

# US House approves Libya funds, rebukes Obama

Gaddafi 'may abandon' capital; rebels in contact with regime

AFP, Washington

The US House of Representatives yesterday beat back an effort to cut funding for direct US strikes on Libyan strongman Muammar Gaddafi's forces.

Lawmakers voted 238-180 to defeat a resolution that would have denied money to drone attacks and bombings while backing US operations in support of Nato-led efforts there for one year.

Earlier, the House rejected a resolution that would have given congressional authorisation to President Barack Obama's decision to use military force against Gaddafi amid deep anger at the White House's handling of the conflict.

Republican US House Speaker John Boehner said Thursday that lawmakers would vote on that measure as well as a competing one that would authorise US forces to take part in the Nato-led pounding of strongman Gaddafi's military.

"This is primarily a fight between the Congress and the president over his unwillingness to consult with us before making this decision," said Boehner, who told reporters the two measures "will be on the floor tomorrow."

If vetoed, the measure would have cut off all funding for US military operations except for tasks in support of Nato allies, like aerial refueling, intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance, planning, or search and rescue.

Many of Obama's own Democrats have called for an end to the conflict amid polls showing the US public does not believe the US should be involved.

Meanwhile, The Wall Street Journal yesterday quoted a senior US national security official as saying American intelligence shows Gaddafi "doesn't feel safe anymore" in the capital where he has ruled for over four decades.

However, officials told the paper

they did not see the move as imminent.

Gaddafi is believed to have numerous safe houses and other facilities both within the capital and outside of it to which he might relocate.

Rebel spokesman Mahmud Shamam told French daily Le Figaro the insurgents were in indirect contact with the regime and may be prepared to allow Gaddafi to stay in Libya, but that he and his family must agree to leave power.

"Our conditions remain the same. It is totally excluded that Gaddafi or members of his family take part in a future government. We are discussing with them the mechanism for Gaddafi's departure," he said.

In the rebels' capital Benghazi, however, the National Transitional Council deputy chairman Abdel Hafiz Ghoga told AFP: "There is no contact, direct or indirect, with the Gaddafi regime."



Children dance in the street as part of the annual feast for their patron saint, John the Baptist, in the San Juan suburb of Manila yesterday. The playful celebrations went on despite torrential rain and storms forced 53,000 people to take shelter in rescue centres fleeing their homes.

# UN to send rights mission to Yemen

AFP, Geneva

The UN is sending a mission to Yemen on Monday to examine the human rights situation, amid persistent popular protests calling for the ouster of President Ali Abdullah Saleh, a spokeswoman said yesterday.

"We will be deploying a mission to Yemen, an assessment mission to Yemen beginning on Monday. This will be a 10-day mission and a team of three from our office will be going," said Ravina Shamdasani, spokeswoman at the UN human rights office.

Meanwhile, five people, including three soldiers, were killed in violence across Yemen's main port city of Aden yesterday, officials and medics said.

## NEWS IN brief

### Blast kills 6 in Afghanistan

AFP, Kunduz

Five civilians and one policeman were killed yesterday by a bicycle bomb which exploded in a busy bazaar in northern Afghanistan, the provincial governor's spokesman told AFP.

Women and children were among 22 others injured in the blast, which took place around 6:00 pm in Khan Abad district, Kunduz province, on Afghanistan's main weekly day of rest.

"Six people have been killed and 22 others injured as a result of today's explosion," a police official said.

The Taliban frequently target the Afghan police and other government employees in their near decade-long insurgency.

### 16 dead in landslides in India

AFP, Kolkata

Sixteen people in northeast India have been killed by landslides triggered by heavy monsoon rains, a senior police official said yesterday.

The deaths occurred overnight in villages perched on steep mountain sides near the town of Pelling in the scenic Himalayan state of Sikkim.

"Fourteen people were buried alive when rolling debris piled on their houses," senior police officer Jasbir Singh told AFP by telephone from Gangtok, capital city of Sikkim.

### Brazil, Spain lead race to head UN food agency

AFP, Rome

Brazilian and Spanish candidates are leading the field for an upcoming election for the next head of the Food and Agriculture Organisation in Rome, the UN agency leading the struggle against global hunger.

Former Spanish foreign minister Miguel Angel Moratinos and former Brazilian food security minister Jose Graziano da Silva are two of six candidates for Sunday's vote, with the others coming from Austria, Indonesia, Iran and Iraq.

Each of the FAO's 191 member states gets one vote in the election -- unlike other United Nations agencies where the biggest contributors get more of a say.

## Huge 7.2 earthquake rocks Alaska

AFP, Washington

A powerful 7.2-magnitude earthquake shook Alaska's Aleutian Islands late Thursday, and US officials issued a localized tsunami warning near the remote island chain.

There were no immediate reports of damage or injuries.

A tsunami warning was issued by the US West Coast and Alaska Tsunami Warning Center just after the quake which was lifted yesterday.

The quake on the Fox Islands struck at 6:09 pm local time at the depth of 10 kilometres, the US Geological Survey said in a statement.

A pair of moderate aftershocks shook the Aleutian Islands early yesterday.

## China warns N Korea over attacks on south

AFP, Seoul

China has warned its ally North Korea against making any further attacks on South Korea following two deadly border incidents last year, the South's President Lee Myung-Bak was quoted yesterday as saying.

"China delivered its intentions (to South Korea) that it won't stand by the North if it makes an additional provocation," Lee said during a lunch meeting Thursday with members of the parliamentary defence committee.

It was not clear when the Chinese message was delivered. Beijing has also made its stance clear to Pyongyang, Lee was quoted by Chosun Ilbo as saying.

China is the North's last remaining major ally and its key source of food and fuel. It came in for criticism for failing publicly to censure the North following the two incidents last year.

The South, citing the findings of a multinational investigation, accused its neighbour of torpedoing a warship in March 2010 with the loss of 46 lives.

The North denied involvement but last November shelled a South Korean border island, killing four people including civilians.

Tensions remain high and the North's military has recently threatened retaliation for what it sees as provocations by the South.

## GAZA AID FLOTILLA US expresses concern

AFP, Washington

The United States voiced concern yesterday that pro-Palestinian activists plan to embark on an aid flotilla to the Gaza Strip in defiance of an Israeli naval blockade.

The flotilla is due to mark the anniversary last month of an Israeli commando raid that killed nine Turkish activists aboard a ship that was part of a flotilla trying to break the Israeli-imposed blockade of Gaza.

"We are concerned that a number of groups are organizing a ... flotilla ... sailing from various European ports to Gaza in the near future," State Department spokeswoman Victoria Nuland said. It involves danger, she added.

## SYRIA UNREST Forces kill 11 protesters

AFP, Nicosia

Syrian security forces opened fire yesterday on anti-regime rallies killing at least 11 protesters, three of them in the capital Damascus, human rights activists said.

The violence came as thousands of protesters took to the streets across Syria after the weekly Muslim prayers calling for the fall of the autocratic regime of President Bashar al-Assad.

The demonstrations were in response to a call by the Facebook group Syrian Revolution 2011, one of the motors of the protests, under the banner, "Fall of legitimacy."

"Security forces tried to break up a rally calling for the fall of the regime with tear gas before opening fire" killing three people and injuring 25 others, an activist in the Damascus neighbourhood of Barzeh said, reached by telephone.

They also opened fire on demonstrators in the town of Kiswah south of Damascus, killing at least five people, another activist told AFP.

Three people were also killed in the central city of Homs and 20 others wounded when security forces opened fire on the crowd of protesters, an activist at the scene told AFP.

## Ukraine ex-PM goes on trial

AFP, Kiev

Ukraine's ex-prime minister Yulia Tymoshenko yesterday went on trial for alleged abuse of power, denouncing her rival President Viktor Yanukovich as a coward fearing political competition.

The former premier, known as the "Iron Lady", is accused of abuse of power in connection with a contract she signed with Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin after a brief interruption of gas deliveries from Russia in early 2009.

Tymoshenko described the trial as a "kangaroo court" and vendetta orchestrated by the authorities.

"Whatever verdict is handed down, it will be a verdict against Yanukovich and not me," said Tymoshenko as several thousand of her supporters rallied in the streets near the courthouse in central Kiev.



## RWANDA GENOCIDE AND MASS RAPE Female mastermind jailed for life

AFP, Arusha

Judges at the UN court for Rwanda yesterday sentenced to life in prison the first woman to be charged with genocide and incitement to rape before an international court.

"For these crimes, and considering all relevant circumstances, the chamber sentences you Pauline Nyiramasuhuko to life imprisonment," presiding judge William Hussein Sekule said.

Nyiramasuhuko, 65, a former minister for women's affairs, was found guilty on seven of the 11 genocide charges she faced, including conspiracy to commit genocide, genocide and "rape as a crime against humanity."



Pauline Nyiramasuhuko

"Pauline Nyiramasuhuko conspired with other members of the interim government to commit genocide in Butare," the judge said.

"She ordered rape at the Butare prefecture office. She had superior responsibility on the Interahamwe (militia which she ordered) to commit the rapes at the Butare prefecture."

The former minister's son, Arsene Shalom Ntahobali, one of five co-accused, was also sentenced to life for crimes including genocide, extermination and rape as a crime against humanity.

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E-mail: [mbainfo@northsouth.edu](mailto:mbainfo@northsouth.edu), web: [www.northsouth.edu](http://www.northsouth.edu)

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