

Saudi Arabia Will Host Conference To Unite Syrian Opposition

BY EDITH M. LEDERER
Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS — Saudi Arabia will host a conference in mid-December to try to unite the Syrian opposition ahead of new peace talks, a key issue in stepped up efforts to end the nearly five-year civil war, the country's U.N. ambassador said Thursday.

Saudi Ambassador Abdullah Al-Moualimi said his country will be trying to bring different strands of the opposition "together for a united voice."

Last Saturday, foreign ministers from about 20 nations agreed in Vienna to an ambitious yet incomplete plan that sets a Jan. 1 deadline for the start of negotiations between Syrian President Bashar Assad's government and opposition groups. Within six months, the negotiations are to establish a "credible, inclusive and non-sectarian" transitional government that would set a schedule for drafting a new constitution and holding a free and fair U.N.-supervised election within 18 months.

Neither the Syrian government nor opposition groups were present at the talks, which brought together the main foreign backers of both sides.

Staffan de Mistura, the U.N. special envoy for Syria who represented the United Nations at the Vienna talks, told reporters after briefing the General Assembly behind closed-doors that a national cease-fire in Syria is now more likely because the countries participating in



AP PHOTO/BEBETO MATTHEWS

U.N. Special Envoy for Syria Staffan de Mistura gestures as he speaks during a news conference, Thursday at U.N. headquarters. De Mistura told reporters after a closed-door meeting of the General Assembly that a national cease-fire in Syria is now more likely because the countries participating in two rounds of talks in Vienna "have an interest in a cease-fire."

two rounds of talks in Vienna "have an interest in seeing a cease-fire taking place."

In Vienna, the foreign ministers failed to reach consensus on which groups other than the Islamic State and al-Qaida affiliates would not be eligible to be part of a cease-fire. Jordan was chosen to oversee a process that would identify which groups should be considered for identification as terrorists.

Al-Moualimi said de Mistura told the General Assembly that Jordan will hold a meeting in mid-December

that will focus on defining which groups are part of the opposition and which groups are going to be considered terrorists.

De Mistura said the Vienna participants want "as large as possible a cease-fire" and that the foreign ministers agreed to disagree about a number of issues — including about the future of Assad, whose departure is a key opposition demand for participating in new talks.

He said the opposition should look at the package that the ministers did support which calls for a

transitional governing body for Syria with full executive powers, a new constitution and elections that go beyond parliament.

The war in Syria has killed more than 250,000 people, left 11 million uprooted from their homes, and allowed Islamic State militants to carve out significant parts of Syria and Iraq for their would-be caliphate. Europe and Syria's neighbors, meanwhile, are struggling to cope with the worst migrant crisis since World War II.

House Votes To Curb Syrian Refugees

WASHINGTON (AP) — Responding swiftly to the terror in Paris, the U.S. House voted overwhelmingly Thursday to erect high hurdles for Syrian and Iraqi refugees coming to American shores, dividing the president's own party as lawmakers reflected the anxiety of voters back home.

The vote was 289-137, enough to override a threatened White House veto of the legislation, which was hurriedly drafted in response to the carnage in the streets of Paris. Forty-seven Democrats voted for the bill, despite President Barack Obama's biting criticism of its proposed limits.

The bill would require new FBI background checks and individual sign-offs from three high-ranking U.S. officials before any refugee could come to the U.S. from Iraq or Syria, where the Islamic State group that has claimed credit for the attacks has flourished.

Republicans said it was simply prudent to place new controls on the refugee system, without ending it entirely or requiring religious tests as some in the GOP, including presidential candidates, have demanded.

"This is an urgent matter and that is why we're dealing with this urgently," declared new House Speaker Paul Ryan of Wisconsin. "It just is common sense that we pause, re-evaluate and make sure that we have the proper standards in place to make sure something like what happened in Paris doesn't happen here."

Cell Phone Led To Paris Attacks Ringleader

PARIS (AP) — French investigators tracked down the alleged ringleader of last week's Paris bloodshed after receiving a startling tipoff: The Islamic militant wasn't in Syria but in Europe, plotting yet another attack. A discarded cellphone found near a bloodied concert hall led them to his cousin, and then to a suburban Paris apartment where both died in a hail of bullets and explosions.

As a manhunt intensified Thursday for a fugitive connected to the carnage, details emerged about the intelligence operation that allowed authorities to zero in on Abdelhamid Abaaoud, the Belgian-Moroccan extremist they say orchestrated the attacks in Paris and four plots thwarted earlier this year.

The narrative provided by French officials raised questions about how a wanted militant suspected of involvement in multiple plots could slip into Europe undetected.

Investigators quickly identified Abaaoud as the architect of the deadly attacks in Paris, but they believed he had coordinated the assaults against a soccer stadium, cafes and a rock concert from the battlefields of Syria.

That situation changed profoundly on Monday, when France received a tip from a non-European country that Abaaoud had slipped into Europe through Greece, Interior Minister Bernard Cazeneuve said.

Study Finds More Mexicans Leaving US

SAN DIEGO (AP) — More Mexicans are leaving than moving into the United States, reversing the flow of a half-century of mass migration, according to a study published Thursday.

The Pew Research Center found that slightly more than 1 million Mexicans and their families, including American-born children, left the U.S. for Mexico from 2009 to 2014. During the same five years, 870,000 Mexicans came to the U.S., resulting in a net flow to Mexico of 140,000.

The desire to reunite families is the main reason more Mexicans are moving south than north, Pew found. The sluggish U.S. economic recovery and tougher border enforcement are other key factors.

The era of mass migration from Mexico is "at an end," declared Mark Hugo Lopez, Pew's director of Hispanic research.

The finding follows a Pew study in 2012 that found net migration between the two countries was near zero, so this represents a turning point in one of the largest mass migrations in U.S. history. More than 16 million Mexicans moved to the United States from 1965 to 2015, more than from any other country.

Ex-Subway Pitchman Sentenced To Prison

INDIANAPOLIS (AP) — Jared Fogle emerged from obscurity to become the unlikely face of one of the nation's biggest restaurant chains, earning a small fortune by touting the benefits of a healthy lifestyle that included Subway sandwiches.

But his wholesome public image was only that, and on Thursday he was sentenced to more than 15 years in prison for trading in child pornography and having sex with underage prostitutes.

Fogle, 38, sought leniency, apologizing to his victims and telling the court in a tearful statement that he was raised with good values by a good family, but succumbed to self-centered "deception and lies." He said he wished he had realized long ago that he had a problem.

"I had become dependent on alcohol, pornography and prostitutes," he told the judge. "... I want to redeem my life. I want to become a good, decent person. I want to rebuild my life."

Judge Tanya Walton Pratt wasn't swayed, though, and gave him a harsher sentence than the 12½ years that prosecutors had sought. She also ordered him to submit to a lifetime of post-prison supervision and fined him \$175,000.

Palestinian Attacks In Tel Aviv, West Bank

JERUSALEM (AP) — A pair of stabbing and shooting attacks carried out by Palestinians killed three Israelis, a Palestinian and an American teenager on Thursday in one of the deadliest days in a recent outburst of Israeli-Palestinian violence.

The attacks are part of a wave of violence that erupted in mid-September over tensions surrounding a Jerusalem holy site sacred to Jews and Muslims. Palestinians accuse Israel of plotting to take over the hilltop compound known to Jews as the Temple Mount and to Muslims as the Noble Sanctuary, something Israel denies.

The Palestinians say the violence is rooted in frustration at decades of living under Israeli occupation. Israel accuses Palestinian leaders of inciting the unrest.

Costa Rica Says Regional Bloc To Consider Cuban Migrants

BY LUIS MANUEL GALEANO
Associated Press

MANAGUA, Nicaragua — A Central American regional bloc will take up the issue of some 2,000 Cuban migrants denied entry by Nicaragua on their way to the United States, Costa Rican authorities said Thursday, in a case that has ramped up diplomatic tensions between the two countries.

Foreign Ministers of SICA nations are expected to meet Tuesday in the capital of El Salvador, where the bloc is headquartered, and will consider the issue as a humanitarian rather than a security concern, Costa Rican officials said.

"The countries have reacted in a positive and supportive way," Foreign Minister Manuel Gonzalez said. "They have understood that the humanitarian aspect is at stake and should be tackled, comprehensively, by the entire region."

Earlier in the day, Nicaragua accused Costa Rica of attempting to avoid discussion of the issue at SICA. Nicaraguan government spokeswoman Rosario Murillo, who is the wife of President Daniel Ortega, read a statement saying Costa Rica had tried to "systematically block" Nicaragua's request.

Nicaragua's foreign minister, Samuel Santos, said Costa Rica never warned his country more than 1,900 Cubans were about to show up at the border, where they have been stuck for several days. He said that was why they were denied entry.

"Not a single letter did we receive about that," Santos said.

Nicaragua closed its southwestern border with Costa Rica at Penas Blancas on Sunday and soldiers forcefully pushed the Cubans back from the frontier, hours after Costa Rica issued humanitarian transit visas to the migrants.

The Cubans say they do not want to

stay in Central America but rather are trying to reach the United States.

The Caribbean island nation has seen a large uptick in the number of its people heading for the United States in the months since Washington and Havana announced a partial detente and re-established formal diplomatic relations.

Many would-be Cuban migrants fear the thaw could bring an end to unique U.S. rules that let nearly all islanders who reach American soil stay in the United States. U.S. officials say no change is currently in the works.

The government of Nicaragua, a close ally of Cuba, has echoed Havana's accusations that U.S. migratory policy for Cubans is to blame for the flow.

On Tuesday, Costa Rica proposed the creation of a "humanitarian corridor" to facilitate Cuban migrants' travel through the region toward the U.S.-Mexico border.

Australian Whale-Watcher Body's Recovered

VANCOUVER, British Columbia (AP) — The body of an Australian man missing since a whale-watching boat capsized last month was recovered off Canada's Pacific Coast, the British Columbia Coroners Service said Thursday.

Raveshan Morgan Pillay, 27, was listed missing after the Leviathan II boat was hit by a wave and capsized on Oct. 25 off Vancouver Island.

The coroner said surfers found Pillay's body on the beach of Vargas Island on Wednesday evening.

The boat capsized about eight nautical miles (14.7 kilometers) off Tofino, a popular destination for whale watchers that is at the very tip of a peninsula some 200 miles (320 kilometers) northwest of Victoria, the capital of British Columbia.

Tofino Mayor Josie Osborne said Pillay's family travelled from Sydney to Tofino after the accident, but returned back to Australia last

week.

Pillay's family told the Tofino and surrounding communities that had they experienced "kindness after kindness" in a thank you letter published in the local newspaper after their departure.

"Every shop we walked into was welcoming, every person we spoke with so kind," said the letter addressed to the communities of Tofino, Ahousaht and Tla-o-qui-aht.

"Nobody is to blame. We lost our son, but we only lost his physical body. His spirit is here. And we gained a family, friends, a community. We will be back."

The letter included a long list of thank-yous and was printed on Nov. 11 in the *West-erly News*.

Pillay's girlfriend and her family were also on board the vessel when it capsized, and his girlfriend's father was among the six people confirmed dead.

The victims, two of whom were British nationals living in Canada, were identified as David Thomas, 50, and his 18-year-old son Stephen, from Swindon in southern England; Katie Taylor, 29, of Whistler, British Columbia; Nigel Francis Hooker, 63, of Southampton, England, and Jack Slater, 76, of Toronto.

Officials said the passengers were sightseeing on one side of the upper deck when a wave hit from the opposite side, flipping the boat, tossing 27 tourists and crew into the water.

The Coroners Service, Transportation Safety Board and Royal Canadian Mounted Police were continuing to investigate the cause of the incident, reviewing the weather, wreckage and maintenance history of the 20-meter (65-foot) boat.

Life jackets were not required on the vessel and it appeared the tourists were not wearing them at the time,

an initial coroner's investigation found.

A senior employee of Jamie's Whaling Station, the company operating the boat, said the vessel sank so quickly the crew didn't have time to issue a mayday call. The crew shot flares from the water which attracted the attention of local aboriginal fishermen who rushed to help rescue people, said Corene Inouye, the company's director of operations.

Argentine Presidential Campaigns Spar Over Pope's Comments

BY PAUL BYRNE
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Associated Press

HUACALERA, Argentina — Argentina's presidential campaigns sparred Thursday over just whom the country's most famous son is supporting.

Marcos Pena, campaign chairman for opposition candidate Mauricio Macri,

criticized governing party candidate Daniel Scioli for comments implying that Argentine native Pope Francis was a supporter.

The pope "clearly doesn't intervene in local politics," said Pena, who added that Scioli was being "disrespectful."

Speaking from Rome on Wednesday, Francis called

on his compatriots to "vote their consciences."

Scioli, who has often referred to the pope on the campaign trail, a few hours later provided an interpretation. He said the pope shared a "profound message" indicating that "people should seek out who they think will best defend them."

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