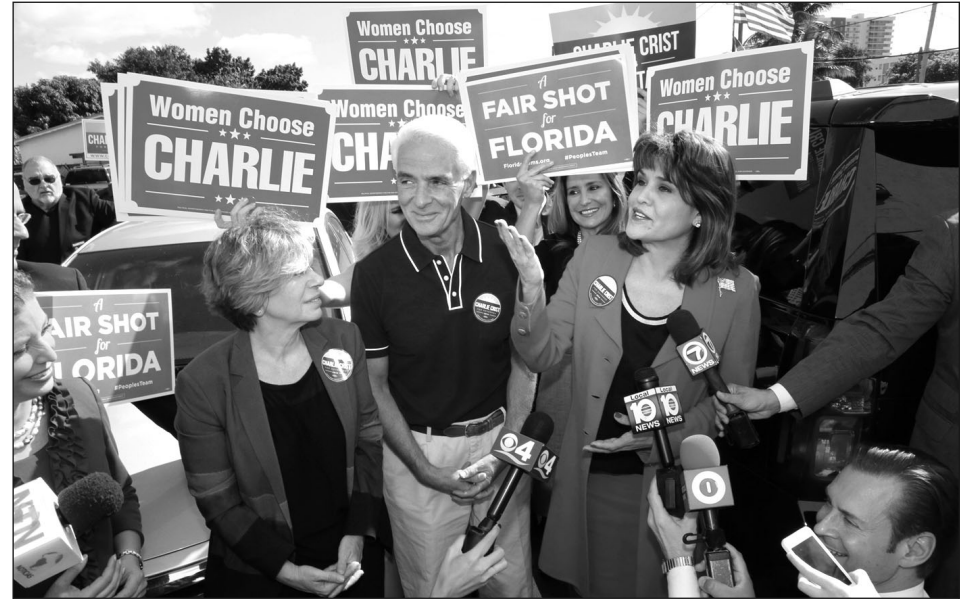
Tuesday's elections come just as U.S. growth has been showing consistent improvement, thanks in part to a congressional truce on budget fights. Previous such fights shut down the government and raised the specter of a default on the federal debt. A repeat of either could quickly damage the economic recovery.

If Democrats retain control of the Senate, the cease-fire may hold, analysts say. But it's possible it could dissolve with a takeover that gives Republicans control of both chambers and potentially emboldens them to intensify conflicts with a lame-duck Democratic White House.

Republicans already control the House and are expected to maintain and even expand their majority in that chamber.

Addressing the prospect of Republican leadership in both chambers, Jack Ablin, chief investment officer at BMO Private Bank, said, "My sense is it will only harden the tension that's in place."

On the other hand, Republican control would also raise the likelihood of other actions that could ultimately benefit the economy. Once in control, for example, Republicans could accept gridlock and pursue smaller deals on tax reform or trade authority with President Barack Obama. These deals could



JOSE A. IGLESIAS/EL NUEVO HERALD/MCT
Annette Taddeo, right, speaks to supporters during a rally for Gov. Charlie Crist at the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Hall Monday in Miami.

potentially benefit the economy in the long run, analysts note.

One possibility would be that a Republican majority would authorize Obama to complete trade negotiations for the Trans-Pacific Partnership to expand overseas markets for American-made products, which could help exports, said Corey Boles, a senior analyst with the Eurasia Group, a consulting firm.

Boles noted that tax reform "faces long odds in any Congress" but has a better chance of reaching Obama's desk with a Republican Senate than with the currently divided Congress. Proposals to lower corporate tax rates, for instance, and allow companies to bring back profits from abroad without incurring significant taxes could

fuel growth, its supporters say.

Still, it remains unclear how Republicans would steer the Senate. Few campaigns have outlined detailed policy agendas. The result, given the unknowns, is a troubling set of uncertainties for an economy still hobbled in some ways by the resolutions from previous showdowns.

The settlements brokered to end budget clashes in 2011 and 2013 did manage to cut the budget deficit. Yet they subtracted from growth for the past three years, according to Commerce Department figures.

Coupled with the end of stimulus spending from the Great Recession, the automatic spending cuts agreed to three years ago caused

government spending to fall relative to the economy. That was followed in 2013 by higher tax rates, which also slowed growth.

The economic drag from these deals is likely to fade in 2015 and beyond if the current truce holds.

"We're slowly moving away from contracting to stability," said Kevin Logan, chief U.S. economist at the bank HSBC.

Regardless of what happens, Eurasia Group analyst Boles said voters shouldn't expect the midterms to push Congress into action.

"It will be same personalities in charge of the chambers and a president who is disconnected from domestic policy," he said. "We don't expect a lot to get done."

Russia Boycotts Nuclear Meeting In Vienna

BY GEORGE JAHN AND DEB RIECHMANN
Associated Press

VIENNA — Russia has failed to show up at meeting planning the 2016 Nuclear Security Summit, U.S. and European officials said Monday, in a potentially serious blow to efforts by President Barack Obama to cement his legacy as leaving the world safer from nuclear terrorism than when he took office.

The officials said it was not immediately clear whether Russia's absence meant that Moscow meant to boycott the summit itself or if it was a temporary show of displeasure over Washington's harsh condemnation of Moscow's role in Ukraine unrest and its lead in orchestrating Western sanctions and other punitive measures in response.

But even if short-term, Russia's no-show is significant. Only three or four planning meetings are scheduled before the spring of 2016, when the summit is tentatively set to open. With Russia a key global player — and one of the world's five formally recognized nuclear powers — its input is crucial to setting an agenda.

The U.S. president initiated a string of summits in 2010 aimed at preventing terrorists from getting their hands on weapons-grade nuclear material. Since then, the number of countries that have enough ma-

terial to build a nuclear weapon has fallen from 39 to 25.

At the last summit this year in The Hague, 35 countries pledged to turn international guidelines on nuclear security into national laws and open up their procedures for protecting nuclear installations to independent scrutiny. The summit also featured new reduction commitments, with Japan, Italy and Belgium agreeing to cut their stocks of highly enriched uranium and plutonium.

At the same time, there were setbacks. Russia was notably absent from the 35-nation agreement, along with China, India and Pakistan, all nations with nuclear weapons.

The officials, who demanded anonymity because their information was confidential, said that with the exception of Russia, all of the 54 countries that participated in this year's March summit attended the preparatory meeting in Washington.

Patrick Ventrell, a spokesman for the National Security Council at the White House said the U.S. regretted the Russian decision not to attend.

"As far as the U.S. is concerned, the door remains open to their joining future such meetings," he told The Associated Press. Asked if the Russian absence meant a boycott of the summit, Ventrell said "you would have to ask them."

Many Questions Still Unanswered In Spaceship Crash

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Federal accident investigators have an early sense of what went wrong before an experimental spaceship designed to ferry tourists beyond the Earth's atmosphere broke apart during a test flight. But they still don't know why the craft prematurely shifted its shape prior to the deadly crash.

And another question looms: How far will the accident push back the day when paying customers can routinely rocket dozens of miles into the sky for a fleeting feel of weightlessness and a breathtaking view?

A team from the National Transportation Safety Board kept working Monday at the Mojave Desert crash site where Virgin Galactic's SpaceShipTwo fell to the ground. The accident killed the co-pilot and badly injured the pilot who parachuted out of the ship Friday.

Late Sunday, acting NTSB Chairman Christopher Hart said cockpit video showed that the co-pilot unlocked SpaceShipTwo's unique "feathering" system earlier than planned. The system works somewhat like the wing flaps that airplanes use to slow for landing — except that SpaceShipTwo's twin tails rotate up at a far more extreme angle, to a position that creates strong resistance and slows the descent.

But while the co-pilot unlocked the system before planned, that action alone should not have been enough to change the craft's configuration. Activating the feathering system requires the pulling of a lever, not unlike a gun fires only when the trigger is pulled, not just because the safety has been disengaged.

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