

Putin Vows To Punish Those Who Bombed Jet

MOSCOW (AP) — A somber President Vladimir Putin vowed to hunt down and punish those responsible for a bomb that brought down a Russian passenger jet last month, “wherever they are hiding.” Intensified Russian airstrikes Tuesday hit the Islamic State group’s stronghold in Syria that also is being pounded by the French military.

Russia’s FSB security service confirmed for the first time that a homemade bomb caused the Oct. 31 crash of the Metrojet Airbus 321-200 in Egypt’s Sinai Desert and killed all 224 people aboard in what it called “a terrorist act.” The Islamic state had already claimed responsibility, saying it was punishing Moscow for its air campaign in Syria.

With Russia striking IS targets in reprisal for the Metrojet downing, France hitting militants in response to the attacks on civilians in Paris last week and the ongoing U.S.-led coalition bombings, the extremists were facing a stepped-up assault from at least three military powers. But the Kremlin said it was too soon to call it a de facto alliance.

Putin heard the report on the Metrojet bombing at a late-night meeting of his security advisers in the Kremlin that was shown on national television. He and his advisers stood for moment of silence for those who died on the plane, mostly Russian vacationers flying from the Red Sea resort of Sharm el-Sheikh to St. Petersburg.

An unusually subdued Putin called it “one of the bloodiest crimes,” and promised retribution for “the murder of our people in Sinai.”

Republicans Rush To Shut Borders

WASHINGTON (AP) — Republicans urged an immediate closure of America’s borders to Syrian refugees Tuesday, drawing angry denunciations from some Democrats and igniting an emotional debate about U.S. values in the wake of the deadly Paris terror attacks.

“Pause” was the word used by both new House Speaker Paul Ryan of Wisconsin and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell of Kentucky, urging at least a temporary halt in the resettlement of Syrians and disputing Obama administration claims that the small numbers making their way here so far are being thoroughly investigated.

The administration showed no sign of backing off its plans to bring an additional 10,000 Syrian refugees to the U.S. and mounted a hasty defense of its vetting process, which Attorney General Loretta Lynch assured Congress is “robust.”

Homeland Security Secretary Jeh Johnson, who briefed House members Tuesday night, said, “It’s important to me that the vetting that is conducted is thorough, it’s careful.”

Yet there were signs that Democratic allies might abandon the White House on the issue. Chuck Schumer of New York, the third-ranking Senate Democrat, broke with most in his party and told reporters that a pause in accepting Syrian refugees “may be necessary.”

France, England Soccer Teams Unite

LONDON (AP) — Uniting in a symbol of defiance and respect, players and fans of the French and English soccer teams delivered a moving display of solidarity at Wembley Stadium at a friendly staged four days after the deadly attacks in Paris.

A touching pre-game ceremony saw England and France supporters sing the French national anthem as one, before the squads came together around the center circle to observe impeccably a minute’s silence in honor of the 129 people killed.

Social media was awash with praise for the dignified way a sensitive occasion was handled. Wembley’s iconic arch was lit up in the blue, white, and red of the French flag, while the French motto “Liberte, Egalite, Fraternite” was projected on the front of the national stadium.

England won 2-0, but rarely has the result of a soccer match — particularly one this prestigious — felt so irrelevant.

“This will be shown round the world and will show unity,” said England captain Wayne Rooney, one of the team’s goal-scorers. “Football is a global game and it is not about religion or race. We need to stand tall together in these tough times.”

Jindal Ends Bid For GOP Nomination

BATON ROUGE, La. (AP) — Louisiana Gov. Bobby Jindal dropped out of the 2016 race for president Tuesday, ending a campaign that failed to gain much support among Republicans sifting through a long list of contenders for the GOP nomination.

“I’ve come to the realization that this is not my time,” Jindal said on Fox News Channel as he announced the decision to suspend his campaign.

The 44-year-old governor said he wasn’t ready to endorse another candidate, but intended to support the eventual Republican presidential nominee.

Term-limited and out of office in January, Jindal said he will work with a think tank he started a few years ago, called America Next, to devise what he called “a blueprint for making this the American century.”

“Going forward, I believe we have to be the party of growth and we can never stop being the party that believes in opportunity. We cannot settle for the left’s view of envy and division,” Jindal said in a statement.

Adviser Acknowledges Carson Struggling

Some advisers to Republican presidential candidate Ben Carson say he is struggling to grasp the complexities of foreign policy, his closest confidant said Tuesday, acknowledging their frustration while adding the political newcomer is making progress.

“I’d say he’s 75 percent of the way there,” said Armstrong Williams, Carson’s longtime business manager. “The world is a complex place, and he wants to get it right.”

A story published Tuesday by The New York Times quoted one of Carson’s advisers as saying the retired neurosurgeon, who is making his first run for public office, is having trouble understanding foreign policy despite intense briefings on the subject.

“Nobody has been able to sit down with him and have him get one iota of intelligent information about the Middle East,” Duane R. Clarridge, a former CIA official, told the newspaper. Clarridge added that Carson needs weekly conference calls to brief him on foreign policy, so “we can make him smart.”

The Carson campaign reacted swiftly to the Times’ story, casting Clarridge in a statement as “an elderly gentleman” who isn’t part of Carson’s inner circle.

Police Shooting Vids Won’t Be Released

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — State investigators looking into the fatal shooting of a black Minneapolis man by police during a scuffle have several partial videos of the incident but won’t release them at this time, despite demands from protesters, an official said Tuesday.

Jamar O’Neal Clark, 24, died Monday evening, a day after he was shot by police during an early-morning dispute, the state Bureau of Criminal Apprehension said Tuesday.

Some witnesses said Clark was handcuffed when he was shot. Police initially said he was not handcuffed, but authorities later said handcuffs were at the scene and they were trying to determine whether Clark was restrained. His death sparked protests including one Monday night in which hundreds of people blocked traffic on an interstate highway, leading to 42 arrests.

The BCA is investigating the case, but Mayor Betsy Hodges has requested a federal civil rights investigation. That satisfied one of the protesters’ demands, but investigators haven’t met two others: the release of any video and the identities of the officers involved.

French Hunt 2nd Fugitive, Launch New Airstrikes On IS

BY LORI HINNANT
AND JAMEY KEATEN
Associated Press

PARIS — French police hunted Tuesday for a second terrorist believed to have escaped after the bomb and gun massacres in Paris, while a U.S. official revealed that the suspected mastermind was part of an Islamic State cell that American intelligence agencies had been tracking for months.

Meanwhile, France and Russia unleashed a new wave of airstrikes against IS targets in Syria, while fears of further terror attacks deepened in Paris and beyond. The Eiffel Tower closed to the public just a day after it had reopened and a soccer match between Germany and the Netherlands was canceled due to a bomb threat just 90 minutes before kickoff.

Islamic State militants have claimed responsibility for the Friday the 13th attacks that targeted France’s national soccer stadium, a packed concert hall and popular restaurants and cafes in one of Paris’ trendiest neighborhoods, killing 129 people and wounding more than 350.

French authorities had previously said that at least eight people were directly involved in the bloodshed Friday: seven who died in the attacks and one who got away and slipped across the border to Belgium. However, there have been gaps in officials’ public statements, which have never fully disclosed how many attackers took part in the deadly rampage.

On Tuesday, officials told The Associated Press they now believe at least one other attacker was involved and they were working to identify and track down that suspect. Three officials spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to provide details about the ongoing investigation.

Surveillance video obtained by the AP also indicated that a team of three attackers carried out the shootings at one of the cafes. The video was among evidence authorities used in concluding that at least one other attacker was at large, the French officials indicated.

The brief clip shows two black-clad gunmen with automatic weapons calmly firing on the bar then returning toward a waiting car, whose driver was maneuvering behind them. Authorities believe the car is the same black Spanish-made SEAT vehicle that was found Saturday with three Kalashnikovs inside.



CAROLYN COLE/LOS ANGELES TIMES/TNS
A police officer stands guard at one of the entrances to the Presidential Palace where U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry was meeting with French President Francois Hollande on Tuesday.

Previously officials had not specified how many people were involved in the attack on a sidewalk bar on La Fontaine au Roi street, as well as the other night spots in the same vicinity.

Investigators have identified 27-year-old Abdelhamid Abaaoud, a Belgian of Moroccan descent, as the chief architect of the attacks. He is believed to be in Islamic State-held territory in Syria.

A U.S. official briefed on intelligence matters said Abaaoud was a key figure in an Islamic State external operations cell that U.S. intelligence agencies have been tracking for many months.

Analysts have been debating to what extent the Islamic State group was devoting resources to external terrorist attacks, versus seeking to hold onto the territory it has seized in Iraq and Syria. A consensus is now emerging that the group is more focused on exporting terror than had been widely understood.

U.S. intelligence agencies have some insights into who is involved in that effort, said the official, who was not authorized to discuss the matter publicly and spoke on condition of anonymity. But their understanding is hampered by the many challenges of gathering intelligence in Syria, where the CIA does not have a regular presence on the ground.

The chairman of the Senate intelligence committee said Tuesday that it was likely militants plotting the attacks in Syria, Belgium and France

used encryption to hide their communications from authorities. Sen. Richard Burr, R-North Carolina, said there was no direct evidence of encryption, but that authorities had concluded it was used because they have uncovered no evidence of conversations among the plotters.

The statement acknowledges the challenges intelligence agencies face in monitoring records of international phone traffic.

Speaking to reporters after a classified intelligence briefing, Burr also said there is a “strong likelihood” the Paris attacks were directed, rather than just inspired, by the Islamic State group in Syria.

The comments were the strongest public attribution yet by American officials. CIA director John Brennan said Monday the attack bore “the hallmarks of terrorism carried out” by the Islamic State group.

The U.S. Joint Special Operations Command has been carrying out targeted strikes for about a year against senior Islamic State militants in Syria, in cooperation with the CIA and other agencies.

On Tuesday, 10 French fighter jets attacked Islamic State targets in a new wave of airstrikes, French Defense Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian said. Speaking on TF1 TV, he said France will have 36 warplanes in the region capable of carrying out airstrikes on IS targets once the Charles de Gaulle aircraft carrier reaches the zone.

NATO allies were shar-

ing intelligence and working closely with France, NATO chief Jens Stoltenberg said.

In Moscow, Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered the missile cruiser Moskva, currently in the Mediterranean, to start cooperating with the French military on operations in Syria. His order came as Russian warplanes fired cruise missiles on militant positions in Syria’s Idlib and Aleppo provinces. IS militants have positions in Aleppo province, while the al-Qaida-linked Nusra militant group is in Idlib.

Moscow has vowed to hunt down those responsible for blowing up a Russian passenger plane over Egypt last month, killing 224 people, mostly Russian tourists. IS militants have also claimed responsibility for that Oct. 31 attack.

Meanwhile, U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry met with French President Francois Hollande and Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius. Standing next to Hollande at the Elysee Palace on Tuesday, Kerry said the carnage in Paris, along with recent attacks in Egypt, Lebanon and Turkey, made it clear that more pressure must be brought to bear on Islamic State extremists.

A cease-fire between Syria’s government and the opposition could be just weeks away, Kerry said, describing it as potentially a “gigantic step” toward deeper international cooperation against IS.

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