



Libyan security forces gather outside the French embassy building in Tripoli following a car bomb attack yesterday.

French embassy in Libya bombed

AFP, Tripoli

A car bomb hit the France embassy in Libya yesterday, wounding two French guards and causing extensive damage in the first attack on a foreign mission since militants stormed the US consulate in Benghazi in September.

Libyan Foreign Minister Mohammed Abdel Aziz branded the act a "terrorist" incident, and French President Francois Hollande said Tripoli must act quickly to find the perpetrators and bring them to justice.

A diplomat in Paris said French Foreign Minister Fabius would fly to Tripoli later in the day.

The attack comes as Libya continues to suffer from a lack of security following the 2011 ouster of long-time dictator Muammar Gaddafi and as French forces are engaged in a battle against Islamist extremists in Mali.

The explosion occurred around 7:10am, Tripoli security chief Mahmud al-Sherif said, after an explosives-laden car was parked outside the mission's front door.

Sherif said "this was not a suicide bombing," adding that "we face several threats and enemies, and it is too early to point to any party in particular."

An AFP correspondent said the wall surrounding the property was destroyed and the embassy building extensively damaged.

The explosion, which created a deep crater in the street, destroyed two cars parked nearby, damaged two neighbouring villas and blew out the windows of a shop 200 metres away.

A French source said one guard was seriously wounded and another lightly hurt in the attack on the mission, housed in a two-storey villa in the upmarket Gargaresh area. A girl was also injured in the attack.

Since Gaddafi's fall, Libya has been plagued by persistent insecurity failures. The violence in Libya is often blamed on radical Islamists persecuted under Gaddafi and who now want to settle old scores, while security remains the prerogative of militias in a number of important areas.

Armed jihadist groups hurt by the French intervention in northern Mali had threatened retaliation by attacking French interests across the world.

US rejects N Korea's nuke status demand

REUTERS, Seoul/geneva

North Korea yesterday insisted that it be recognised as a nuclear weapons state, a demand the United States promptly dismissed as "neither realistic nor acceptable".

"If the DPRK sits at a table with the US, it has to be a dialogue between nuclear weapons states, not one side forcing the other to dismantle nuclear weapons," the North's Rodong Sinmun newspaper said.

The United States swiftly rejected the claim.

"North Korea's demand to be recognised as a nuclear weapons state is neither realistic nor acceptable," a senior US official in Geneva said.

Canada thwarts Qaeda-linked train plot

Blames Iran; Tehran denies role

REUTERS, Toronto

Canadian police have arrested two men and charged them with plotting to derail a Toronto-area passenger train in an operation that they say was backed by al-Qaeda elements in Iran.

"Had this plot been carried out, it would have resulted in innocent people being killed or seriously injured," Royal Canadian Mounted Police official James Malizia told reporters on Monday.

US officials said the attack would have targeted a rail line between New York and Toronto, a route that travels along the Hudson Valley and enters Canada near Niagara Falls. Neither suspect is a Canadian citizen, and police did not reveal their nationalities. Two sources following the investigation said one was Tunisian.

Canada's intelligence agency has long expressed concern about the possibility that disgruntled and radicalized Canadians could attack targets at home and abroad.

Iran reacted angrily. "No shred of evidence regarding those who've been arrested and stand accused has been provided," Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Ramin Mehmanparast said yesterday according to the Mehr news agency.

'Obama injured' Hackers cause stir with AP tweet

AFP, Washington

Hackers spooked markets yesterday after breaking into the Associated Press's Twitter account and falsely reporting President Barack Obama had been injured after two blasts at the White House.

A brief alert on the news agency's @AP account read: "Breaking: Two explosions in the White House and Barack Obama is injured."

Almost immediately the wire service posted via its corporate communications

feed that its @AP Twitter account had been hacked, before promptly suspending the service.

Hackers regularly target the Twitter accounts of news organizations, with online activists backing the regime of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad claiming responsibility for hacking an AFP Twitter account in February.



Musharraf to be probed for Benazir's killing

Pak caretaker says it won't charge him for treason

AGENCIES

A Pakistani anti-terrorism court conducting the trial of suspects charged with involvement in the 2007 assassination of former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, yesterday ordered that former President Pervez Musharraf be included in the investigation process.

The Federal Investigation Agency (FIA), which is investigating the Bhutto assassination, told the court in the garrison city of Rawalpindi that the former military ruler has not yet been formally included in the case, reported Xinhua.

Judge Chaudhry Habib-ur-Rehman directed the FIA to complete the investigation and submit a report in the apex court. The hearing was adjourned until May 3.

Musharraf has been accused of failing to provide adequate protection to Bhutto when she returned to Pakistan from exile in 2007. She was killed in a suicide bombing and firing in Rawalpindi shortly after she addressed an election rally.

Meanwhile, Pakistan's caretaker government has told the Supreme Court it will not file treason charges against former military ruler Pervez Musharraf.

Attorney General Irfan Qadir said in a statement submitted to the court Monday that caretaker officials have decided to leave the decision on treason charges to the government that will come to power after the May 11 parliamentary election.

Lawyers have filed petitions before the Supreme Court accusing him of committing treason while in power.

Pak ex-PM Ashraf cleared for polls

PTI, Lahore

A Pakistani court yesterday cleared former premier Raja Pervez Ashraf's candidature for the May 11 general election, setting aside an election tribunal's decision to reject his nomination papers over allegations of corruption.

A full bench of the Lahore high court observed that there was no court declaration against Ashraf that declared him "non-profligate, non-righteous or non-sagacious", and he could not be barred from participating in the polls.

The Pakistan People's Party leader will now be eligible to contest the polls from a parliamentary constituency in his hometown of Gujjar Khan, located 125 km from Islamabad.

Suspect charged

AP, Boston

The two brothers suspected of bombing the Boston Marathon appear to have been motivated by a radical brand of Islam but do not seem connected to any Muslim terrorist groups, US officials said Monday after interrogating and charging Dzhokhar Tsarnaev with crimes that could bring the death penalty.

Tsarnaev, 19, was charged in his hospital room, where he was in serious condition with a gunshot wound to the throat and other injuries suffered during his attempted getaway. His older brother, Tamerlan, 26, died Friday after a fierce gun-battle with police.

The Massachusetts university student was charged with using and conspiring to use a weapon of mass destruction. He was accused of joining with his brother in setting off the shrapnel-packed pressure-cooker bombs that killed three people and wounded more than 200 a week ago.

Preliminary interviews with Tsarnaev indicate the two brothers fit the classification of self-radicalized jihadists, the source said. Dzhokhar has said his brother wanted to defend Islam from attack, according to the source.

The brothers, ethnic Chechens from Russia who had been living in the US for about a decade, practiced Islam.

Two US officials said preliminary evidence from the younger man's interrogation suggests the brothers were motivated by religious extremism but were apparently not involved with Islamic terrorist



BOSTON BLAST

Charged with using WMD

Brother drove the attack

Denies any international ties

Can face death penalty

organisations.

Dzhokhar communicated with his interrogators in writing, precluding the type of back-and-forth exchanges often crucial to establishing key facts, said the officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss the investigation publicly.

They cautioned that they were still trying to verify what they were told by Tsarnaev and were looking at such things as his telephone and online communications and his associations with others.

However, the criminal complaint shed no light on the motive for the attack.

The Obama administration said it had no choice but to prosecute Dzhokhar Tsarnaev in the federal court system. Some politicians had suggested he be tried as an enemy combatant in front of a military tribunal, where defendants are denied some of the usual constitutional protections.

But Tsarnaev is a naturalised US citizen, and under US law, American citizens cannot be tried by military tribunals, White House spokesman Jay Carney said.

Shortly after the charges were unveiled, Boston-area residents and many of their well-wishers including President Barack Obama at the White House observed a moment of silence at 2:49pm Eastern the moment a week earlier when the bombs exploded.

India asks China to withdraw troops

AFP, New Delhi

India's foreign ministry yesterday said it had asked China to withdraw troops who allegedly advanced into disputed territory claimed by New Delhi in a remote area of the Himalayas.

"We have asked the Chinese side to maintain the status quo in this sector (of the western border)," spokesman Syed Akbaruddin told a briefing. "By this I mean the status quo prior to this incident."

He stressed that there were differing perceptions of the undefined frontier at the limit of the Buddhist-majority Indian region of Ladakh which is a source of friction between the neighbours.

He said that mechanisms existed to resolve border problems peacefully and that if troops were to come face-to-face "they shall exercise safe restraint and take all necessary steps to avoid an escalation of the situation".

Akbaruddin added that the Chinese ambassador to New Delhi had been summoned over the alleged incursion on April 15 when a platoon of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) is said to have advanced and erected a camp.

Meetings between local commanders

Disputed border



are underway to resolve the incident.

"I would like to say we have all resolved all previous incidents peacefully and it is our hope that we would resolve this incident too peacefully," Akbaruddin added.

China has denied that its troops violated Indian territory or that it is contravening accords signed in 1993 and 1996 between the countries to maintain peace along the so-called Line of Actual Control (LAC).

Tension at the border is a regular feature and the Indian press frequently reports on movements by Chinese troops as well as the build-up of Chinese military forces and infrastructure in frontier areas of Tibet.

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Syria using chemical arms: Israel

AFP, Jerusalem

The Israeli army yesterday said Damascus had used chemical weapons as US Defence Secretary Chuck Hagel wrapped up a three-day visit focused on the Syrian civil war and the Iranian nuclear threat.

The remarks were made by a top official in Israel's military intelligence as Hagel met with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu shortly before departing for a brief visit to Jordan.

Speaking to delegates at a Tel Aviv security conference, he cited an incident on March 19 in Aleppo province in which 31 people were killed, pointing to the physical symptoms suffered by those in the area at the time.

Washington has said the use of chemical agents in Syria would be a "game changer" but it has yet to reach a definitive conclusion on the issue, Hagel said on Monday.

Iraq troops, protesters clash in Iraq; 40 killed

AFP, Kirkuk

Deadly fighting hit Kirkuk province in north Iraq yesterday, with 27 people killed in clashes between protesters and security forces while 13 gunmen died in revenge attacks on the army, officers said.

Education Minister Mohammed Ali Tamim, a Sunni from Hawijah near where the clashes took place, resigned in the wake of the violence, becoming the third Sunni minister to do so since March.

The fighting was the deadliest to date linked to protests in Sunni areas that erupted more than four months ago.

The protesters have been demanding the resignation of Shia Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki and railing against the alleged targeting of their community by the authorities.

Tuesday's violence broke out around 5:00am when security forces entered an open area near Hawijah, west of Kirkuk province's eponymous capital, where demonstrations have been held since January, according to senior army officers, who gave an overall toll of 27 people killed and around 70 wounded.

A second officer said that 34 Kalashnikov assault rifles and four PKM machineguns were recovered at the scene.

Two soldiers were killed and seven wounded in the operation, while the remainder of the casualties were a combination of protesters and militants, the officers said.

The dawn violence sparked revenge attacks. Thirteen gunmen were killed in attacks on army checkpoints in the Al-Rashad and Al-Riyadh areas of Kirkuk province, the army officers said.

Yesterday's incident was not the first time that anti-government demonstrations in Iraq have turned deadly - security forces killed a protester in the north Iraq city of Mosul on March 8, and eight demonstrators near Fallujah, west of Baghdad, on January 25.



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