

House Approves Arms For Syrian Rebels

BY DAVID ESPO AND
 DONNA CASSATA
 Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Republican-controlled House voted grudgingly to give the administration authority to train and arm Syrian rebels on Wednesday as President Barack Obama emphasized anew that American forces “do not and will not have a combat mission” in the struggle against Islamic State militants in either Iraq or Syria.

The 273-156 vote crossed party lines to an unusual degree in a Congress marked by near ceaseless partisanship. Top Republican and Democratic leaders backed Obama’s plan seven weeks before midterm elections, while dozens of rank-and-file lawmakers in both parties opposed it.

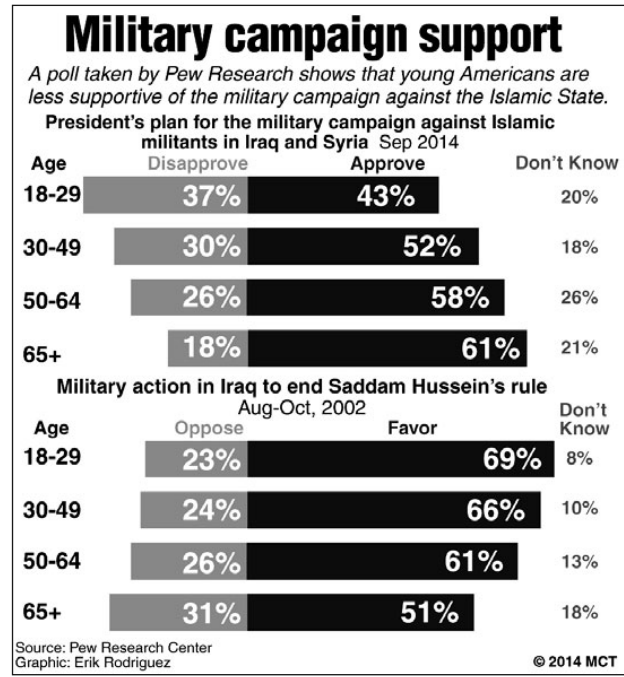
The provision was added to spending legislation that will ensure the federal government operates normally after the Sept. 30 end of the budget year. Final approval is expected in the Senate as early as Thursday.

Even supporters of the military plan found little to trumpet. “This is the best of a long list of bad options,” said Rep. Jim Moran, D-Va.

One Republican supporter noted the measure includes strict limits on Obama’s authority. “Members on both sides of the aisle are very concerned that too much of Congress’ warmaking power has gone to the president,” said Rep. Tom Cole of Oklahoma.

Obama’s remarks and similar comments Wednesday by House Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi of California seemed designed to reassure liberal lawmakers that the new military mission would be limited.

In a statement following the vote, Obama said the House “took an important step forward as our nation unites to confront the threat posed” by the Islamic State group, showing bipartisan support for a “critical component” of his strategy against



the extremists. Only a day earlier, Gen. Martin E. Dempsey, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, drew widespread attention when he told Congress he might recommend the use of U.S. ground combat forces if Obama’s current strategy fails to stop the militants.

Across the political aisle from the president and Pelosi, Speaker John Boehner, R-Ohio, and House Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy of California swung behind the plan. Yet many other Republicans expressed concerns that it would be insufficient to defeat militants who have overrun parts of Syria and Iraq and beheaded two American journalists.

In all, 85 Democrats and 71 Republicans voted to deny Obama the authority he sought. The measure passed on the strength of 159 votes from Republicans and 114 from Democrats.

GOP lawmakers took solace in the short-term nature of the legislation. It grants Obama authority only until Dec. 11, giving Congress plenty of time to return to the issue in a postelection session set to begin in mid-November. While the military

provision was given a separate vote in the House — to tack it onto the spending bill — it seemed unlikely there would be a yes-or-no vote in the Senate on Obama’s new military strategy to train rebel forces in Saudi Arabia to be used in conjunction with potential U.S. airstrikes.

Instead, the Senate is likely to vote only once on the legislation that combines approval for arming and training rebels with the no-shutdown federal spending provisions.

Officials put a \$500 million price tag on Obama’s request to train and equip rebels. The cost generated virtually no discussion among lawmakers, who focused instead on the possible consequences of a new military mission not long after America ended participation in wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Testifying before a Senate Committee, Secretary of State John Kerry said the forces seeking to create an Islamic state “must be defeated. Period. End of story.”

There was little, if any dissent on that, but debate aplenty about the best way to accomplish it.

“We simply don’t know if somewhere down the line it

will turn our guns back against us,” said Rep. Loretta Sanchez, D-Calif., giving voice to a fear that rebels seeking the removal of Syrian president Bashar Assad would eventually prove unreliable allies.

Republican Rep. Tom McClintock of California expressed a different concern. “Committing insufficient force in any conflict is self-defeating, and airstrikes alone cannot win a war,” he said.

Dempsey’s day-old remarks had staying power.

U.S. troops “will support Iraqi forces on the ground as they fight for their own country against these terrorists,” Obama told officers in Florida at U.S. Central Command, which oversees American military efforts in the Middle East. He added, “As your commander in chief, I will not commit you and the rest of our armed forces to fighting another ground war in Iraq.”

Vice President Joe Biden said in Iowa that Gen. Dempsey’s “conclusion is that it is not needed now.” Biden added: “We’ll determine that based on how the effort goes.”

Pelosi said the House action “is not to be confused with any authorization to go further. ... I will not vote for combat troops to engage in war.”

In Baghdad, Iraq’s new prime minister told The Associated Press in an interview that his government wants no part of a U.S. ground combat mission. “Not only is it not necessary; we don’t want them. We won’t allow them,” Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi said.

The measure also renews the charter of the Export-Import Bank, which helps finance purchases of U.S. exports. That postpones until next June a battle between tea party forces opposing the bank and business-oriented Republicans who support it.

The legislation also includes \$88 million to combat the outbreak of Ebola in West Africa.

The bill passed on a vote of 319-108.

Iraqi PM Rejects U.S. Ground Troops

BAGHDAD (AP) — Iraq’s new prime minister ruled out stationing U.S. ground troops in his country, chiding the international community Wednesday for inaction in Syria and lamenting the “puzzling” exclusion of neighboring Iran from the coalition being assembled to fight the Islamic State group.

Haider al-Abadi has been embraced by the West as a more inclusive leader who might heal the internal rifts that have dismembered Iraq. But his forthrightness in an interview with The Associated Press — his first with international media — suggested a man capable of parting ways on vision and holding his ground.

Al-Abadi praised the U.S. aerial campaign targeting the militants who have overrun much of northern and western Iraq and carved out a proto-state spanning the Syria-Iraq border, saying it has helped efforts to roll back the Sunni extremists.

But he stressed that he sees no need for the U.S. or other nations to send troops into Iraq to help fight the Islamic State.

“Not only is it not necessary,” he said, “We don’t want them. We won’t allow them. Full stop.”

Anxiety Mounts Before Scotland Votes

EDINBURGH, Scotland (AP) — For Scots, Wednesday was a day of excitement, apprehension, and a flood of final appeals before a big decision. In a matter of hours, they will determine whether Scotland leaves the United Kingdom and becomes an independent state.

A full 97 percent of those eligible have registered to vote — including, for the first time, 16- and 17-year-olds — in a referendum that polls suggest is too close to call.

A phone poll of 1,373 people by Ipsos MORI, released Wednesday, put opposition to independence at 51 percent and support at 49 percent, with 5 percent of voters undecided.

That means neither side can feel confident, given the margin of error of about plus or minus three percentage points.

Former Prime Minister Gordon Brown, himself a Scot, told a No campaign rally that the quiet majority of pro-Union Scots “will be silent no more,” while pro-independence leader Alex Salmond urged voters to seize a democratic opportunity 307 years in the making.

Frein Search Continues In Pennsylvania

Schools closed, kids stayed inside and authorities chased down several false sightings Wednesday in their hunt for the suspect in a fatal ambush outside a rural Pennsylvania State Police barracks.

Police released new details about the background of Eric Frein, a 31-year-old self-taught survivalist who authorities said recently shaved his head in a wide Mohawk, evidently as “part of the mental preparation to commit this cowardly act,” Lt. Col. George Bivens said Tuesday afternoon.

Frein belonged to a military simulation unit based in eastern Pennsylvania whose members play the role of soldiers from Cold War-era eastern Europe, Bivens told reporters.

“In his current frame of mind, Frein appears to have assumed that role in real life,” he said.

Hundreds of law enforcement officials spent a fifth full day Wednesday looking for the gunman who concealed himself outside the Blooming Grove barracks late Friday and shot two troopers with a rifle, killing one and wounding the second. Police named Frein the suspect after finding his abandoned SUV, which contained his driver’s license and spent shell casings matching those at the crime scene.

Lieria's President Praises U.S. Ebola Aid

MONROVIA, Liberia (AP) — People critically ill with Ebola languishing in an ambulance for hours as paramedics seek a place for them. Treatment centers filling up as soon as they are opened. The situation is so dire in Liberia that its president welcomed a U.S. pledge to send troops and treatment centers, but said much more needs to be done.

President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf on Wednesday urged the world community to redouble efforts to battle the disease, which could spread into other countries after already hitting five West African nations.

“Our American partners realize Liberia cannot defeat Ebola alone,” Sirleaf said in a written statement. “We hope this decision by the United States will spur the rest of the international community into action ... The entire community of nations has a stake in ending this crisis.”

Even as the promises of aid came, the risks of such help were underscored as yet another international health care worker fell ill while trying to help sick patients in Liberia. Doctors Without Borders — also known by its French acronym MSF — said the female French employee would be evacuated to a special treatment center in France after being placed into isolation on Tuesday.

The infection marks the first time an international MSF worker has contracted Ebola. Six local staff have been infected, three of whom died, though it was not clear that they had become sick at work and may have contracted the virus from the communities where they lived.

Fed Signals Plan To Keep Key Rate At Record Low

BY MARTIN CRUTSINGER
 AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON — The Federal Reserve signaled Wednesday that it plans to keep a key interest rate at a record low because a broad range of U.S. economic measures remain subpar.

The Fed said it intends to keep its benchmark rate near zero as long as inflation remains under control, until it sees consistent gains in wage growth, long-term unemployment and other gauges of the job market.

The central bank retained language signaling its plans to keep short-term rates low “for a considerable time” after it ends its monthly bond purchases after its next meeting in October.

“In the Fed’s mind, the economy still has work to do, but it’s improving,” said Mike Arone, an investment strategist with State Street Global Advisors.

Stock prices rose after the Fed issued a statement at 2 p.m. Eastern time after a two-day policy meeting, and the Dow Jones industrial average closed up about 25 points to a record high.

The yield on the 10-year Treasury note edged up to 2.62 percent from 2.59 percent late Tuesday.

In its statement, the Fed said it will make another \$10 billion cut in the pace of its Treasury and mortgage bond purchases, which have been intended to keep long-term borrowing rates low.

It also clarified the process by which it will eventually unwind its low-rate policies. The Fed said it would first increase

its key short-term rate before it stops reinvesting its bond holdings, which have driven the Fed’s balance sheet to a record of nearly \$4.5 trillion.

On Wednesday, the central bank also issued updated forecasts for growth, inflation and interest rates. The median short-term rate supported by Fed policymakers at the end of 2015 is now 1.38 percent, up from 1.13 percent at its June meeting. This suggested pressure from some Fed officials for a faster rate increase than the Fed’s statement implied.

The Fed also expects slower growth this year and next than in its last projections issued in June. It predicts that the economy will grow about 2.1 percent this year, down from its June forecast of roughly 2.2 percent. That reduction likely reflects the sharp contraction in the first quarter of this year. The economy has rebounded solidly since then.

On the eve of the Fed’s meeting this week, the financial world had been on high alert for whether the Fed would reiterate that it expects to keep its key short-term rate near zero for a “considerable time” after the bond buying ends.

With job growth solid, manufacturing and construction growing and unemployment at a near-normal 6.1 percent, many analysts had suggested that the Fed was edging closer to a rate increase to prevent a rising economy from igniting inflation.

The number of U.S. job openings is near its highest level in 13 years. Layoffs have dwindled. And consumer confidence has reached its highest point in nearly seven years.

Despite the signs of a stronger economy, most economists think the first increase in the Fed’s short-term rate won’t occur until mid-2015.

The Fed’s new statement retained language stating that a range of labor market indicators “suggests there remains significant underutilization of labor resources.”

Meeting with reporters after the Fed meeting, Chair Janet Yellen said she still thought the job market has yet to fully recover.

“There are still too many people who want jobs but cannot find them, too many who are working part-time but would prefer full-time work and too many who are not searching for a job but would be if the labor market were stronger,” Yellen said.

The Fed made only minor changes to its previous statement in its assessment of the economy. The statement was approved on an 8-2 vote.

The dissents came from Charles Plosser, president of the Fed’s Philadelphia regional bank, who had dissented at the last meeting, and Richard Fisher, president of the Dallas regional Fed bank. Both are viewed as “hawks” — Fed officials who are concerned about the threat of future inflation and believe the Fed should be moving more quickly to raise rates.

Asked at her news conference whether she had concerns about the dissents, Yellen noted that the committee had approved the policy statement by “an overwhelming majority, and I don’t consider the level of dissent to be surprising or very abnormal.”

OBITUARIES

Elizabeth Joy Cuka

Elizabeth Joy Cuka, daughter of Matt and Sara Cuka, Scotland was stillborn Saturday, September 13, 2014 at Avera Sacred Heart Hospital, Yankton. Private family graveside services will be held. The Opsahl-Kostel Funeral Home &

Crematory, Yankton, is assisting with service details.

Those who will cherish Elizabeth Joy’s memory forever are her parents, Matt & Sara Cuka of Scotland; grandparents, Cathy & Gary Cuka of Tyndall and Jerald and Ronda Pritchett of O’Neill, NE; great-

grandparent, Dorothy Cuka of Tyndall; uncles, JJ Pritchett and wife, Nikki and son, Jace, Cody Pritchett, all of O’Neill, NE, Joey Cuka of Tyndall and David Cuka of Texas.

She was preceded in death by her great-grandparents, Romaine Cuka,

Rose and Roland Hornback and Joe and Rosie Pritchett.
Yankton Press & Dakotan
 September 18, 2014

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 www.opsahl-kostelfuneralhome.com

Charles Graham

Charles “Bill” Graham, 62, died Sept. 16, 2014 at home in Hurley.

A memorial service will be held at 1:30 p.m. Saturday at the Viborg Community Center.

Register online at www.viborgfuneralhome.com

Anna Ausdemore

Anna M. Ausdemore, 90, of Constance, Nebraska, died Tuesday, Sept. 16, 2014 at the Bloomfield Good Samaritan Nursing Home, in Bloomfield, Nebraska.

Arrangements are pending with the Wintz Funeral Home in Crofton, Nebraska.

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