

Could Model Planes Be A Terrorist Weapon?

BOSTON (AP) — Model airplanes are suddenly on the public's radar as potential terrorist weapons. A Muslim American from suburban Boston was arrested Wednesday and accused of plotting to attack the Pentagon and the U.S. Capitol with remote-controlled model planes packed with explosives.

These are not balsa-wood-and-rubber-band toys investigators are talking about. The FBI said Rezwan Ferdaus hoped to use military-jet replicas, 5 to 7 1/2 feet long, guided by GPS devices and capable of speeds over 100 mph.

Federal officials have long been aware of the possibility someone might try to use such planes as weapons, but there are no restrictions on their purchase — Ferdaus is said to have bought his over the Internet.

Counterterrorism experts and model-aircraft hobbyists said it would be nearly impossible to inflict large-scale damage of the sort Ferdaus allegedly envisioned using model planes. The aircraft are too small, can't carry enough explosives and are too tricky to fly, they said.

"The idea of pushing a button and this thing diving into the Pentagon is kind of joke, actually," said Greg Hahn, technical director of the Academy of Model Aeronautics.

Coalition Says Attacks Trending Downward

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP) — International forces in Afghanistan released new data Thursday showing violence trending downward in their favor, only a day after the U.N. reported considerably more clashes and other attacks per month than last year.

The quick scheduling of the news conference to unveil the statistics underscored NATO's sensitivity about how the war is perceived back home as the U.S. and other nations start to withdraw some forces with an eye toward pulling all combat troops out by the end of 2014.

The new statistics show that insurgent attacks in the first eight months of the year were down 2 percent compared with the same period last year.

The U.N. report, by contrast, found that the monthly average number of clashes and other attacks was running nearly 40 percent higher than last year. The U.N. study measured not only Taliban attacks but also assaults by NATO and Afghan forces on insurgents; it did not provide a breakdown between the two.

The coalition cited methodological differences between the two surveys: The U.N. report counted a wide range of security incidents that the NATO report did not, including arrests and seizures of weapons caches.

Dr. Took Vials From Jackson's Nightstand

LOS ANGELES (AP) — One of Michael Jackson's bodyguards had barely stepped into the singer's bedroom when he heard a scream: "Daddy!" Jackson's young daughter cried.

A few feet away, the singer lay motionless in his bed, eyes slightly open. His personal doctor, Conrad Murray, was trying to revive him when he saw that Jackson's eldest children were watching.

"Don't let them see their dad like this," Murray said, the first of many orders that bodyguard Alberto Alvarez testified Thursday that he heeded in the moments before paramedics arrived at Jackson's home in June 2009.

What happened next — after Alvarez said he ushered Jackson's eldest son and daughter from the room — is one of the key pieces of prosecutors' involuntary manslaughter case against Murray.

According to Alvarez, Murray scooped up vials of medicine from Jackson's nightstand and told the bodyguard to put them away. "He said, 'Here, put these in a bag,'" Alvarez said.

Ex-Ambassador Says Hijacker Lived In Africa

LISBON, Portugal (AP) — A convicted American killer who disappeared after a 1972 hijacking lived openly in West Africa under his real name for years and even socialized with U.S. embassy officials there, a former U.S. ambassador said Thursday.

The comments by John Blacken, a retired U.S. ambassador to Guinea-Bissau, raised new questions about a decades-long FBI manhunt for George Wright, who managed to elude authorities for 41 years until being arrested Monday in Portugal.

Blacken told The Associated Press he was stunned to hear about Wright's arrest because he knew him and his wife — who might have even worked on translation projects for the U.S. embassy. But Blacken had no idea that Wright was a fugitive.

In Washington, the U.S. State Department had no immediate comment.

Wright's years on the lam took him across the globe — from New Jersey to Detroit to Algeria to France to Guinea-Bissau and then Portugal, at the very least.

Lawyer: Knox Victim Of 'Tragic Judicial Case'

PERUGIA, Italy (AP) — An Italian defense lawyer argued Thursday that Amanda Knox is an innocent girl "crucified" in the media and wrongly convicted of killing her roommate, urging an appeals court not to be afraid to correct a mistake.

Carlo Dalla Vedova told the court in his closing arguments that Knox has been the victim of a "tragic judicial case" and has spent more than 1,000 days behind bars as a result. The highly anticipated verdict in the appeals case is expected Monday.

Knox was convicted of murdering Meredith Kercher, a British student in Perugia, and sentenced to 26 years in prison, while co-defendant Raffaele Sollecito was sentenced to 25 years. They deny wrongdoing and have appealed.

"Knox has been crucified, impaled in a public square, subjected to the most sinister of speculations," Dalla Vedova said. "All, regardless of their nationalities, have offended Amanda Knox."

Soon after her arrest on Nov. 6, 2007, Knox became a media sensation, depicted either as a manipulative girl-gone-wild or as a naive young woman caught up in a judicial nightmare. The media remained hooked on the case, and hundreds of reporters, cameramen and photographers.

GOP Presidential Debate In Az. Set For Dec. 1

PHOENIX (AP) — Arizona Gov. Jan Brewer says a Republican presidential debate has been scheduled in the state for Dec. 1.

Brewer said Thursday that CNN will televise the debate, which will highlight Southwestern issues and give Arizona voters a close-up look at the candidates.

CNN and the Arizona Republican Party will co-host the nationally televised debate, which will be aired at 8 p.m. EST. A venue hasn't been selected yet.

The debate also will be aired globally on CNN International, CNN en Espanol and CNN Radio.

U.S. Condemns Assault On Envoy In Syria

BY MATTHEW LEE
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Obama administration blamed the Syrian government for an attack on the top U.S. envoy to Syria on Thursday, saying it was part of an ongoing, orchestrated campaign to intimidate American diplomats there.

Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton called the assault on a convoy carrying the U.S. ambassador an "ugly" incident for which Syria's government and security services must answer. She demanded that Syrian authorities protect foreign diplomats.

"We condemn this unwarranted attack in the strongest possible terms," Clinton told reporters at the State Department. "This attempt to intimidate our diplomats through violence is wholly unjustified."

Administration officials said they had lodged formal protests with Syrian authorities but there were no plans to recall Ambassador Robert Ford from Damascus. He wasn't injured.

Officials said Ford would continue to meet opposition figures and press the government to end its brutal six-month crackdown on

pro-reform demonstrators. The crackdown led President Barack Obama and some European leaders to demand that Syrian President Bashar Assad step down.

The White House and State Department said no one was injured when a violent mob pelted Ford and several colleagues with tomatoes and eggs as they entered the office of a prominent Syrian opposition figure. However, they said several heavily armored embassy vehicles sent to help extricate them from the situation were badly damaged with broken windows and dents when the same crowd hurled rocks.

"This inexcusable assault is clearly part of ongoing campaign of intimidation aimed at diplomats ... who are raising questions about what is going on inside Syria," Clinton said. "It reflects an intolerance on the part of the regime and its supporters."

At the White House, spokesman Jay Carney said the attack was "unwarranted and unjustifiable." He praised Ford for bearing witness to the "brutality of the Assad regime" and putting "himself at great personal risk to support the legitimate aspirations of the Syrian people."

Ford and his colleagues had left the em-

bassy to visit opposition leader Hassan Abdul-Azim, who heads the outlawed Arab Socialist Democratic Union party. Trying to keep a low profile, they parked about a block away and walked to the office where they were confronted by the crowd, according to Toner.

Abdul-Azim said Ford was inside his office when the Assad supporters tried to force their way in, breaking some door locks. Office staff prevented them from rushing in, but the ambassador was trapped inside for about three hours by the hostile pro-government protesters outside. Ford called the U.S. Embassy for help and alerted Syrian authorities to the situation. But Syrian security forces did not show up for more than an hour.

Syria's Foreign Ministry said the U.S. Embassy informed the ministry that Ford was confronted by protesters when he visited Abdul-Azim. The statement added that the ministry immediately contacted security authorities, who "took all measures needed to protect the ambassador and his team and secured their return to their work in accordance with Syria's international commitments."

Retired Military To Pay Higher Health Premiums

BY PAULINE JELINEK
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Military retirees will pay slightly more for their health care starting Saturday, and more cost increases are on the way.

Premiums haven't been raised since 1994 and still will be just a fraction of what civilians pay. Under a change announced by the Defense Department on Thursday, individuals who enroll in the retiree program as of Saturday will pay \$260 annually, up from \$230, and it will be \$520 annually for a family, up from \$460.

Retirees already in the program will not see any increase until next year because they have already paid for this year. But "modest annual increases" are planned in the future, Cynthia Smith, a Pentagon spokeswoman, said.

Active duty service members get free health care and that will remain the same. But other personnel changes unpopular with service member may be in the offing due to U.S. budget problems, including changes to the system for retirement pay, which is under study.

Military health costs have ballooned since 2001, and increases announced Thursday were approved in February by former Defense Secretary Robert Gates, who said he was trying to get spending under control. The decades-old health program, known as TRI-CARE, provides health coverage to some 10 million active duty personnel, retirees, reservists and their families. Its costs have jumped from \$19 billion in 2001 to \$53 billion, according to estimates from earlier this year.

"We are committed to offering the best possible health care system for our entire military family," Dr. Jonathan Woodson, the assistant defense secretary for health affairs, said in a statement Thursday. "This modest annual fee increase allows us to responsibly manage our costs in line with other secretary of defense initiatives announced earlier this year."

Officials have tried previously to raise premiums but were met with resistance from veterans' groups as well as lawmakers loathe to tamper with benefits of men and women in uniform who have sacrificed for the nation. But the nation's budget and debt crises have changed that.

Gates particularly singled out working-age

retirees — those in their 40s who retired after 20 years in the military and can go on to second careers, meaning they are likely to be able to afford a small increase, he said.

That retirement system is also under a magnifying glass. A Pentagon advisory panel in July created an uproar among troops and retirees by suggesting it should be scrapped and replaced with a 401K-style savings plan. Though the report was preliminary, advisory and nonbinding, Defense Secretary Leon Panetta took pains to put out a statement saying he believed any changes to retirement pay should exempt current troops and retirees.

But Panetta also said the system needed to be looked at, and other defense officials have said everything is on the table as the Pentagon looks for savings.

Panetta also agreed with the advisory group that the retirement system is unfair in that it pays lifetime benefits at about half of base pay, starting immediately when a person retires with 20 years of service, but it pays nothing for those who stay in uniform for 10, 15 or even 19 years.

OBITUARIES

Ronald 'Ornery' Barkl

Ronald "Ornery" James Barkl ("Mayor" of the Holiday Gas Station on Prairie and Highway 95), 69, of Careywood, died Sept. 21, 2011, doing what he loved, working on trucks in Hayden.

He was born during the heat of World War II on March 7, 1942, in Yankton, S.D., to a large Czech farm family, where he famously began his lifelong career as a mechanic by rebuilding a tractor engine at the tender age of 9.

He served in the Air Force as a crew chief to his favorite airplane, the C-130, during Vietnam. After that he traveled around and later married his spouse, Christine Barkl, and is survived by his oldest son, Troy, and his two daughters: Jessica and Christin, respectively.

The family settled in North Idaho shortly after the birth of their first daughter, and Ron worked with Union Pacific Railroad in Spokane until it was deregulated in the '80s. He then went on to work for himself and was famous for his 19-foot work van. He loved to bother his daughters about getting their oil changed and watching his son play baseball or softball. In addition, to all of this he was an avid Yankees fan, since 1952, and finally saw them play at the "original" Yankee Stadium in 2006.

In 2009, he walked his youngest daughter down the aisle to become Mrs. Ryan Cantlon. He loved animals and working on his property in Careywood. He loved his '68 British-racing-green SS Camaro 396, he loved Chinese food at Hayden's Pau Pau's and, more than anything, he loved his family.

He is also survived by three brothers, Harold, Alden and Bill; and five sisters, Lillian, Sylvia, Wilma, Lovella and Emily. He was also the surrogate "Dad" to Davey Davis and Paul MacGovern, and doted on Paul's children.

He lived a very full life, but he

Audrey Schuurmans

Funeral Mass for Audrey Schuurmans of Tyndall will be held at 3:00 p.m. on Friday, September 30 at St. Leo Catholic Church in Tyndall with Fr. Joe Forcelle as Celebrant. Organist will be Kathy Koenig and soloist is Kevin McLouth. Interment will follow in St. Leo Catholic Cemetery, Tyndall.

Active casketbearers are Nick Mansour, Michael Mansour, Paul Kreber, Tom Kreber, Jared Schuurmans, Gerrit Schuurmans, and Tyler Hagedorn. Honorary casketbearers are Bruce Gross, Dylan Gross and Matthew Hagedorn.

Visitation will be held on Thursday from 5:00 p.m. until 8:00 p.m. at the Goglin Funeral Home in Tyndall. There will be visitation from 10:00 a.m. until 1:00 p.m. at the funeral home on Friday.

Online condolences may be sent at www.goglinfh.com.

Audrey Mae Schuurmans was born on Wednesday, December 10, 1930 in Tyndall, South Dakota to Louis and Lydia (Jilek) Kreber. She attended Country School through the eighth grade, and graduated from Tyndall High School in 1948. She later earned her Teaching Certificate from Southern State Teacher's College. Prior to her marriage, she taught country school in Bon



Schuurmans

Homme County. Audrey was united in marriage to Darrel Schuurmans on Saturday, February 20, 1954 at St. Columbkille Catholic Church in Wilmington, Ohio. While Darrel was stationed in Ohio, Audrey continued her teaching career as a 1st grade teacher in Clinton, Ohio. Following their return to the area, she resumed teaching country school and later taught 5th grade in Tyndall. In later years, she became a teaching aide with special needs children in Tyndall. She especially enjoyed teaching at the Bon Homme Colony and teaching art. In her spare time, Audrey loved gardening, painting and calligraphy, genealogy studies, and cards, especially pinochle. She was a 4-H leader and was a member of the Jolly Neighbors, St. Leo's Altar Society, and Catholic Order of Foresters. Audrey passed away on Tuesday, September 27, 2011 in Tyndall,

South Dakota, having attained the age of 80 years, 9 months, and 17 days.

Audrey is survived by her children: Gary (Connie) Schuurmans of Norfolk, Nebraska, Judi Schuurmans-Peyton of West Point, Nebraska, Patti (Randy) Hagedorn of Norfolk, Nebraska, and Lynda (Brett) Gross of Baxter, Minnesota; twelve grandchildren: two great-grandchildren: a brother, Ed (Mary) Kreber of Springfield; and two sisters: Mary Ellen (Mike) Penessa of Green Valley, Arizona and Sharon (Nick) Mansour, of Tucson, Arizona.

Preceding her in death was her husband, Darrel Schuurmans in 2008, her daughter, Susan Schuurmans in 1990, her parents, Louis and Lydia Kreber, two brothers, Harold Kreber and William Kreber, and one sister, Lois Kreber.

Yankton Press & Dakotan
September 30, 2011

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www.goglinfh.com

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