

Islamists suspected over Libyan rebel death

Regime blames al-Qaeda; Nato hits Libyan TV station

AGENCIES

Libyan rebels say the gunmen who shot dead their military chief were members of an Islamist-linked militia that is allied to their struggle to overthrow veteran leader Muammar Gaddafi.

The assassination of Abdel Fattah Younes, apparently by his own side, has hurt the opposition just as it was winning broader international recognition and launching an offensive against Gaddafi's forces in the west of the country.

It will deepen concerns among the rebels' Western backers including the United States, keen to see them prevail in a five-month-old civil war but frustrated by their lack of unity and nervous about the influence of Islamists.

After 24 hours of confusion, rebel minister Ali Tarhouni said Younes had been killed by members of the Obaida Ibn Jarrah Brigade, a militia allied to the rebels, suggesting that Islamist ele-

ments were involved.

Tarhouni told reporters in Benghazi on Friday that a militia leader who had gone to fetch Younes from the front line had been arrested and had confessed that his subordinates had carried out the killing.

"It was not him. His lieutenants did it," Tarhouni said, adding that the killers were still at large.

Younes took part in the coup that brought Gaddafi to power in 1969 and served him for four decades. He quit as interior minister in February and defected to the side of the rebels, becoming their military chief.

Parts of the opposition distrusted him because of his long and close ties to Gaddafi.

One rebel commander, who asked not to be named, said Islamists whom Younes had targeted in his job as interior minister may have killed him in retaliation.

"Abdel Jalil could not directly accuse the Islamists because he fears them. And I don't think the investigation will lead anywhere. They don't dare to touch the Islamists."

Tripoli also pinned the blame squarely on al-Qaeda and argued that the killing exposed the impotence of the NTC.

"The other members of the National Transitional Council knew about it but could not react because they are terrified of al-Qaeda," regime spokesman Mussa Ibrahim told reporters in Tripoli.

The United States, which like some 30 other nations has formally recognised the opposition, said Younes's death was a blow but called for solidarity among the rebels.

Meanwhile, Nato in Brussels said in a statement early yesterday its warplanes had launched precision strikes on three Libyan television transmitter dishes to silence "terror broadcasts" on state television.



Severely malnourished Somali children receive fluids and nutrients intravenously at the Mogadishu Banadir hospital yesterday. Somalia is worst affected by an extreme drought that has put millions in danger of starvation and spurred a global fund-raising campaign.

PHOTO: AFP

Plane crashes at Guyana airport

BBC ONLINE

A plane crashed and broken in two on landing at Guyana's main airport in the capital, Georgetown, yesterday causing injuries but no deaths.

The Caribbean Airlines Boeing 737-800 flight BW-523 from New York had 163 people aboard.

The plane apparently overshot the runway at Cheddi Jagan International Airport during wet weather.

Guyana's president said it halted near a 200-foot (61-metre) ravine that could have resulted in dozens of deaths.

"We are very, very grateful that more people were not injured," Bharrat Jagdeo added, quoted by AP news agency.

Turkey's military in turmoil as top brass quit

Govt rules out crisis, says no power vacuum exists

AGENCIES

Turkey faced turmoil within its military yesterday after the country's four most senior commanders quit, offering Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan an opportunity to extend his authority over the once dominant armed forces.

Chief of General Staff General Isik Kosaner stepped down on Friday evening along with the army, navy and air force commanders in protest over the detention of 250 officers on charges of conspiring against Erdogan's government.

In a farewell message to "brothers in arms," Kosaner said it was impossible to continue in his job as he could not defend the rights of men who had been detained as a consequence of a flawed judicial process.

Relations between the secularist military and Erdogan's socially conservative Justice and



Tayyip Erdogan

Development Party (AK) have been fraught since it first won power in 2002, due to mistrust of the AK's Islamists.

Turkey's president acknowledged yesterday that the resignation of the nation's top military commanders was unprecedented, but he said it would not cause a crisis.

"No one should see this as a crisis in Turkey," President Abdullah Gul told reporters yesterday. "The developments yesterday were extraordinary within its scope, but as you see everything is continuing on its own course. There is no (power) vacuum."

The subordination of the generals was starkly demonstrated last year when police began detaining scores of officers over "Operation Sledgehammer," an alleged plot against Erdogan's government discussed at a military seminar in 2003.

20 protesters killed across Syria

Says rights group

REUTERS, Amman

Syrian forces shot dead at least 20 civilians in attacks on pro-democracy demonstrations across the country Friday, the Syrian human rights organisation Sawasiah said.

Syrians in their thousands took to the streets nationwide for the 17th consecutive Friday to demand an end to President Bashar al-Assad's 11-year rule, activists said by telephone, defying an intensifying military crackdown on an uprising for political freedoms.

"The security forces are continuing violent repression against peaceful demonstrations demanding freedom and the downfall of the regime, firing live ammunition at most protests all over Syria Friday," Sawasiah said in a statement sent to Reuters.

Sawasiah said it had the names of 20 people killed in the cities of Latakia, Hama, Homs, Deraa, Kiswa, Deir al-Zor and in and around the capital Damascus.

Arrests continued across the country in the last two days, rights campaigners said, including hundreds of people in Damascus, where they said Republican Guards deployed in force in the central Maidan district Friday to prevent protests.

NORWAY MASSACRE 'Killer suspect had several targets'

AFP, Oslo

The royal palace and the headquarters of the governing Labour Party were on self-confessed Norwegian killer Anders Behring Breivik's list of targets, the tabloid Verdens Gang (VG) reported yesterday.

"During his interrogation, he said that he had planned to attack other targets, but on July 22 it was only the seat of government in Oslo and Utøya," the island where young Labour Party supporters were holding their summer camp, prosecutor Paal-Fredrick Hjord Kraby was quoted as telling the paper.

According to VG, the royal palace was a target because of its symbolic value, while Labour headquarters were targeted because of the party's role in creating the multi-cultural society so loathed by Behring Breivik.

"I would not like to comment on the number or nature of the targets he had in mind. They are obvious targets for a terrorist and the idea is to hit the government," Hjord Kraby said.

Norwegian police declined to comment on the report to AFP. "After the attacks security was stepped up on central buildings. We do not give out details of what measures are in place but the security of institutions is assured," police spokeswoman Carol Sandby said.

NEWS IN brief

Militants attack gas-line in Egypt

AFP, Cairo

Unidentified gunmen yesterday attacked a terminal on the gas pipeline to Israel for the fifth time since February, a security official said.

Gunmen on motorbikes and cars lobbed grenades and tried to storm the terminal at Al-Shulaq in north Sinai but were confronted by armed forces, leading to clashes.

Witnesses said the gunmen managed to flee.

Nepal Maoists threaten to end government support

AFP, Kathmandu

Nepal's Maoist party yesterday vowed to pull out of the government if the premier fails to appoint its lawmakers as cabinet ministers, threatening fresh political turmoil in the Himalayan nation.

"We will withdraw our support to the government if the prime minister fails to administer the oath of office (to our members) by Sunday," said Maoist spokesman Dinanath Sharma.

The withdrawal of Maoist backing would mean the collapse of Prime Minister Jhulanath Khanal's administration.

Egypt changes venue for Mubarak trial

AP, Cairo

Egypt's state news agency says the trial of Hosni Mubarak will be moved from a Cairo convention centre to a police academy on the city's eastern outskirts.

The change of venue, announced yesterday by the head of Cairo's appeal court, is designed to ensure tighter security for the former president's trial, which is expected to draw a large audience.

The 83-year-old Mubarak, his two sons, his security chief and six senior security officials are expected to appear in court on Aug 3.

2 Indian troops killed in Kashmir

AFP, Srinagar

Two Indian soldiers were killed yesterday in a fierce clash with rebels along the de facto border that splits Kashmir between India and Pakistan, the army said.

It was the second gunbattle between Kashmiri rebels and troops in northern Kupwara district this week. On Thursday, an army officer was killed in the same district in a clash with infiltrating militants.

India says it regularly intercepts Islamist rebels sneaking into Indian Kashmir to fight New Delhi's rule in the scenic Himalayan territory.

Iraq less safe than a year ago

Says US watchdog

AFP, Baghdad

Iraq is a less safe place than it was one year ago and security is continuing to deteriorate, an American watchdog warned yesterday, just months ahead of a US withdrawal from the country.

The assessment by the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction (SIGIR) contrasts markedly from the view often voiced by senior US army officers who argue that levels of violence are significantly lower than in 2006 and 2007, when Iraq was in the throes of a sectarian bloodbath.

"Iraq remains an extraordinarily dangerous place to work," Stuart Bowen said in the report published yesterday. "It is less safe, in my judgment, than 12 months ago."



PHOTO: AFP

Queen Elizabeth II's eldest granddaughter Zara Phillips married England rugby star Mike Tindall at Canongate Kirk in Edinburgh, Scotland, yesterday in a low-key event far removed from the spectacle of this year's other British royal wedding.

Marvel wins superhero copyright claim

BBC ONLINE

Marvel has won a legal battle to retain copyright of its lucrative comic book characters including Spider-Man and The Incredible Hulk.

The company sued the family of late co-creator Jack Kirby last year after they laid claim to copyrights for work he created from 1958 to 1963.

However a New York judge ruled Kirby's illustrations of characters like Iron Man had been created "for hire".

A lawyer for Kirby's estate has said they will appeal the ruling. Other characters at the centre of the dispute included The Fantastic Four, The Mighty Thor, The X-Men, The Avengers, Ant-Man, Nick Fury and The Rawhide Kid.

"This case is not about whether Jack Kirby or Stan Lee is the real 'creator' of Marvel



characters," US District Judge Colleen McMahon wrote in her 50-page ruling.

"It is about whether Kirby's work qualifies as work-for-hire under the Copyright Act of 1909."

The judge said the contracts she reviewed made it clear that all of Kirby's work for publications owned by Marvel was work for hire.

She noted the artist - who died in 1994 - said in a 1986 sworn statement that he did his work at a time when it was common practice for vested ownership of his creations to belong to the company that paid him to draw.

She added Kirby had also signed a written agreement in the spring of 1972 admitting that he was not entitled to retain ownership of the work.

The judge therefore concluded Marvel was considered the author and owner of Kirby's creations because the characters were made at Marvel's expense.

PHONE-HACK INQUIRY

Britain police add computer probe

New York Post told to save related evidence

REUTERS, London

London police probing phone hacking at Rupert Murdoch's defunct News of the World tabloid are broadening their investigation to allegations of computer hacking, they said yesterday.

A new investigative team will be set up to tackle the new allegations, reporting to Sue Akers, the officer in charge of the phone hacking probe, the Metropolitan Police Service said in a statement.

"Operation Tuleta is currently considering a number of allegations regarding breach of privacy, received by the MPS since January 2011, which fall outside the remit of (phone-hacking) Operation Weeting, including computer hacking," the statement by the London police force said.

"Some aspects of this operation will move forward to a formal investigation."

In USA, employees at Rupert Murdoch's tabloid the New York Post have been instructed to preserve any traces of the kind of phone hacking uncovered at one of the media tycoon's British newspapers.

In a memo, Post editor Col Allan told employees that the instruction from in-house lawyers to "preserve and maintain documents" came "in light of what has gone on in London at News of the World, and not because any recipient has done anything improper or unlawful."

NY Post, a daily with a reputation for hard-hitting scoops, was not itself suspected of the illegal activity uncovered at other papers in Murdoch's News Corporation stable.

The revelation of widespread phone hacking by journalists has caused a political uproar in Britain and News Corp is concerned that investigators may widen their probe to Murdoch's US-based outlets.

PAK SECTARIAN VIOLENCE

Gunmen kill 11 Shias in Quetta

AFP, Quetta

Ten Shia Muslims and another man were killed yesterday when gunmen opened fire in an apparent sectarian attack in southwestern Pakistan, police said.

The shooting took place on the outskirts of Quetta, the capital of oil and gas-rich Baluchistan province, which borders Afghanistan and Iran.

"Gunmen opened fire on a passenger van carrying Shia Muslims. Ten Shias and a passer-by were killed and four injured in the attack," senior police officer Jamil Ahmad Kakar told AFP by telephone.

Kakar said the unidentified gunmen stood by the roadside spraying bullets at the van before they fled the scene in a waiting car.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility, but Baluchistan is rife with sectarian violence between Pakistan's majority Sunni and minority Shia Muslims, as well as Islamist militancy and an insurgency waged by separatists.

On Friday, gunmen killed seven Shia pilgrims at a bus stop also in Quetta. Police said the victims had been waiting for a coach to travel to neighbouring Iran.

Shia Muslims account for about a fifth of Pakistan's 167-million-strong population, which is dominated by Sunni Muslims.