

Islamic State Poised To Capture Town

MURSITPINAR, Turkey (AP) — Islamic State fighters were poised to capture a strategic Syrian town on the Turkish border, Turkey's president warned Tuesday, even as Kurdish forces battled to expel the extremists from their footholds on the outskirts.

The outgunned Kurdish fighters struggling to defend Kobani got a small boost from a series of U.S.-led airstrikes against the militants that sent huge columns of black smoke into the sky. Limited coalition strikes have done little to blunt the Islamic State group's three-week offensive, and its fighters have relentlessly shelled the town in preparation for a final assault.

Warning that the aerial campaign alone was not enough to halt the Islamic State group's advance, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan called for greater cooperation with the Syrian opposition, which is fighting both the extremists and forces loyal to Syrian President Bashar Assad.

"Kobani is about to fall," Erdogan told Syrian refugees in the Turkish town of Gaziantep, near the border. "We asked for three things: One, for a no-fly zone to be created; Two, for a secure zone parallel to the region to be declared; and for the moderate opposition in Syria and Iraq to be trained and equipped."

Erdogan's comments did not signal a shift in Turkey's position: He has said repeatedly that Ankara wants to see a more comprehensive strategy for Syria before it commits to military involvement in the U.S.-led coalition.

N. Korea Acknowledges Its Labor Camps

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — A North Korean official publicly acknowledged to the international community the existence of his country's "reform through labor" camps Tuesday, a mention that appeared to come in response to a highly critical U.N. human rights report earlier this year.

Diplomats for the reclusive, impoverished country also told reporters that a top North Korea official has visited the headquarters of the European Union and expressed interest in dialogue, with discussions on human rights expected next year.

North Korea's deputy U.N. ambassador Ri Tong Il said the secretary of his country's ruling Workers Party had visited the EU, and that "we are expecting end of this year to open political dialogue between the two sides." The human rights dialogue would follow.

In Brussels, an EU official confirmed a recent North Korea meeting with the EU's top human rights official, Stavros Lambrinidis, but said any dialogue currently planned is limited to rights issues.

Choe Myong Nam, a North Korean foreign ministry official in charge of U.N. affairs and human rights issues, said at a briefing with reporters that his country has no prison camps and, in practice, "no prison, things like that."

Airstrikes Hardly Dent Islamic State Gains

BAGHDAD (AP) — After two months, the U.S.-led aerial campaign in Iraq has hardly dented the core of the Islamic State group's territory. The extremist fighters have melted into urban areas when needed to elude the threat, and they have even succeeded in taking new territory from an Iraqi army that still buckles in the face of militants.

In neighboring Syria, days of airstrikes have been unable to stop militants on the verge of capturing a strategic town on the Turkish border.

The limited results show the central weakness of the campaign: There is only so much that can be done from the air to defeat an extremist force that has swept over much of Iraq and Syria. The Islamic State fighters have proven elusive and flexible, able to reorganize to minimize the blows. And more importantly, there are almost no allied forces on the ground able to capitalize on the airstrikes and wrest back territory from the militants.

The exception: Iraqi Kurdish fighters, the most effective forces in Iraq, have made some modest gains the past week.

That only highlights how others have proven unable to do the same. The Iraqi military is undermined by corruption and command problems. A new Iraqi government has been trying to woo support from more Sunni tribesmen, whose fighters are seen as vital against the Sunni extremists, but so far there has not been a flood of support. In Syria, rebels supported by Washington are in no position to move against the extremists, and Syria's Kurds are not as well armed as Iraq's.

Japanese, US Scientists Win Nobel Prize

STOCKHOLM (AP) — An invention that promises to revolutionize the way the world lights its homes and offices — and already helps create the glowing screens of mobile phones, computers and TVs — earned a Nobel Prize on Tuesday for two Japanese scientists and a Japanese-born American.

By inventing a new kind of light-emitting diode, or LED, they overcame a crucial roadblock for creating white light far more efficiently than incandescent or fluorescent bulbs. Now LEDs are pervasive and experts say their use will only grow.

"Incandescent light bulbs lit the 20th century; the 21st century will be lit by LED lamps," the Nobel committee said in announcing its award to Japanese researchers Isamu Akasaki and Hiroshi Amano and naturalized U.S. citizen Shuji Nakamura.

Their work, done in the early 1990s, led to a fundamental transformation of technology for illumination, the committee said. And when the three arrive in Stockholm to collect their awards in early December, "they will hardly fail to notice the light from their invention glowing in virtually all the windows of the city."

Nakamura, 60, is a professor at the University of California, Santa Barbara. Akasaki, 85, is a professor at Meijo University and Nagoya University in Japan, while Amano, 54, is also at Nagoya. Akasaki and Amano made their inventions while working at Nagoya, while Nakamura was working separately at the Japanese company Nichia Chemicals.

Drug Agency Sued Over Fake Facebook

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Drug Enforcement Administration set up a fake Facebook account using photographs and other personal information it took from the cellphone of a New York woman arrested in a cocaine case in hopes of tricking her friends and associates into revealing incriminating drug secrets.

The Justice Department initially defended the practice in court filings but now says it is reviewing whether the Facebook guise went too far.

Sondra Arquiatt's Facebook account looked as real as any other. It included photos of her posing on the hood of a sleek BMW and a close-up with her young son and niece. She even appeared to write that she missed her boyfriend, who was identified by his nickname.

But it wasn't her. The account was the work of DEA Agent Timothy Sinnigen, Arquiatt said in a federal court lawsuit. The case is scheduled for trial next week in Albany, N.Y., court records show.

Justice Department spokesman Brian Fallon said in a statement Tuesday that officials were reviewing both the incident and the practice, although in court papers filed earlier in the case the government defended it. Fallon declined to comment further because the case was pending.

Ebola Evades European Defenses; Victims Pet Dog Must Die

BY JORGE SAINZ AND ALAN CLENNENING
Associated Press

MADRID — Health officials in Spain rushed to contain the Ebola virus Tuesday after it got past Europe's defenses, quarantining four people at a Madrid hospital where a nursing assistant got infected and persuading a court that the woman's dog must die.

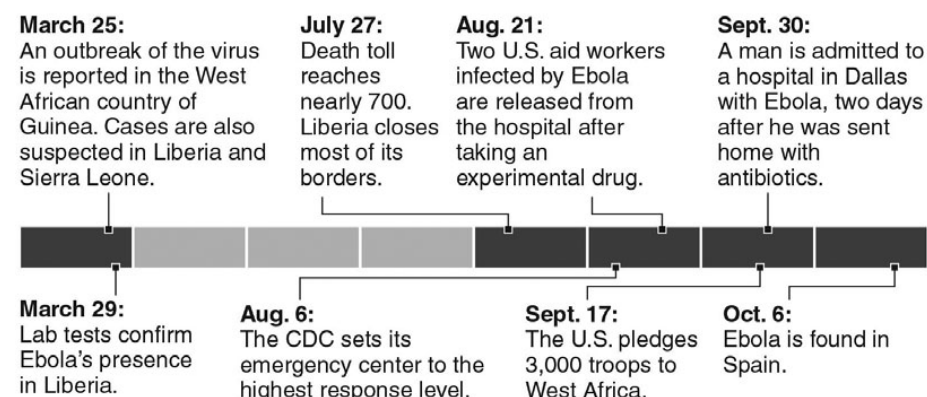
The first case of Ebola transmitted outside Africa, where a months-long outbreak has killed more than 3,400 people, is raising questions about how prepared wealthier countries really are. Health workers complained Tuesday that they lack the training and equipment to handle the virus, and the all-important tourism industry was showing its anxiety.

Medical officials in the United States, meanwhile, are retraining hospital staff and fine-tuning infection control procedures after the mishandling of a critically ill Liberian man in Texas, who might have exposed many others to the virus after being sent away by a hospital.

In Africa, the U.S. military was preparing to open a 25-bed mobile hospital catering to health care workers with Ebola, before building a total of 17 promised 100-bed Ebola Treatment Units in Liberia. The virus has taken an especially devastating toll on health care workers, sickening or killing more than 370 in the hardest-hit countries of Liberia, Guinea and Sierra Leone, where doctors and nurses were already in short supply.

And as the disease moved from a seemingly distant continent to the doorsteps of the world's largest economies, government

Ebola outbreak



leaders faced growing pressure to ramp up responses. Spanish opposition parties called for the resignation of Health Minister Ana Mato, and the European Union demanded answers to what went wrong.

Obama administration spokesman Josh Earnest said Tuesday that more passenger screening measures would be announced "in the next couple of days," even though the White House remains "confident in the screening measures that are currently in place."

The nursing assistant in Madrid was part of a special team caring for a Spanish priest who died of Ebola last month after being evacuated from Sierra Leone. The nursing assistant wore a hazmat suit both times she entered his room, officials said, and no records point to any accidental exposure to the virus, which spreads through direct contact with the bodily fluids of a sickened person.

The woman, who had been on vacation in the Madrid area after treating the priest, was diagnosed with Ebola on Monday after coming down with a fever, and was said to be stable

Tuesday. Her husband also was isolated as a precaution. Another quarantined nurse tested negative, but a man who traveled in Nigeria remained in isolation.

Madrid's regional government even got a court order to euthanize and incinerate their pet, Excalibur, against the couple's objections, without even testing the animal. A government statement said "available scientific information" provides no guarantee that infected dogs can't transmit the virus to humans.

Some reports in medical journals suggest that dogs can be infected with Ebola without showing symptoms, but whether they can spread the disease to people is unclear.

Ebola's source in nature hasn't been pinpointed. The leading suspect is a certain type of fruit bat, but the World Health Organization lists chimpanzees, gorillas, monkeys, forest antelope and porcupines as possibly playing a role in spread of the disease. Even pigs may amplify infection because of bats on farms in Africa.

Spanish authorities also were tracking down all the

woman's contacts, and put more than 50 other people under observation, including her relatives and fellow health care workers. "The priority now is to establish that there is no risk to anybody else," emergency coordinator Fernando Simon said.

Even so, the potential repercussions of Ebola's presence in Europe became clear, as shares of Spanish airline and hotel chain companies slumped in Tuesday's trading. Spain is Europe's biggest vacation destination after France, and investors were apparently spooked that the deadly virus could scare away travelers.

The afflicted woman, reportedly in her 40s and childless, was not identified to protect her privacy, but nursing union officials she had 14 years' experience. Spanish officials said she had changed a diaper for the priest and collected material from his room after he died. Dead Ebola victims are highly infectious, and in West Africa their bodies are collected by workers in hazmat outfits.

Protests Thin As Two Sides Agree To Talk

BY TIM SULLIVAN AND KELVIN CHAN
Associated Press

HONG KONG — Crowds of protesters who filled Hong Kong's streets with demands for more democracy thinned dramatically Tuesday after student leaders and the government agreed to hold talks in the increasingly frustrated city.

The government and students leaders announced they will begin talks on political reform on Friday. But while a government representative said negotiations were off to "a good start," the students expressed anger and disappointment at officials' unwillingness to address their real demands.

Just a few days after tens of thousands of demonstrators thronged the city's streets, only a couple thousand protesters were scattered across the three main protest areas on Tuesday night. But the six-lane highway that cuts through the heart of Hong Kong's business district remained blocked by demonstrators, once again snarling traffic and angering many commuters.

Despite the dwindling numbers of activists on the streets, protest leaders insisted the movement was far from defeated, and vowed to walk away from negotiations if the police used force to clear away the remaining demonstrators.

Michael Leung, 14, wearing his school uniform and



CHRIS STOWERS/MCT

Student protesters reinforce a sign in support of their movement at the Mong Kok pro-democracy site that continues to occupy the crucial Nathan Road/Argyle Street intersection in Hong Kong on Tuesday.

doing homework on the highway, said he had come to the protest zone on three days after school.

"You see now the number of people is decreasing because there has been no big action from the government and the police," he said. "But I think if the government or police want to clear this area, then the people will come out again."

At the territory's government headquarters, which had been blocked by protesters for a week, only a half dozen or so student protesters remained at the barricades. Eight policemen stood nearby, chatting among themselves.

On Tuesday night, a dozen policemen ringed a small group of pro-government demonstrators as they marched near the protesters.

"It is true democracy we're looking for!" one of the demonstrators cried into portable loudspeaker, as the group shouted her down.

Many uncertainties remain about how the standoff will be resolved. Lau Kong-wah, the territory's undersecretary of constitutional affairs, said the government's first meeting with students on Friday will discuss the details of political reform in a public forum.

But Lester Shum, a Hong Kong Federation of Students leader, said the group was disappointed that the government proposed to focus the talks on legal technicalities — a tactic that he said was used to dodge their demand for free elections.

"It shows the government has no sincerity to face Hong Kong's political problems and

the dissatisfaction of the many Hong Kong people who protested on the streets," he said.

"We will continue the occupation protests," he added. "We believe the occupation movement has put very big pressure on the government."

The dueling questions now are how long the demonstrators are willing to continue their protests — and how long until the government removes them.

"We are safe (from a crack-down) for the moment," said Joseph Cheng, a specialist in Chinese politics at the City University of Hong Kong who has deep ties to the city's pro-democracy movement. "Now that there are negotiations going on — or at least negotiations to discuss negotiations — we expect that the police will not clear the protesters for a few days."

But with the authorities unlikely to agree to the protesters' immediate demands, including the resignation of Hong Kong Chief Executive Leung Chun-ying, any talks could quickly collapse.

"The real test is what happens when the negotiations break down," said Cheng.

Like many protest leaders, Cheng suspects the government is purposefully slowing discussions to drive a wedge between the activists and residents increasingly anxious for the protests to end.

People "are now beginning to say: 'Hey, we want to make a living. You are disturbing my daily life,'" he said.

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