

Hong Kong Protesters Vow To Occupy

HONG KONG (AP) — Raising the stakes in their standoff with the authorities, Hong Kong's pro-democracy protesters threatened to occupy key government buildings unless the territory's top official resigns by the end of the day Thursday.

The Chinese government, meanwhile, appeared to be losing patience. An editorial solemnly read Wednesday on state TV said all Hong Kong residents should support authorities in their efforts to "deploy police enforcement decisively" and "restore the social order in Hong Kong as soon as possible."

And the Communist Party-run *People's Daily* warned of "unimaginable consequences" if the protests persist.

In the biggest challenge to Beijing's authority since China took control of the former British colony in 1997, thousands of demonstrators have clogged the streets of the Asian financial center since Friday, demanding freer elections in Hong Kong.

Storming government buildings would risk inviting another clash with police like the one over the weekend. It also would put pressure on the Chinese government, which has backed Hong Kong Chief Executive Leung Chun-ying's attempts to end the protests but has not openly intervened.

Early Voters Begin Casting Ballots

WASHINGTON (AP) — It's not Obamacare or climate change. It's not yet terrorism or fear of the Islamic State group. Those issues are on the minds of voters as they begin casting ballots in this year's midterm elections, but nothing matters to American voters as much as the economy.

In a new Associated Press-GfK poll released Wednesday, 9 in 10 of those most likely to go to the polls or mail in a ballot in this year's midterm elections call the economy an extremely or very important issue.

"We need jobs," said Christine Kamischke, 45, of rural northern Michigan. She works in a large retail store and her husband was recently laid off from his job at an Air Force base near their home. Wednesday was his first day without work. The couple has five children.

Kamischke said the economy is her top concern, and she's focused on national security only if it helps get her husband's job back.

The poll found that concerns about the spate of foreign policy challenges facing the U.S. have grown since July, with 6 in 10 Americans now calling the U.S. role in world affairs an important issue, up from 51 percent in July.



OLIVIER DOULIERY/ABACA PRESS/MCT
President Barack Obama holds a bilateral meeting with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in the Oval Office of the White House on Wednesday, in Washington, D.C.

U.S. Sharply Criticizes New Israeli Housing Project

BY JULIE PACE
AP White House Correspondent

WASHINGTON — In a striking public rebuke, the Obama administration warned Israel on Wednesday that plans for a controversial new housing project in east Jerusalem would distance Israel from "even its closest allies" and raise questions about its commitment to seeking peace with Palestinians.

The harsh criticism came just hours after President Barack Obama and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu met at the White House. Obama spokesman Josh Earnest said the president privately raised his concerns with Netanyahu though the two leaders made no mention of the matter in their public comments to reporters.

"This development will only draw condemnation from the international community," Earnest said. "It also would call into question Israel's ultimate commitment to a peaceful negotiated settlement with the Palestinians."

Netanyahu pushed back against the criticism, according to reporters traveling with him Wednesday, saying that people should have all of the information before making such statements. He also said that while Obama did raise the issue of settlements in their meeting, the discussion did not focus on specific cases.

An Israeli official, who wasn't authorized to discuss the matter and spoke on condition anonymity, confirmed the accuracy of Netanyahu's comments to his traveling press corps.

The new 2,500 unit project that stoked U.S. anger is contentious because it would complete a band of Jewish areas that separate Jerusalem from nearby Bethlehem. The U.S. has repeatedly criticized Israeli construction in east Jerusalem, casting it as damaging to efforts to secure an elusive peace accord with the Palestinians.

The White House also condemned what it called the recent occupation of residential buildings in Silwan, an Arab neighborhood in east Jerusalem where several hundred hard-line Israeli settlers have moved in recent years. Earnest called the move was "provocative" and said it would "escalate tensions at a moment when those tensions have already

been high."

Appearing before reporters earlier, Obama and Netanyahu betrayed little of the U.S. displeasure projected by the White House spokesman, as well as officials at the State Department. While the two leaders have long had a tense relationship, each took a polite and cordial tone in their brief public remarks.

Still, areas of discord were evident, most notably Obama's frustration with Palestinian civilian deaths in during the summer war in Gaza and Israel's wariness of U.S.-led nuclear negotiations with Iran.

Sitting alongside Netanyahu, Obama said leaders must "find ways to change the status quo so that both Israel citizens are safe in their own homes, and schoolchildren in their schools, from the possibility of rocket fire but also that we don't have the tragedy of Palestinian children being killed as well."

More than 2,100 Palestinians — the vast majority of them civilians, according to the United Nations — and more than 70 Israelis were killed during the 50-day war in Gaza.

Officials said much of Obama and Netanyahu's private discussions centered on Iran. The U.S. and its negotiating partners — Britain, France, Germany, Russia and China — have until Nov. 24 to reach a deal with Iran on its nuclear program, and all sides say significant gaps remain.

The West suspects that Iran is secretly trying to build a nuclear weapon alongside its civilian atomic program, something that Israel sees as an existential threat. Netanyahu reiterated his skepticism that the diplomatic process will allow Tehran to keep aspects of its program intact.

"Iran seeks a deal that would lift the tough sanctions that you worked so hard to put in place and leave it as a threshold nuclear power," Netanyahu told Obama. "And I firmly hope under your leadership that would not happen."

Iran insists its nuclear program is for peaceful purposes only.

As Netanyahu arrived at the White House, city officials in Jerusalem announced plans to move forward with the construction of homes in east Jerusalem's Givat Hamatos neighborhood.

U.S. Ebola Passenger Sent Home From ER

BY LAURAN NEERGARD AND PAUL J. WEBER
Associated Press

DALLAS — The airline passenger who brought Ebola into the U.S. initially went to a Dallas emergency room last week but was sent home, despite telling a nurse that he had been in disease-ravaged West Africa, the hospital said Wednesday in a disclosure that showed how easily an infection could be missed.

The decision by Texas Health Presbyterian Hospital to release the patient, who had recently arrived from Liberia, could have put others at risk of exposure to Ebola before the man went back to the ER a couple of days later, when his condition worsened.

A day after the diagnosis was confirmed, a nine-member team of federal health officials was tracking anyone who had close contact with him after he fell ill on Sept. 24. The group of 12 to 18 people included three members of the ambulance crew that took the man to the hospital and a handful of schoolchildren.

They will be checked every day for 21 days, the disease's incubation period.

"That's how we're going to break the chain of transmission, and that's where our focus has to be," Dr. Tom Frieden, director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, told The Associated Press Wednesday.

The CDC reminded the nation's health care providers to ask patients with symptoms if they've traveled recently. The American College of Emergency Physicians planned to alert its members as well.

The patient explained to a nurse last Thursday that he was visiting the U.S. from Africa, but that information was not widely shared, said Dr. Mark Lester, who works for the hospital's parent company.

"Regrettably, that information was not fully communicated" throughout the medical team, Lester said. Instead, the man was diagnosed with a low-risk infection and sent home.

He was prescribed antibiotics, according to his sister, Mai Wureh, who identified



PAUL MOSELEY/FORT WORTH STAR-TELEGRAM/MCT
As DISD Police watch, Gabriella Beltran, right, walks from Hotchkiss Elementary with her children Valeria Curranza, Joseph Manuel Beltran and Oliver Torres. Parents were summoned by the Dallas School District to pick their children up early from L.L. Hotchkiss Elementary, Wednesday. Children who had reportedly been near the man who has been diagnosed with the Ebola virus have attended the school.

her brother, Thomas Eric Duncan, as the infected man in an interview with The Associated Press.

Duncan has been kept in isolation at the hospital since Sunday. He was listed in serious but stable condition.

Hospital epidemiologist Dr. Edward Goodman said the patient had a fever and abdominal pain during his first ER visit, not the riskier symptoms of vomiting and diarrhea.

But the diagnosis, and the hospital's slip-up, highlighted the wider threat of Ebola, even in places far from West Africa.

"The scrutiny just needs to be higher now," said Dr. Rade Vukmir, a spokesman for the American College of Emergency Physicians.

Ebola is believed to have sickened more than 7,100 people in West Africa and killed more than 3,300, according to the World Health Organization. Liberia is one of the three hardest-hit countries in the epidemic, along with Sierra Leone and Guinea.

In Texas, neither the ambulance crew nor the children showed any symptoms. They were restricted to home while their conditions are observed. It was not exactly clear how Duncan knew the children, but his sister said he had been visiting with family, including two nephews.

At an address listed for the family in Kannapolis, North Carolina, a man who identified himself as Duncan's brother told reporters the family was "just stressed out."

Ebola symptoms can include fever, muscle pain, vomiting and bleeding, and can appear as long as 21 days after exposure to the virus. The disease is not contagious until symptoms begin. It spreads only by close contact with a patient's bodily fluids.

The man left Liberia on Sept. 19, flying from Brussels to Dulles Airport near Washington. He then boarded a flight for Dallas-Fort Worth, according to airlines, and arrived the next day to see relatives.

He started feeling ill four or five days later, Frieden said.

The CDC sent a team to Monrovia's airport on Wednesday to make sure health officials there are screening passengers properly. All people traveling from the outbreak zone are supposed to be checked for fever and asked about their travel history before being allowed to leave. Plastic buckets filled with chlorinated water for hand-washing are present throughout the airport.

"There were no signs of any disease when the gentleman boarded the flight," said Dr. Tom Kenyon, director of the CDC's Center for Global Health. "This was not a failure of the screening process at the airport."

Since the man was showing no symptoms on the plane, the CDC stressed that there is no risk to fellow passengers.

Tests designed to detect the virus in the bloodstream are not typically performed on people who don't yet have symptoms, because tests done too early may miss the diagnosis, Frieden said.

"Even in the initial phases of illness, when they've got a fever, the most sensitive tests in the world don't detect it because there's so little virus that they have," he said. "It's only as they become sicker that they become more infectious."

Hospitals have been on the lookout: The CDC has received 94 inquiries from states about illnesses that initially were suspected to be Ebola, but after taking travel histories and doing some other work, most were ruled out. Of the 13 people who actually underwent testing, only one — the Dallas patient — tested positive.

The Dallas apartment complex where Duncan was believed to be staying was cordoned off Wednesday, and the management was turning away visitors. TV cameras lined the fence of the parking lot, and at least one helicopter hovered overhead.

Four American aid workers who became infected in West Africa have been flown back to the U.S. for treatment after they became sick. Three have recovered.

S.S. Chief Quits Due To Security Lapses

BY EILEEN SULLIVAN AND ALICIA A. CALDWELL
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Secret Service Director Julia Pierson abruptly resigned Wednesday in the face of multiple revelations of security breaches, bumbling in her agency and rapidly eroding confidence that the president and his family were being kept safe.

President Barack Obama "concluded new leadership of that agency was required," said spokesman Josh Earnest.

High-ranking lawmakers from both parties had urged her to step down after her poorly received testimony to Congress a day earlier — and revelation of yet another security problem: Obama had shared an elevator in Atlanta last month with an armed guard who was not authorized to be around him.

That appeared to be the last straw that crumbled trust in her leadership in the White House. Earnest said Obama and his staff did not learn about that breach until just before it was made public in news reports Tuesday.

"Today Julia Pierson, the director of the United States Secret Service, offered her resignation, and I accepted it," Homeland Security Secretary Jeh Johnson said in a statement. He announced that Joseph Clancy, retired head of the agency's Presidential Protective Division, would come out of retirement to lead the Secret Service temporarily.

Taking further steps to restore trust in the beleaguered agency, Johnson also outlined an independent inquiry into the agency's operations.

That trust was shaken by a series of failures in the agency's critical job of protecting the president, including a breach Sept. 19, when a knife-carrying man climbed over the White House fence on Pennsylvania Avenue and made it deep into the executive mansion before being stopped.

Republicans quickly served notice that Pierson's resignation and the inquiry ordered by Johnson would not end their investigation.

"The Oversight Committee will continue to examine clear and serious agency failures at the Secret Service," said the panel's chairman, Rep. Darrell Issa, R-Calif. "Problems at the Secret Service pre-date Ms. Pierson's tenure as director, and her resignation certainly does not resolve them."

Pierson's permanent replacement will probably face a grueling confirmation process before Congress.

In an interview with Bloomberg



OLIVIER DOULIERY/ABACA PRESS/MCT
United States Secret Service director Julia Pierson testifies at a hearing about the White House perimeter breach at the Rayburn Building in Washington, D.C., on Tuesday. On Sept. 19, 2014, an armed intruder entered the North Portico of the White House.

News after her resignation was announced, Pierson said she recognized that "Congress has lost confidence in my ability to run the agency."

She said she met Johnson on Wednesday and "after that discussion I felt this was the noble thing to do."

Rep. Jason Chaffetz, R-Utah, a leader of the congressional inquiry, called her resignation "the right thing to do, it had to happen, but there are some systemic challenges that must be addressed."

Some revelations came from whistleblowers who contacted Chaffetz, and he suggested more damaging stories may emerge. "Unfortunately there are more out there and we'll see how that goes," he said.

After a congressional hearing Tuesday into the Sept. 19 breach and an earlier one, reports emerged of still another. Earlier in September, Obama had shared an elevator in Atlanta with a private guard who was not authorized to be around him with a gun. That was the first known Secret Service failure to unfold in the presence of the president. The first family was not at the White House when the recent intruder entered.

The White House learned about the Atlanta episode only about when lawmakers and the public did — when the Washington Examiner and The Washington Post reported it, Earnest said.

Obama had not been told about it previously, Earnest said. This, despite Pierson's statement to the committee that she briefs the president "100 percent of the time" about threats to his personal security and those at the

White House. She said the only time she had briefed him this year was after the Sept. 19 White House intrusion.

The man accused of running into the White House on Sept. 19, Omar J. Gonzalez, pleaded not guilty Wednesday in a brief appearance in federal court. He is accused of unlawfully entering a restricted building while carrying a deadly weapon, which is a federal charge, and two violations of District of Columbia law.

Wearing a standard prison-issue orange jumpsuit, Gonzalez sat attentively at the defense table but did not address the court as his lawyer entered the plea.

As for Pierson, support for the Secret Service director unraveled quickly after her defensive testimony Tuesday, which left key questions unanswered.

Democratic Rep. Elijah Cummings, top Democrat on the committee, said in multiple interviews Wednesday that Pierson was no longer the best person to lead the Secret Service.

She is the latest administration official to leave in the midst of controversy. Others include:

— Veterans Affairs Secretary Eric Shinseki resigned last May, taking the blame for what he decried as a "lack of integrity" in the sprawling health care system for the nation's military veterans.

— Kathleen Sebelius, secretary of health and human services as the "Obamacare" insurance marketplace failed spectacularly in its launch, stayed on to oversee repairs before Obama accepted her resignation months later.