

Turkey Authorizes Operations Inside Syria

AKCAKALE, Turkey (AP) — Turkey sanctioned further military action against Syria on Thursday and bombarded targets across the border with artillery for a second day, raising the stakes in a conflict that increasingly is bleeding outside Syrian territory.

Although both sides moved to calm tensions, Turkey's parliament overwhelmingly approved a bill allowing the military to conduct cross-border operations into Syria — making clear that Ankara has military options that do not involve its Western or Arab allies.

It was the most dramatic escalation in tensions between the countries, which were close allies before the revolt against Syrian President Bashar Assad began in March 2011. Over the past 18 months, however, Turkey has become one of the strongest critics of the Syrian regime, accusing it of savagery and massacres against the opposition.

The rebels who are trying to bring down Assad have used Turkey as their base, enraging a regime that accuses foreign countries of fomenting the unrest inside Syria.

The spark for the latest hostility was a mortar shell fired from Syria that slammed into a house in the Turkish border village of Akcakale on Wednesday, killing two women and three children.

Study: Free Birth Control — Fewer Abortions

WASHINGTON (AP) — Free birth control led to dramatically lower rates of abortions and teen births, a large study concluded Thursday, offering strong evidence for how a bitterly contested Obama administration policy could benefit women's health.

The project tracked more than 9,000 women in St. Louis, many of them poor or uninsured. They were given their choice of a range of contraceptive methods at no cost — from birth control pills to goop-proof options like the IUD or a matchstick-sized implant.

When price wasn't an issue, women flocked to the most effective contraceptives — the implanted options, which typically cost hundreds of dollars up-front to insert. These women experienced far fewer unintended pregnancies as a result, reported Dr. Jeffrey Peipert of Washington University in St. Louis in a study published Thursday.

The effect on teen pregnancy was striking: There were 6.3 births per 1,000 teenagers in the study. Compare that to a national rate of 34 births per 1,000 teens in 2010.

There also were substantially lower rates of abortion, when compared with women in the metro area and nationally: 4.4 to 7.5 abortions per 1,000 women in the study, compared with 13.4 to 17 abortions per 1,000 women overall in the St. Louis region, Peipert calculated. That's lower than the national rate, too, which is almost 20 abortions per 1,000 women.

Lawmakers Seek Look At Gehrig's Records

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — Some Minnesota lawmakers hope to force the release of Lou Gehrig's medical records, saying they might provide insight into whether the Yankees star died of the disease that came to take his name or whether repetitive head trauma played some kind of role.

Their effort comes despite opposition from Mayo Clinic, which holds the records, and skepticism from experts that the records alone would prove anything.

Rep. Phyllis Kahn, a Minneapolis Democrat and self-described baseball fanatic, conceded that the records "probably won't show anything."

"But just in case they might it's ridiculous not to look at them," she said Thursday.

Gehrig's death is attributed to amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, or ALS, a debilitating neurological disease that after his death in 1941 became commonly known by his name.

Parole Recommended For Ex-Manson Follower

LOS ANGELES (AP) — A former Charles Manson follower imprisoned for 40 years in a double murder engineered by Manson won a recommendation of parole Thursday in his 27th appearance before a parole board panel.

Bruce Davis, convicted with Manson and another man in the killings of a musician and a stuntman, was not involved in the infamous Sharon Tate murders in 1969.

The answer to his plea for freedom came on the eve of his 70th birthday. He was a young man of 30 when he was sentenced to life in prison in 1972 in a case that was a postscript to Manson's notorious reign as leader of the murderous communal cult known as the Manson family.

Davis long maintained he was a bystander in the killings of the two men, but in recent years he acknowledged his shared responsibility because he was present.

The hearing was held at the California Men's Colony at San Luis Obispo, where Davis is imprisoned.

Unemployment Aid Applications Rise To 367K

WASHINGTON (AP) — The number of Americans seeking unemployment benefits rose to a seasonally adjusted 367,000, a level consistent with only modest hiring.

Weekly applications increased last week by 4,000 from the previous week's level of 363,000, the Labor Department said Thursday. The previous week was revised higher from an initial reading of 359,000. The four-week average, a less volatile measure, was unchanged at 375,000.

Joshua Shapiro, chief U.S. economist at MFR Inc., said the figures are "consistent with a soft but by no means collapsing labor market."

Unemployment benefit applications are a measure of the pace of layoffs. When they consistently fall below 375,000, it typically indicates that hiring is strong enough to lower the unemployment rate.

Applications have mostly stayed near or above that level since the spring, coinciding with a weak stretch of hiring. The government reports Friday on September hiring and unemployment.

There are only two employment reports left before Election Day, so Friday's figures could have a major impact on the presidential campaign. The report comes just two days after President Barack Obama and GOP challenger Mitt Romney engaged in a debate focused largely on the economy and job growth — the top issues on most voters' minds this year.

Romney:

'Victory Is In Sight' After First Debate

BY DAVID ESPO AND KASIE HUNT
Associated Press

DENVER — Buoyed by a powerful debate showing, Mitt Romney said Thursday he offers "prosperity that comes through freedom" to a country struggling to shed a weak economy.



Romney

President Barack Obama accused the former Massachusetts governor of running from his own record in pursuit of political power.

Both men unleashed new attack ads in the battleground states in a race with little more than a month to run. Obama suggesting Romney couldn't be trusted with the presidency, and the Republican accusing the president of backing a large tax increase on the middle class.

The debate reached 67.2 million viewers, an increase of 28 percent over the first debate in the 2008 presidential campaign. The measurement and information company Nielsen said Thursday that 11 networks provided live coverage of the debate.

Not even Democrats disputed that Romney was likely to benefit politically from the debate Wednesday night in which he aggressively challenged Obama's stewardship of the economy and said his own plans would help pull the country out of a slow-growth rut. Still, there was no immediate indication that the race would expand beyond the nine battleground states where the rivals and their running mates spend nearly all of their campaign time and advertising dollars.

Debate host Colorado is one of them, and Virginia, where Romney headed for an evening speech, is another. So, too, Wisconsin, Obama's destination for a mid-day rally. Nevada, Ohio, Iowa, New Hampshire, Florida and North Carolina are the others.

Among them, the nine states account for 110 electoral votes out of the 270 needed to win the White House, more than enough to tip the campaign to one man or the other.

"Victory is in sight," Romney exulted in an emailed request for donations to supporters. It was a show of confidence by a man hoping for a quick reversal in pre-debate public opinion polls that showed him trailing in battleground states as well as nationally.

Reprising a line from the debate, he told an audience of conservatives in Denver that Obama offers "trickle-down government." He added, "I don't think that's what America believes in. I see



GARY PORTER/MILWAUKEE JOURNAL SENTINEL/MCT

President Barack Obama speaks to a large crowd during a campaign visit on Thursday at the University of Wisconsin in Madison, Wisconsin.

instead a prosperity that comes through freedom."

Another possible pivot point in the campaign neared in the form of Friday's government report on unemployment for September. Joblessness was measured at 8.1 percent the previous month.

Obama campaigned with the energy of a man determined to make up for a subpar debate showing. Speaking to a crowd not far from the debate hall, he said mockingly that a "very spirited fellow" who stood next to him onstage Wednesday night "does not want to be held accountable for the real Mitt Romney's positions" on taxes, education and other issues. "Governor Romney may dance around his positions, but if you want to be president you owe the American people the truth," he said.

Later, before a crowd of tens of thousands in Madison, Wis., he said Romney wants to cut federal funding for Public Television while repealing legislation that regulates the banking industry. "I just want to make sure I've got this straight: He'll get rid of regulations on Wall Street, but he's going to crack down on Sesame Street," Obama said.

Taxes were a particular point of contention between the two men, although they were sharply divided as well on steps to cut the deficit, on government regulation, on education and Medicare.

Both in the debate and on the day after, Obama said repeatedly that his rival favors a \$5 trillion tax cut that is tilted to the wealthy and would mean tax increases on the middle class or else result in a spike in federal deficits.

Romney said it wasn't so, and counterattacked in a new television commercial. It cited a report by the American Enterprise Institute that said Obama and "his liberal allies" want to raise taxes on middle class earners by \$4,000 and that the Republican alternative would not raise the amount they owe to the IRS.

Romney has refused so far to disclose many of the details to support his assertion that his proposal would not lead to a tax cut. His ad was an attempt to parry a report by the Tax Policy Center that Obama has frequently tried used to political advantage, as he did again during the day.

Outbreak Spotlights Risks From Custom-Mixed Drugs

BY MARILYNN MARCHIONE
AP Chief Medical Writer

Two people blinded in Washington, D.C., in 2005. Three dead in Virginia in 2006 and three more in Oregon the following year. Twenty-one dead polo horses in Florida in 2009. Earlier this year, 33 people in seven states with fungal eye infections.

And now, at least five people dead and 35 sickened with fungal meningitis that has been linked to steroid shots for back pain.

All these disasters involved medicines that had been custom-mixed at what are called "compounding pharmacies" — laboratories that supply hospitals, clinics and doctors to a much wider degree in the U.S. than many people realize.

These pharmacies mix solutions, creams and other medicines used to treat everything from menopause symptoms and back pain to vision loss and cancer. Unlike manufactured drugs, these products are not subject to approval by the Food and Drug Administration. And some have turned out to be dangerously contaminated.

Compounding pharmacies often obtain drugs from manufacturers and then split them into smaller doses, or mix ingredients sold in bulk. Any of those steps can easily lead to contamination

if sterile conditions aren't maintained. For example, the fungus suspected in the current meningitis outbreak can spread in the air.

The risks from these products have long been known but are being amplified now by a national shortage of many drugs that has forced doctors to seek custom-made alternatives to the usual first-choice treatments. The steroid suspected in the current outbreak has been in short supply.

"Because of the incredible number of drugs that are out of stock or back-ordered, compounding pharmacies are working with local hospitals, clinics and physicians to fill that gap," said David Miller, executive vice president of the International Academy of Compounding Pharmacists, a trade organization.

These products have had remarkable growth. More than 7,500 compounding pharmacies operate in the U.S., up from 5,000 in 2009, Miller said. They account for a \$3 billion segment of the drug market and 3 percent of all prescriptions filled.

Some say this industry needs more regulation.

"There's not a lot of oversight of compounding pharmacies" compared with drug manufacturers, said Allen Vaida, executive vice president of the Institute for

Safe Medication Practices, a suburban Philadelphia advocacy group that tracks medication errors.

Dr. William Schaffner, an infectious-disease specialist at Vanderbilt University, agreed.

"They fall into this gray area and no one supervises in a rigorous fashion their manufacturing processes. The state pharmacy boards don't have the resources or the knowledge or experience," and the FDA does not get involved unless a problem occurs, he said.

The FDA has said the steroid in the current meningitis outbreak came from the New England Compounding Center, based in Framingham, Mass. The company recalled three lots of the drug last week and has said it has voluntarily suspended operations and is working with regulators to identify the source of the infection. Investigators also are looking into the antiseptic and anesthetic used during the injections.

On Thursday, investigators urged doctors nationwide to avoid all products from the New England company. At least 23 states have received vials from the three recalled lots.

Compounding pharmacies are supposed to supply products to meet unique patient needs, and

to prepare drug products that are not available commercially, based on an individual prescription. They may cross a line if they supply a product on a large scale to a clinic or hospital without individual prescriptions, Miller and other experts said.

"They, in effect, since they do this on a large scale, have become mini-pharmaceutical companies," Schaffner said.

That appears to be the basis for an FDA warning to the New England company and four other firms in December 2006. The FDA told them to stop compounding and distributing anesthetic creams "marketed for general distribution rather than responding to the unique medical needs of individual patients." Too much anesthetic in a rubbed-on cream can cause seizures and irregular heartbeats, and at least two deaths have resulted, the FDA said.

Miller, of the pharmacy trade group, said that in the current outbreak, it appears that the New England company was dispensing drugs widely to clinics and hospitals instead of filling individual prescriptions.

Some compounding pharmacies have had more than one troubling episode. And some products seem to have problems over and over again.

Spotlight

From Page 1A

"There were rumors, they had bought land and they were coming to town. We thought it was a pretty big deal."

Hagerty filed the restaurant review, then started hearing that the column had generated a great deal of controversy.

"I heard all this stuff about the column being so pathetic, that (detractors) thought I was simple-minded," she said. "But it was only an hour before my bridge club. I thought, 'I don't have time for all this crap, I have to go to bridge club.'"

Hagerty was stunned upon returning from her weekly bridge gathering.

"I received 18 phone calls," she said. "My computer had emails from all over the country that said things like, 'Don't feel bad. It was a good story about Olive Garden.' I was told my story went viral, and I didn't even know what that meant. It made me nervous."

Hagerty was mocked and harpooned by those who found the column a joke and an insult to fine cuisine. She was revered and defended by those who liked the restaurant, hated the other side's

snobbery or just didn't enjoy seeing the onslaught against the elderly woman.

"People came to my defense," she said. "They didn't want to see a little old lady from North Dakota get browbeaten. Or they might think I was pathetic, I don't know."

She also received immediate celebrity status.

"The local TV station wanted me to go with them to Olive Garden, then and now," she said, still not grasping the breadth and width of the reaction around the world.

Bourdain quickly emerged as one of her earliest and sharpest detractors.

"He was one of my main critics when I went viral," Hagerty said. "But then, he thought about it again, and he thought I wasn't so stupid, this lady from North Dakota that was writing about the Midwest and smaller towns. He found there was a story that hadn't been told."

Hagerty met Bourdain for coffee in March, shortly after the cyber-meltdown.

"He's very handsome and we had a very nice conversation. He was flattering, and he thought I was half-way intelligent," she said with a laugh. "He was a very nice gentleman, and he sent me flowers. I didn't know who Anthony Bourdain was until I went viral, and now I call him 'Tony.'"

The two entered into a working agreement, and Hagerty invited the celebrity to Grand Forks. They haven't scheduled a visit yet, but she remains hopeful.

During Thursday's press conference, Hagerty told USD students that it takes some nerve and a lot of curiosity to become a successful columnist.

"I like columns because there's so much freedom. You have the ability to impart a lot of knowledge, and you hope that people have fun reading it," she said. "You have the meat and potatoes of the newspaper, and the columns are the salad."

The Olive Garden review gave her worldwide notoriety, but Hagerty said she has found joy in writing about everyday life. One of her favorite columns involved riding a grain truck from Grand Forks to Duluth, Minn.

"My work really isn't work, it's my pleasure, my way of life. The job, it was never hard for me," she said. "I like talking to people, to see what makes them tick and to ask questions. I like to find interesting things about people."

Hagerty found humor in a student's question about her future plans.

"I'm 86, and I enjoy the work I do," she said. "I will probably keep on doing it until the Grand Forks Herald fires me or I get a better offer and I move on to the Chicago

Tribune. I will continue writing as long as I have my marbles."

And Hagerty's ride has become much wilder thanks to the Olive Garden and cyberspace.

"It's been so much fun," she

said. "It's like this wild dream that will never end. If you tried to make it up, you couldn't."

Hagerty's "Eatbeat" column on Olive Garden can be found here:

<http://www.grandforksherald.com/event/article/id/231419/>

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