

Cobbling Coalition For Iraq, Syria No Easy Task

BY LARA JAKES AND DESMOND BUTLER
Associated Press

ANKARA, Turkey — Assembling a coalition to fight the militants from the Islamic State group is proving to be a complicated affair.

France is all in, but would like to invite Iran — against the wishes of the United States. The U.S. is pressing Turkey, which has resisted publicly endorsing the global strategy against the extremists, who are holding 49 Turkish hostages.

Many world leaders want to act quickly, before the Islamic State group gains more territory. But it's crucial to reach agreement on what the coalition is doing and why, particularly after bitter diplomatic divisions created by the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq a decade ago.

U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry said as many as 40 countries have offered various levels of support — from humanitarian aid to cracking down on illicit cross-border funding and fighters that are flowing to the insurgents — to providing intelligence and supplies to rebels in Syria and security forces in Iraq.

But after more than a week of meetings with top NATO and Mideast officials, Kerry refused to say Friday precisely how a global campaign that is being pieced together by the U.S. would succeed in destroying the Islamic State group, which has taken over large parts of Iraq and Syria.

The U.S. needs serious support from regional players if it

hopes to weaken the militants over the long term.

Kerry has persuaded key Arab allies to join a coalition of Mideast nations that pledged to curb the extremists' resources, repudiate their ideology, provide humanitarian aid to its victims and potentially contribute to a military campaign.

He's had less success in getting Turkey to join in. Visiting Ankara on Friday, he pressed Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu to harden borders against fighters and funding flowing to the Islamic State militant group.

Turkey sits on the front line of the Islamic State group's battleground in Iraq and safe haven in Syria. It already has helped refugees and cracked down on suspicious cross-border traffic from both countries.

But Turkey is in a tight spot, and the U.S. is being careful not to push too hard on its NATO ally as Turkish authorities grapple with trying to free the hostages, who include diplomats. The Turks were kidnapped from their consulate in the northern Iraqi city of Mosul when it was overrun by the Islamic State group in June.

"They have a few sensitive issues," Kerry told the BBC on Thursday. "We respect those sensitive issues, and we're going to work with them very carefully."

At the start of a meeting Friday with Kerry, Cavusoglu cited "challenges and threats" in Iraq and Syria.

The Sunni Muslim extremists also are holding several



Americans hostage. After Washington launched more than 150 airstrikes against them in Iraq since last month, they have beheaded two U.S. freelance journalists who were working in Syria.

Senior U.S. officials who briefed reporters traveling with Kerry said Ankara already has been working against the Islamic State, including by recently denying about 6,000 people from entering Turkey and deporting 1,000 more who were deemed suspicious. But one of the U.S. officials said Turkey's borders remain extremely porous.

Pistorius Convicted Of Culpable Homicide

BY GERALD IMRAY AND CHRISTOPHER TORCHIA
Associated Press

PRETORIA, South Africa — A judge convicted Oscar Pistorius of culpable homicide Friday in the death of his girlfriend, ruling that the former track star was negligent when he opened fire in his home after hearing what he said sounded like an intruder in a bathroom in the middle of the night.

The judge acquitted Pistorius of a more serious murder charge, a day after saying that the onetime Olympian could have called security guards or screamed for help on the balcony instead of grabbing his handgun and blasting multiple rounds through the door of a toilet stall.

Under South African law, culpable homicide is the illegal killing of someone through irresponsible behavior. The charge is comparable to reckless homicide or manslaughter.

"The conduct of the accused after the incident is inconsistent" with someone who had just committed murder, Judge Thokozile Masipa said, referring to Pistorius' telephone calls for help after he shot Reeva Steenkamp and his apparent distress as he cried and prayed over her body.

The runner's conviction on the lesser charge troubled some people who said the law goes too easy on deep-pocketed defendants such as Pistorius, who hired a high-powered legal team.

"People think he got away with murder," said Veronica Nyathi, a Johannesburg resident. "Most people want to see him go to jail. If he was poor, he would definitely be in jail. But if you are rich, your life can go on as normal."

Pistorius showed no emotion as he stood in a dark suit with his hands crossed in front of him for the judgment. After the verdict, the double-amputee who rose to fame running on carbon-fiber blades, was hugged by relatives. The judge then or-



Oscar Pistorius arrives for the final verdict at North Gauteng High Court on September 12, 2014 in Pretoria, South Africa. Judge Thokozile Masipa has ruled out murder charges, but announced today that Oscar Pistorius is guilty of culpable homicide.

dered a recess and extended his bail.

The verdict capped months of testimony in a trial that was followed around the world and had been seen as a showcase for the justice system in South Africa a generation after the end of white racist rule.

The next step in the sensational case comes at an Oct. 13 sentencing hearing, when the defense and the prosecution call witnesses to try to influence the judge's decision on whether, or for how long, Pistorius should go to prison.

The sentence for a culpable homicide conviction is at the judge's discretion and can range from a suspended sentence and a fine to as much as 15 years in prison. Legal experts have cited five years as a guideline.

South Africa does not have a jury system. Masipa, 66, reached the verdict with the help of two assistants. One of South Africa's first black female judges, she is regarded by some as a sym-

bol of the country's transformation since 1994, deciding a case in which the accused, as well as the chief defense lawyer and prosecutor, are all white men.

Masipa said Pistorius could not be convicted of premeditated murder or a lesser murder charge because prosecutors did not prove that he knew Steenkamp was behind the locked toilet door when he shot through it in the predawn hours of Valentine's Day last year.

Pistorius said he mistook Steenkamp for an intruder. The prosecution said he killed her intentionally after an argument. The 29-year-old model had been seeing him for only a few months.

Some legal analysts agreed there was a strong case for conviction on the lesser charge because Pistorius knew that someone — in his version, an intruder — was behind the toilet door when he fired.

"The verdict is shocking to say the least," said

Leonard Gray in Port Elizabeth, Steenkamp's hometown. "I feel sorry for Reeva Steenkamp's family because they're not going to get any closure."

However, Shrina Padayachy, also in Port Elizabeth, called the judge's verdict "fair and just because it's the prosecution that must prove beyond a reasonable doubt." Pistorius' uncle, Arnold Pistorius, said there were no winners in the case, but his family was relieved.

"It's a big burden off us, off our shoulders," he said. "We always knew the facts of the matter, and we never had any doubt in Oscar's version of this tragic incident."

Disappointed prosecutors said they would decide whether to appeal only after sentencing.

The judge convicted the 27-year-old athlete of illegally firing a gun in a public place when a friend's pistol he was handling went off in a Johannesburg restaurant in early 2013, weeks before Steenkamp's killing.

Increasing Airstrikes In Iraq Expected

WASHINGTON (AP) — As U.S. forces gear up for airstrikes in Syria, the first demonstration of President Barack Obama's more aggressive military campaign against the Islamic State group is likely to unfold first in Iraq as early as next week, officials said Friday.

In Syria, U.S. planes and drones will be gathering intelligence on targets and air defense threats in preparation for airstrikes there. At the same time, a wider range of targets — perhaps including Islamic State leaders — are expected to come under attack in Iraq.

U.S. warplanes have launched 158 strikes in Iraq over the past five weeks while emphasizing a relatively narrow set of targets. The focus has been Obama's initial goal of defending U.S. personnel, protecting critical infrastructure such as major dams and enabling humanitarian relief operations.

New strikes Friday destroyed two Islamic State armed vehicles in an effort to support Iraqi troops near the Mosul Dam and in defense of Irbil, the military's U.S. Central Command said.

More U.S. troops, along with additional intelligence-gathering aircraft, are expected to arrive in northern Iraq next week. That will enable an expanded surveillance effort over Syria by a range of aircraft, including Predator and Reaper drones as well as Navy EA-18G electronic warfare planes that are capable of jamming air defense radars and striking ground targets.

Was The Authorization For War Legal?

WASHINGTON (AP) — On the cusp of intensified airstrikes in Iraq and Syria, President Barack Obama is using the legal grounding of the congressional authorizations President George W. Bush relied on more than a decade ago to go to war. But Obama has made no effort to ask Congress to explicitly authorize his own conflict.

The White House said again Friday that Bush-era congressional authorizations for the war on al-Qaida and the Iraq invasion give Obama authority to act without new approval by Congress under the 1973 War Powers Act. That law, passed during the Vietnam War, serves as a constitutional check on presidential power to declare war without congressional consent. It requires presidents to notify Congress within 48 hours of military action and limits the use of military forces to no more than 60 days unless Congress authorizes force or declares war.

"It is the view of this administration and the president's national security team specifically that additional authorization from Congress is not required, that he has the authority that he needs to order the military actions," White House spokesman Josh Earnest said. He said there were no plans to seek consent from Congress. "At this point we have not, and I don't know of any plan to do so at this point," he said.

The administration's tightly crafted legal strategy has short-circuited the congressional oversight that Obama once championed. The White House's use of post-9/11 congressional force authorizations for the broadening air war has generated a chorus of criticism that the justifications are, at best, a legal stretch.

Video Could Prove Brown Surrendered

ST. LOUIS (AP) — Cellphone video that shows a witness raising his hands in the air immediately after the fatal shooting of a black 18-year-old by a white police officer in Ferguson appears to support previous accounts and could bolster arguments that Brown was surrendering when he was shot, legal experts said Friday.

The video obtained by The Associated Press and first aired by CNN shows two landscapers who were working near the street where Brown was shot by officer Darren Wilson on Aug. 9. In the video, a man can be heard saying, "He had his (expletive) hands up," while one of the workers raises his own hands in the air. The man who took the cellphone video, who spoke on condition of anonymity because he feared for his safety, said the voice is that of the worker raising his hands, but that isn't clear on the video.

The workers are not from Ferguson and were employed by a business from Jefferson County, south of St. Louis. They have not come forward publicly and the AP has been unable to reach them.

EU Sanctions Hit Russian Oil Companies, Lawmakers

BY JUERGEN BAETZ
Associated Press

BRUSSELS — New European Union sanctions against Russia announced Friday toughen financial penalties on the country's banks, arms manufacturers and its biggest oil company, Rosneft, to punish Moscow for what the West sees as efforts to destabilize Ukraine.

The United States was also expected to announce more sanctions Friday.

The EU measures, which were made official after a preliminary agreement Thursday, broaden the scope of penalties imposed in July. They increase restrictions to Europe's capital markets, which further limits the targeted Russian companies' ability to raise money, for example. They now also apply to major oil and defense companies, not only banks.

Similarly, the EU broadened the scope of existing

limits on the export of high-technology goods and items that could also be used for military purposes, so-called dual-use goods.

The sanctions also ban another 24 officials from traveling to the EU and freeze their assets there. Among the individuals are four deputy Parliament speakers and leaders of the separatists in eastern Ukraine. They also hit businessman Sergey Viktorovich Chemezov, who served in the Soviet intelligence service in Germany alongside President Vladimir Putin during the Cold War and is now known as one of his "close associates," according to the EU.

The EU sanctions forbid EU companies from engaging in new contracts in oil drilling, exploration and related services in Russia's Arctic, deep sea and shale oil projects. Russia's Rosneft is majority-owned by the state, but Britain's BP holds a 19.75

percent stake in it.

The curbs on access to Europe's financial markets also hit pipeline operator Transneft, the oil subsidiary of Russia's state-owned energy giant Gazprom and plane maker United Aircraft Corporation.

Conspicuously absent from the list of targets was Russia's gas industry, because many EU nations depend on Russian gas imports. The penalties hit only Gazprom's crude oil subsidiary.

The sanctions take immediate effect and will be reviewed by EU nations at the end of the month. Russia has threatened to retaliate.

Speaking at a conference in Kiev on Friday, European Parliament President Martin Schulz said the new sanctions were a sign to Moscow that there is "no return to business as usual."

The military conflict between the Ukrainian government and pro-Russian

separatists in eastern Ukraine has been raging since mid-April, claiming more than 3,000 lives, according to the UN. Ukraine and the West have accused Russia of providing the rebels with weapons and recruits, which Russia denies.

The new EU capital market sanctions ban credits and loans with a maturity of over 30 days for the targeted Russian banks and firms. Previous sanctions covered only debt and equity with a maturity of more than 90 days.

Limiting access to western capital markets curbs lending and is likely to weigh down Russia's already flagging economy.

"Even though (targeted) companies are not threatened with an immediate liquidity crisis, the banks and firms concerned will painfully notice, especially the stronger constraints for short-term refinancing," said the managing director of the Association of German Banks, Michael Kemmer.

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