

DC Crowd Pushes Through Barriers To WWII Memorial

By The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A crowd converged on the World War II Memorial on the National Mall on Sunday, pushing past barriers to protest the memorial's closing under the government shutdown.

Republican Sens. Ted Cruz of Texas and Mike Lee of Utah, along with former Alaska Gov. Sarah Palin, were part of the demonstrators.

Cruz and Lee are among the tea party-backed lawmakers who refused to keep the government operating unless President Barack Obama agreed to defund the nation's health care overhaul.

"Let me ask a simple question," Cruz told the crowd of hundreds that gathered beginning at 9 a.m. "Why is the federal government spending money to erect barricades to keep veterans out of this memorial?"

Black metal barricades have lined the front of the memorial since the government closed Oct. 1. That's when more than 300 National Park Service workers who staff and maintain the National Mall were furloughed.

As the crowd entered the memorial plaza, they chanted "Tear down these walls" and "You work for us." They sang "God bless America" and other songs.

"Our vets have proven that they have not been timid, so we will not be timid in calling out any who would use our military, our vets, as pawns in a political game," Palin told the crowd.

The memorial has become a political symbol in the bitter fight between De-



Keith Lane/MCT
Demonstrators remove barricades blocking the World War II Memorial to protest the closure of the nation's landmarks during the federal government shutdown in Washington on Sunday.

mocrats and Republicans over who is to blame for the shutdown. Earlier rallies have focused on allowing access for World War II veterans visiting from across the country.

Sunday's rally was more political. A protest by truckers converged with a rally by a group called the Million Vet March at the memorial. Participants cut the plastic links between metal barriers at the National Park Service site and pushed them aside.

Later, some protesters carried metal barricades that look like bicycle racks from the memorial to the White House and stacked them up outside the gates, confronting police in riot gear. Some protesters carried signs reading "Impeach Obama."

Police moved the protesters back to set up barricades between the crowd and the White House gate. Some protesters chanted "shame on you" at the officers.

An armored police vehicle also was sent to the World War II Memorial as people lingered there.

District of Columbia police said the crowd was dispersing by 1 p.m., about four hours after the protests began. U.S. Park Police said there had been one arrest at the Lincoln Memorial for assault, but it was not related to the protest, said Lt. Pamela Smith.

Jim Weller of Allentown, Pa., said he came to protest "to stand up for my rights." "My father was a World War II veteran, shot down in

the Philippines in 1945, and for them to shut down this memorial is absurd," he said.

Cindy Good had a message for lawmakers.

"They need to listen to the American people," she said, "and try to work together in Congress to get this whole thing worked out."

After the protest, U.S. Park Police worked to secure the World War II Memorial again, and Smith said they were still closed because of the shutdown.

The Park Police officers, who have been guarding the memorials amid protests over their closure, are not being paid during the government shutdown.

Spending The Stumbling Block To Budget Deal

BY DONNA CASSATA
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Senate Republicans and Democrats hit an impasse Sunday over spending in their last-ditch struggle to avoid an economy-jarring default in just four days and end a partial government shutdown that's entering its third week.

After inconclusive talks between President Barack Obama and House Republicans, Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, D-Nev., and Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., took charge in trying to end the crises, although a conversation Sunday afternoon failed to break the stalemate.

"I'm optimistic about the prospects for a positive conclusion to the issues before this country today," Reid said as the Senate wrapped up a rare Sunday session.

The two cagy negotiators are at loggerheads over Democratic demands to undo or change the automatic, across-the-board spending cuts to domestic and defense programs that the GOP see as crucial to reducing the nation's deficit.

McConnell insisted a solution was readily available in the proposal from a bipartisan group of 12 senators, led by Sens. Susan Collins, R-Maine, and Joe Manchin, D-W.Va., that would re-open the government and fund it at current levels for six months while raising the debt limit through Jan. 31.

"It's time for Democrat leaders to take 'yes' for an answer," McConnell said in a statement.

But six Democrats in the group and a spokesman for Collins said that while negotiations continued this weekend, there was no agreement.

The latest snag comes as 350,000 federal workers remain idle, hundreds of thou-



McConnell

sands more work without pay and an array of government services, from home loan applications to environmental inspections, were on hold

on the 13th day of the shutdown.

Many parks and monuments remain closed, drawing a protest at the National World War II Memorial on Sunday that included tea party-backed lawmakers who had unsuccessfully demanded defunding of Obama's 3-year-old health care law in exchange for keeping the government open.

Unnerving to world economies is the prospect of the United States defaulting on its financial obligations on Thursday if Congress fails to raise the borrowing authority above the \$16.7 trillion debt limit.

Christine Lagarde, the International Monetary Fund's managing director, spoke fearfully about the disruption and uncertainty, warning of a "risk of tipping, yet again, into recession" after the fitful recovery from 2008. The reaction of world financial markets and the Dow Jones on Monday will influence any congressional talks.

Congress is racing the clock to get a deal done, faced with time-consuming Senate procedures that could slow legislation, likely opposition from tea partiers and certain resistance in the Republican-led House before a bill gets to Obama.

Politically, Republicans are reeling, bearing a substantial amount of the blame for the government shutdown and stalemate.

"We're in a free-fall as Republicans, but Democrats are not far behind," said Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., in warning Democrats about seizing on the GOP's bruised brand as leverage to extract more concessions.

McConnell and Republicans want to continue current spending at \$986.7 billion and leave untouched the new round of cuts in January, commonly known as sequester, that would reduce the amount to \$967 billion. Democrats want to figure out a way to undo the reductions, plus a long-term extension of the debt limit increase and a short-term spending bill to re-open the government.

"Republicans want to do it with entitlement cuts," said Sen. Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y. "Democrats want to do it with a mix of mandatory cuts, some entitlements and revenues. And so how do you overcome that dilemma? We're not going to overcome it in the next day or two."

He suggested keeping the government running through mid-January.

Sen. Dick Durbin of Illinois, the No. 2 Democrat in the Senate, told reporters the two sides are roughly \$70 billion apart, the difference between the \$1.058 trillion Senate budget amount and the \$988 billion envisioned by House Budget Committee Chairman Paul Ryan, R-Wis.

Small Boost Again For Social Security

WASHINGTON (AP) — For the second straight year, millions of Social Security recipients, disabled veterans and federal retirees can expect historically small increases in their benefits come January.

Preliminary figures suggest a benefit increase of roughly 1.5 percent, which would be among the smallest since automatic increases were adopted in 1975, according to an analysis by The Associated Press.

Next year's raise will be small because consumer prices, as measured by the government, haven't gone up much in the past year.

The exact size of the cost-of-living adjustment, or COLA, won't be known until the Labor Department releases the inflation report for September. That was supposed to happen Wednesday, but the report was delayed indefinitely because of the partial government shutdown.

The COLA is usually announced in October to give Social Security and other benefit programs time to adjust January payments. The Social Security Administration has given no indication that raises would be delayed because of the shutdown, but advocates for seniors said the uncertainty was unwelcome.

al-Qaida Picking Up Attacks In Iraq

BAGHDAD (AP) — First came the fireball, then the screams of the victims. The suicide bombing just outside a Baghdad graveyard knocked Nasser Waleed Ali over and peppered his back with shrapnel.

Ali was one of the lucky ones. At least 51 died in the Oct. 5 attack, many of them Shiite pilgrims walking by on their way to a shrine. No one has claimed responsibility, but there is little doubt al-Qaida's local franchise is to blame. Suicide bombers and car bombs are its calling cards, Shiite civilians among its favorite targets.

Al-Qaida has come roaring back in Iraq since U.S. troops left in late 2011 and now looks stronger than it has in years. The terror group has shown it is capable of carrying out mass-casualty attacks several times a month, driving the death toll in Iraq to the highest level in half a decade. It sees each attack as a way to cultivate an atmosphere of chaos that weakens the Shiite-led government's authority.

Recent prison breaks have bolstered al-Qaida's ranks, while feelings of Sunni marginalization and the chaos caused by the civil war in neighboring Syria are fueling its comeback.

"Nobody is able to control this situation," said Ali, who watches over a Sunni graveyard that sprang up next to the hallowed Abu Hanifa mosque in 2006, when sectarian fighting threatened to engulf Iraq in all-out civil war.

Red Cross Workers Kidnapped In Syria

BEIRUT (AP) — Gunmen abducted six Red Cross workers and a Syrian Red Crescent volunteer after stopping their convoy early Sunday in northwestern Syria, a spokesman said, in the latest high-profile kidnapping in the country's civil war.

Simon Schorno, a spokesman for the International Committee of the Red Cross in Damascus, said the assailants snatched the seven aid workers from their convoy near the town of Saragheb in Idlib province around 11:30 a.m. local time (0830 GMT) as the team was returning to Damascus. He declined to provide the nationalities of the six ICRC employees, and said it was not clear who was behind the attack.

Syria's state news agency, quoting an anonymous official, said the gunmen opened fire on the ICRC team's four vehicles before seizing the Red Cross workers. The news agency blamed "terrorists," a term the government uses to refer to those opposed to President Bashar Assad.

Schorno said the team of seven had been in the field since Oct. 10 to assess the medical situation in the area and to look at how to provide medical aid. He said the part of northern Syria where they were seized "by definition is a difficult area to go in," and the team was traveling with armed guards.

Much of the countryside in Idlib province, as well as the rest of northern Syria, has fallen over the past year into the hands of rebels, many of them Islamic extremists, and kidnappings have become rife, particularly of aid workers and foreign journalists.

India: Mass Evacuations Saved Lives

BEHRAMPUR, India (AP) — Mass evacuations spared India the widespread deaths many had feared from a powerful cyclone that roared ashore over the weekend, officials said Sunday, as the country sorted through the wreckage of flooded towns, tangled power lines and tens of thousands of destroyed thatch homes.

Cyclone Phailin, the strongest storm to hit India in more than a decade, destroyed hundreds of millions of dollars' worth of crops, but more than 20 hours after it made landfall in Orissa state on the country's east coast, authorities said they knew of only 17 fatalities.

The final death toll is expected to climb further as officials reach areas of the cyclone-battered coast that remain isolated by downed communication links and blocked roads, but the evacuation of nearly 1 million people appeared to have saved many lives.

"Damage to property is extensive," said Amitabh Thakur, the top police officer in the Orissa district worst-hit by the cyclone. "But few lives have been lost," he said, crediting the mass evacuations.

'Gravity' Tops 'Phillips' At Box Office

LOS ANGELES (AP) — "Gravity" won't be held down. The Warner Bros. astronaut adventure starring Sandra Bullock landed in the top spot at the box office for the second weekend in a row, according to studio estimates Sunday. "Gravity" earned \$44.3 million, bringing its domestic total to \$123.4 million.

Sony's "Captain Phillips" launched in second place with \$26 million. The high seas drama stars Tom Hanks as a cargo ship captain who is held captive by Somali pirates.

The animated Sony movie "Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs 2" slurred up third place in its third weekend with \$14.2 million.

NATO: Man In Afghan Uniform Kills NATO Soldier

BY RAHIM FAIEZ
Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan — A man in Afghan national security forces uniform killed a NATO service member Sunday in eastern Afghanistan, the international military coalition said.

The alliance did not provide other details nor the nationality of the soldier but said an investigation has been launched into the shooting. Most of the foreign forces serving in the east are from the United States.

At least 15 foreign soldiers have been killed this year in so-called insider attacks, compared to a total of 62 last year. A total of 133 coalition soldiers have been killed so far this year, including 104 Americans.

In other attacks, Afghan officials said violence over two days killed 32 people and wounded 35 in different parts of Afghanistan.

Fared Ayal, a police spokesman for southern Uruzgan province, said Sunday that overnight fighting at a police checkpoint killed 10 police officers, eight insurgents and three civilians.

The Interior Ministry said in a statement that an insurgent mortar round fired in eastern Nuristan killed seven civilians, a claim denied by the Taliban in an email.

President Hamid Karzai condemned the attack, which took place near a mosque, along with another mosque bombing in eastern Ghazni that killed two civilians and wounded four. Neither attack targeted government or military personnel.

Both the government and insurgents regularly inflate casualty figures, which cannot be immediately confirmed independently.

The Interior Ministry also said insurgents beat and killed two young boys they accused of spying for the government in eastern Kunar province, a charge also denied by the Taliban.

Violence has been escalating around the country in recent months as insurgents press a campaign to retake territory, which they have so far not managed to do. But the violence has resulted in an increase in civilian and security force casualties.



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