

## Rubio Seeks To Separate From Rep. Pack

CHICAGO (AP) — Marco Rubio's "lean" presidential campaign is putting on weight.

By every measure, the Florida senator's bid for the Republican nomination has grown more robust in October, boosted again by a strong showing in Wednesday night's debate. In preference polls and money flowing in, he's ticking upward.

The campaign's fundraising, which lagged that of several competitors over the summer and early fall, just finished its best month yet. In the hours around the debate Rubio raised \$750,000 online — more than on any previous occasion.

The next day, Rubio was cheered at two fundraisers in Chicago, each of which had more attendees than organizers had planned. At a "young professionals" happy hour at a downtown sports bar, the 44-year-old Rubio told a rowdy group that he woke up that morning "still kind of wired" from the debate.

"It's becoming easier to get people to say yes," said Chris Grozev, who said he sold a couple of hundred \$100 tickets to the happy hour.

## Congress OKs Bipartisan Budget Accord

WASHINGTON (AP) — Congress sent President Barack Obama a bipartisan budget accord Friday that staves off a destabilizing U.S. default, eases the threat of a federal shut-down and spotlights the pitfalls — and opportunities — posed by the current brand of divided government.

The Senate used a post-midnight, 64-35 vote to ship the package to the White House. The House approved the measure two days earlier by a similarly comfortable 266-167 margin, and Obama plans to sign it Monday.

Yet those no-sweat votes masked turmoil beneath the surface. The Republicans who run Congress opposed the legislation by a 2-1 edge in each chamber, telegraphing challenges ahead for Obama, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell and their new governing partner, House Speaker Paul Ryan.

## Greece Criticizes EU In Refugee Crisis

LESBOS, Greece (AP) — Drowned babies and toddlers washed onto Greece's famed Aegean Sea beaches, and a grim-faced diver pulled a drowned mother and child from a half-sunk boat that was decrepit long before it sailed. On shore, bereaved women wailed and stunned-looking fathers cradled their children.

At least 27 people, more than half of them children, died in waters off Greece Friday trying to fulfill their dream of a better life in Europe. The tragedy came two days after a boat crammed with 300 people sank off Lesbos in one of the worst accidents of its kind, leaving 29 dead.

It won't be the last.

As autumn storms threaten to make the crossing from Turkey even riskier and conditions in Middle Eastern refugee camps deteriorate, ever more refugees — mostly Syrians, Afghans and Iraqis — are joining the rush to reach Europe.

More than 60 people, half of them children, have died in the past three days alone, compared with just over a hundred a few weeks earlier.

## GOP Suspends Partnership With NBC

NEW YORK (AP) — Still annoyed by CNBC's handling of this week's presidential debate, the Republican National Committee said Friday that it was suspending its partnership with NBC News and its properties on a primary debate scheduled for February.

NBC News said it was disappointed in the development and will work to resolve the issue with the GOP.

It was unclear in the letter from RNC Chairman Reince Priebus to NBC News chief Andrew Lack whether the party would forbid NBC from televising the Feb. 26 debate and open up the broadcast rights to others. The debate was expected to be telecast on NBC and its Spanish-language partner, Telemundo.

Priebus' letter also comes amid the backdrop of the individual campaign organizations planning a meeting Sunday to air out grievances about the debate process and suggest changes — a meeting that is pointedly excluding the Republican National Committee.

Republicans were angered by what they characterized as petty, non-substantive questions by debate moderators Carl Quintanilla, Becky Quick and John Harwood designed to embarrass the candidates. Harwood asked Donald Trump whether he was running a "comic-book version of a presidential campaign."

## Police Report 2 Stabbings In Jerusalem

RAMALLAH, West Bank (AP) — A Palestinian stabbed and wounded an American man at a station of Jerusalem's light rail on Friday before he was shot dead by police, security guards and civilians, police said. An Israeli man was wounded in the cross-fire.

In the West Bank, two Palestinians carrying knives ran toward an Israeli checkpoint, drawing fire from troops who killed one and critically wounded the other, according to police and a Palestinian medic.

Friday's incidents were the latest in a series of Palestinian attacks that began in mid-September and were accompanied by widespread unrest, including clashes between Palestinian stone-throwers and Israeli troops.

There were no further details on the identity of the American.

In all, 11 Israelis were killed in Palestinian attacks, mostly stabbings, and 66 Palestinians died by Israeli fire in the past six weeks. Forty of the Palestinians killed were said by Israel to have been involved in attacks or attempted attacks. Nineteen Palestinians were wounded by Israeli fire in West Bank clashes Friday, the Palestinian Health Ministry said.

## Immigrants Believe They Can Stay In US

WASHINGTON (AP) — Nearly a year after the Obama administration launched a massive public relations campaign to dispel rumors of a free pass for immigrant families crossing the border illegally, internal intelligence files from the Homeland Security Department suggest that effort is failing.

Hundreds of immigrant families caught illegally crossing the Mexican border between July and September told U.S. immigration agents they made the dangerous trip in part because they believed they would be permitted to stay in the United States and collect public benefits.

The interviews with immigrants by federal agents were intended to help the Obama administration understand what might be driving a puzzling surge in the numbers of border crossings that started over the summer.

Administration efforts to stop the flow of immigrant families, primarily from Central America, have included public service campaigns in Honduras, El Salvador and Guatemala to highlight the dangers and consequences of making the trek.

The Associated Press obtained copies of the interview summaries, which were compiled in reports by the U.S. Customs and Border Protection's Office of Intelligence. They said hundreds of people traveling as part of families consistently cited opportunities to obtain permission to stay in the U.S., claim asylum and receive unspecified benefits. Immigrants spoke of "permisos," or a pass to come into the United States.

## Art Galleries Collect Lego For Ai Weiwei

LONDON (AP) — Ai Weiwei is taking on Lego, brick by brick.

Art galleries around the world are collecting plastic pieces for the dissident Chinese artist after the Danish toy company refused to supply its product for his latest project.

Ai, whose work is often critical of Chinese authorities, says Lego last month refused a bulk purchase order from an Australian gallery where he plans to build a new artwork on the theme of freedom of speech.

Ai called the move "an act of censorship and discrimination," but Lego says it can't endorse the use of its bricks in projects with a "political agenda."

London's Royal Academy, which is currently mounting an exhibition of Ai's work, is encouraging supporters to fill a BMW in its courtyard with Lego bricks that will be shipped to Ai.

# US Escalates Involvement In Syria Amid Talks On Assad Future

BY BRADLEY KLAPPER

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The United States escalated its fight against the Islamic State in Syria on Friday, pledging the first open deployment of military boots on the ground, even as U.S., Russian and other diplomats pressed a new peace effort that America hopes will hasten the departure of Bashar Assad.

Up to 50 special operations troops will be sent to assist Kurdish and Arab forces in northern Syria, American officials said. The move marks a significant departure for President Barack Obama, who for years has resisted putting ground forces in Syria even as he has gradually intensified the U.S. military response to what counterterrorism officials worry is a growing Islamic State threat in Syria and Iraq.

The troop announcement came as diplomats in Vienna representing 17 countries and the European Union agreed to launch a broad new peace attempt to gradually end Syria's long civil war — a declaration that avoided any determination on when President Assad might leave. It is not clear how many rebel groups would agree to a plan that doesn't result in Assad's immediate departure.

Any cease-fire agreement that may come as a result of the peace effort would not include the Islamic State, which controls large parts of northern Syria and has its capital there.

But the participation by Russia and Iran in the attempt could mark a new and promising phase in the diplomacy since those countries have staunchly backed Assad.

The White House has long said that Assad's ouster is essential to its ultimate goal of defeating the Islamic State because the Syrian president's brutal tactics against Sunni rebels have drawn Sunni radicals from all over the world into the militant group's ranks.

The Syrian civil war has killed more than 250,000 people and uprooted more than 11 million, sparking a refugee crisis throughout Europe.

Despite killing as many as 12,000 militants, the U.S. bombing campaign has not significantly weakened the Islamic State's capacity to hold territory, and the group's ranks have been replenished by foreign

fighters and others.

Military experts say ground troops are essential for the fight. A U.S. program to train Syrians was abandoned as a failure, and the new deployment essentially would replace that program.

Speaking to reporters flying with him on an overseas trip, Defense Secretary Ash Carter said this would probably not be the last significant adjustment to the anti-IS military campaign in Syria and Iraq.

"We are going to continue to innovate, to build up what works," he said.

Friday's developments came as missiles slammed into a crowded suburb of the Syrian capital. The attack killed at least 40 people, activists said. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights and the Local Coordination Committees group said government forces fired more than 11 missiles at a market in the suburb of Douma.

In Washington, officials said the new U.S. forces will work from headquarters locations and won't move to the front lines or be used to call in airstrikes. However, the U.S. has conducted special operations raids into Syria before now and will continue to do more unilateral raids. It helped Iraqi forces rescue hostages last week, and Master Sgt. Joshua Wheeler was killed, the first U.S. combat death in that country since 2011.

White House spokesman Josh Earnest said the new troops will not be on a "combat mission."

"There's no denying the serious risk they will be facing," Earnest said, but their mission will "not be to lead the charge to take the hill."

Russia and Syria are conducting airstrikes in the country, but Earnest said it was unlikely the U.S. troops would be at risk because Russia has not bombed in the area where they will be.

On Capitol Hill, some lawmakers greeted the troop announcement with dismay.

It "marks a major shift in U.S. policy — a shift that is occurring without congressional debate (and) is unlikely to succeed in achieving our objective of defeating IS," said Sen. Brian Schatz, D-Hawaii.

On the other hand, Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., chairman of the Armed Services Committee, said the decision was "another insufficient step in the Obama

administration's policy of gradual escalation."

One of the groups the U.S. troops will be working with is a Kurdish militia known as the YPG, which could pose a political problem for the United States.

The YPG was accused of war crimes in a recent report by Amnesty International, which documented allegations that the group forcibly displaced Arabs and Turkmen and burned down villages perceived as cooperating with its opponents. The group has denied the allegations and the State Department says it is looking into them.

Carter declined to be specific about where the U.S. troops will operate in northern Syria but said they will be in territory controlled by Syrian Kurds.

"However, the Kurdish YPG and the Syrian Arab coalition essentially work together to counter ISIL," he said.

In Vienna on Friday, the U.S., Russia and more than a dozen other nations directed the U.N. to start a new diplomatic process between Syria's government and opposition groups with the goal of reaching a nationwide cease-fire and political transition — but without an explicit demand for Assad to quickly leave power.

American officials say the talks marked a significant new phase, one they hope is an endgame for Assad's reign.

At a joint news conference with Russia's top diplomat and the U.N. envoy to Syria, U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry said the countries — including fierce regional rivals Iran and Saudi Arabia — each pledged to support an independent and secular Syria, to maintain the country's institutions, to protect the rights of all Syrians and to strive to defeat the Islamic State.

Kerry said the U.N.-led process should lead to a new constitution for Syria and internationally supervised elections, as well as an end to violence between Assad's military and Sunni rebel groups so the world community can focus on the fight against the Islamic State.

But no agreement was reached on Assad.

"I did not say that Assad has to go or that Assad has to say," Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said through an interpreter.

## Interior Minister: 27 Dead In Club Explosion In Bucharest

BY ALISON MUTLER

Associated Press

BUCHAREST, Romania — An explosion and ensuing flames on a stage at a Bucharest nightclub on Friday left 27 people dead and 180 hospitalized with injuries, Romania's interior minister said.

Interior Minister Gabriel Oprea said the explosion occurred at Colectiv club, located in a basement in downtown Bucharest, a city of 3 million people.

Witnesses told Antena 3 TV that there were between 300 to 400 mostly young people at the club and only one exit door when the metal band Goodbye to Gravity was performing and a "pyrotechnical show" went awry. The station reported that people panicked and rushed for the exit.

Media reported that emergency services arrived 11

minutes after the first call at 10:32 p.m. (2032 GMT).

Digi 24 television station cited witnesses who said the explosion came after a spark on stage ignited some polystyrene decor. Victor Ionescu, who was at the club with his girlfriend, told Antena 3 TV by telephone that there were huge flames after the explosion.

"People were fainting, they were fainting from the smoke. It was total chaos, people were trampling on each other," he said.

A young man filmed by Antena 3 said that flames engulfed clubgoers, burning their skin and hair.

Raed Arafat, a government health ministry official, said that people were treated for burns, smoke inhalation and lesions at hospitals around the capital.

"It is a tragedy without

precedent and it is an intervention without precedent," he said.

According to the Bucharest-based metal band's Facebook page, lead singer Andrei Gault was the 2008 winner of "Megastar," a Romanian show similar to "American Idol." The band has five members and has released two albums since it formed in 2011.

President Klaus Iohannis sent his condolences and said

he was considering declaring a day of national mourning.

The ministry said there were 60 ambulances and fire engines were sent to the scene and a mobile hospital had been set up outside. Some 50 people were taken to the Floreasca emergency hospital, the ministry said.

Health Minister Nicolae Banicioiu called for people to donate blood to help the injured.

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