

Indictment Brought In 2007 Shootings

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Justice Department on Thursday brought fresh charges against four former Blackwater Worldwide security contractors, resurrecting an internationally charged case over a deadly 2007 shooting on the streets of Baghdad.

A new grand jury indictment charges the men in a shooting that inflamed anti-American sentiment in Iraq and heightened diplomatic sensitivities amid an ongoing war. The men were hired to guard U.S. diplomats.

The guards are accused of opening fire in busy Nisoor Square on Sept. 16, 2007. Seventeen Iraqi civilians died, including women and children. Prosecutors say the heavily armed Blackwater convoy used machine guns and grenades in an unprovoked attack. Defense lawyers argue their clients are innocent men who were ambushed by Iraqi insurgents.

The guards were charged with manslaughter and weapons violations in 2008, but a federal judge the following year dismissed the case, ruling the Justice Department withheld evidence from a grand jury and violated the guards' constitutional rights. The dismissal outraged many Iraqis, who said it showed Americans consider themselves above the law. Vice President Joe Biden, speaking in Baghdad in 2010, expressed his "personal regret" for the shootings.

A federal appeals court reinstated the case in 2011, saying now-retired Judge Ricardo Urbina had wrongly interpreted the law.

Obama To Nominate Homeland Head

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Barack Obama is calling back a trusted counterterrorism adviser from his first term by nominating former top Pentagon lawyer Jeh Johnson as secretary of homeland security.

Obama plans to announce Johnson's nomination Friday. He must be confirmed by the Senate before taking over the post most recently held by Janet Napolitano, who stepped down in August to become president of the University of California system.

As general counsel at the Defense Department during the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, Johnson was an aggressive advocate on a number of complex and contentious legal issues. He oversaw the escalation of the use of unmanned drone strikes, the revamping of military commissions to try terrorism suspects rather than using civilian courts and the repeal of the military's ban on openly gay service members. He also mapped out the legal defense for the American cross-border raid into Pakistan that killed Osama bin Laden.

A senior Obama administration official on Thursday confirmed Johnson's selection, first reported by The Daily Beast. The official was not authorized to speak about the nomination on the record and spoke on condition of anonymity.

The official said Obama chose Johnson because of his experience as a national security leader. The official noted that Johnson oversaw the work of more than 10,000 lawyers and was responsible for reviewing every military operation approved by the president and defense secretary.

Mo. Sex Assault Case To Get New Start

MARYVILLE, Mo. (AP) — The case of a 14-year-old girl who says she was raped by an older boy from her Missouri high school and left passed out on her porch in freezing temperatures is expected to get a fresh start under a special prosecutor.

A special prosecutor will be able to launch his own investigation, interview witnesses and work independently from the local prosecutor who's faced intense scrutiny for dropping felony charges in the case last year, experts said Thursday.

"The idea is really to have a third party who is removed from the process, who can bring the appearance of objectivity and neutrality," said Richard Reuben, a professor at the University of Missouri School of Law. "At the end of the day they would look like a prosecutor who is truly independent."

The new prosecutor's final decision carries high stakes: It could settle the debate over whether Rice was right to drop the charges, or validate the accusers' outrage by pushing the case toward a trial.

Nodaway County prosecutor Robert Rice filed a motion Thursday for a judge to appoint a special prosecutor in the case, which has gained new attention after *The Kansas City Star* published results of a seven-month investigation.

Iran Sees Internal Drama In Nuke Talks

TEHRAN, Iran (AP) — The Iranian foreign minister's parting words in Geneva carried hopes that the U.S. and other world powers could begin closing the gap with Tehran over its nuclear program. He returns home with perhaps an even tougher challenge at finding common ground.

In a sharp counterpoint to the Western outreach by President Hassan Rouhani's government, hard-line factions in Iran have amplified their bluster and backlash in messages that they cannot be ignored in any diplomatic moves with Washington either in the nuclear talks or beyond.

They also hold important sway over the pace and direction of Iran's nuclear program through the Revolutionary Guard, the single most powerful institution in Iran. Without its clear backing, the West and its allies could grow increasingly skeptical over Rouhani's ability to deliver on efforts to ease fears that Iran could be moving toward an atomic weapon or a so-called threshold state — without an actual bomb, but with all the expertise and material in place.

"Iran's hard-liners are the not-so-silent partners in everything that Rouhani has set in motion," said Scott Lucas, an Iranian affairs expert at Britain's Birmingham University. "The Revolutionary Guard is never a bystander in Iran."

It's still unclear whether the Guard would agree to potential demands such as increased U.N. monitoring at nuclear and related sites. So far, however, there have few smooth patches with Rouhani. His outreach has brought swift criticism from the Guard and its wide network, including a national paramilitary force known as the Basij.

1.8M-Year-Old Skull Offers New Insight

DMANISI, Georgia (AP) — The discovery of a 1.8-million-year-old skull of a human ancestor buried under a medieval Georgian village provides a vivid picture of early evolution and indicates our family tree may have fewer branches than some believe, scientists say.

The fossil is the most complete pre-human skull uncovered. With other partial remains previously found at the rural site, it gives researchers the earliest evidence of human ancestors moving out of Africa and spreading north to the rest of the world, according to a study published Thursday in the journal *Science*.

The skull and other remains offer a glimpse of a population of pre-humans of various sizes living at the same time — something that scientists had not seen before for such an ancient era. This diversity bolsters one of two competing theories about the way our early ancestors evolved, spreading out more like a tree than a bush.

Nearly all of the previous pre-human discoveries have been fragmented bones, scattered over time and locations — like a smattering of random tweets of our evolutionary history. The findings at Dmanisi are more complete, weaving more of a short story. Before the site was found, the movement from Africa was put at about 1 million years ago.

When examined with the earlier Georgian finds, the skull "shows that this special immigration out of Africa happened much earlier than we thought and a much more primitive group did it," said study lead author David Lordkipanidze, director of the Georgia National Museum. "This is important to understanding human evolution."

Obama Lashes Republicans As Government Reopens

BY DAVID ESPO

AP Special Correspondent

WASHINGTON — In withering day-after criticism, President Barack Obama declared Thursday that the 16-day partial government shutdown was a Republican-provoked spectacle that "encouraged our enemies" around the world.

Elsewhere in Washington, and around the country, federal employees simply streamed back to their jobs. National parks reopened. The popular panda cam at the National Zoo came back online.

But there was no letup in the political fight.

Fresh from a defeat, tea party groups and their allies renewed fundraising efforts with a promise of future assaults on Obama's health care overhaul — and a threat of more election primaries against Republican incumbents who don't stand with them.

Government spending was still front and center. Inside the Capitol, lawmakers charged with forging a post-shutdown deficit-cutting agreement in the next 60 days met privately. "We believe there is common ground," said Sen. Patty Murray, D-Wash., chair of the Senate Budget Committee.

Privately, however, officials in both parties said the prospects for a major breakthrough were dim, given differences over taxes and spending that have proven compromise-proof throughout the current three-year era of divided government.

A few hours after Obama placed his post-midnight signature on legislation ending the long political showdown, Vice President Joe Biden was at the Environmental Protection Agency to greet returning employees. "I hope this is the end of this," he said, but he acknowledged "There's no guarantees."

That was a reference to the last-minute legislation that will fund the government only until Jan. 15 and give Treasury the ability to borrow above the \$16.7 trillion limit until Feb. 7 or a few weeks longer.

At the White House, Obama blended sharp criticism of Republicans with a plea for their cooperation over the



OLIVIER DOULIERY/ABACA PRESS/MCT
President Barack Obama speaks about the reopening of government following the shutdown during a news conference in the State Dining Room of the White House in Washington on Thursday.

remainder of the year and a call for less shrillness on both sides.

"Some of the same folks who pushed for the shutdown and threatened default claimed their actions were needed to get America back on track," he said in remarks in the State Dining Room.

"But probably nothing has done more damage to America's credibility to the world... It's encouraged our enemies. It's emboldened our competitors. And it's depressed our friends who look to us for steady leadership," he said.

Obama said the public is "completely fed up with Washington" and he

and Congress face hard work in regaining trust. It was a reference to public opinion polls that show the nation in a sour mood — though more inclined to blame Republicans than the president and his party for the first partial government shutdown caused by politics in 17 years.

Hoping to jump-start his own stalled agenda, Obama urged lawmakers to concentrate on three items in the coming weeks: a balanced plan to reduce long-term deficits, legislation to overhaul the immigration system and passage of a farm bill.

Government Moves Back To Business

BY JESSICA GRESKO
AND DAVID CRARY

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Barriers came down at federal memorials and National Park Service sites and thousands of furloughed federal workers — relieved but wary — returned to work across the country Thursday after 16 days off the job due to the partial government shutdown.

Among the sites reopening were Yosemite National Park in California, the Smithsonian Institution's network of popular museums, and the World War II memorial in Washington, which had been the scene of protests over the shutdown.

"Just to be able to get back to serving the public is so important," said Greg Bettwy, preparing to return to work with the Smithsonian's human resource department.

For other returning workers, shutdown-related frustration turned to elation at being

back on the job. Some confronted backlogs of email and paperwork; others voiced concern that a gridlocked Congress might trigger another shutdown in January.

"The phrase everyone is talking about is 'kicking the can down the road,'" said Richard Marcus of Silver Spring, Md., who has worked at the National Archives and Records Administration for 29 years. "We'd hate to have to live through this all over again."

National Park Service Director Jonathan Jarvis said all 401 national park units — from Golden Gate National Recreation Area in California to Acadia National Park in Maine — were expected to reopen Thursday. The reopenings include tour roads, trails, visitor centers and other facilities at the park sites. Educational programs will resume, and permits will again be issued for special activities, Jarvis said.

Also reopening are dozens of programs that preserve

nature and historic sites and improve access to outdoor recreation in local communities. And the U.S. Forest Service started lifting a ban on national forests. American Forest Resource Council President Tom Partin said national forest campgrounds would reopen as soon as employees could visit to make sure they're clean and safe.

The federal workers who were furloughed or worked without pay during the shutdown will get back pay in their next paychecks, which for most employees come Oct. 29.

At the Labor Department, Secretary Thomas Perez greeted workers with an email telling them he understood how much the furlough disrupted their lives.

"Unfortunately, as President Obama correctly noted, you are occasionally called on to perform your remarkably important work in a climate that too often treats federal

employees and contractors as a punching bag," Perez said.

The Defense Department called back about 7,000 furloughed civilians. In an open letter to the workforce, Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel said the department still faces budget uncertainty as Congress struggles to pass a 2014 spending bill and deal with automatic budget cuts. Pentagon Comptroller Robert Hale said Thursday that the department lost at least \$600 million worth of productivity during the four days that civilians were furloughed.

The National Institutes of Health also will see lingering after-effects — NIH warned university scientists not to expect a quick resumption of research dollars.

"As the shutdown drags on, the challenge of re-establishing normal operations quickly is growing," NIH Deputy Director Dr. Sally Rockey emailed researchers.



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