

Blasts hits near Egypt mission in Benghazi

No casualties reported
AFP, Benghazi

A bomb exploded in front of Egypt's consulate in the eastern Libyan city of Benghazi yesterday, causing no casualties but some damage, a security official said.

"Unknown assailants in a vehicle threw an explosive device at the Egyptian consulate in Benghazi without causing casualties," said security spokesman Abdallah al-Zayedi.

The blast caused part of the outer wall of the building to collapse and damaged cars parked outside the mission, he added.

The Libyan government said Saturday it has adopted a policy of neutrality regarding the situation in neighbouring Egypt.



An Egyptian man talks to a cop from inside of Cairo's Al-Fath mosque where Islamist supporters of ousted president Mohamed Morsi holed up yesterday. Inset, a army officer points his gun to crowd as he helps an Islamist man to leave the mosque. Security forces yesterday cleared the mosque where Morsi supporters gathered after being evicted from two protest camps on Wednesday.

PHOTO: AFP



EGYPT IN CRISIS

Son of Brotherhood chief killed; Qaeda chief's brother arrested

AFP, Cairo

The son of Mohamed Badie, supreme guide of Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood, was killed in violence between protesters and security forces on Friday, the group's political arm said yesterday.

"Ammar, son of Dr Mohammed Badie, the Supreme Guide of (the) Muslim Brotherhood, (was) killed by live ammunition in yesterday's massacre in Ramsis Square," the Freedom and Justice Party said in a statement. Egyptian authorities have also arrested Mohamed al-Zawahiri, brother of al-Qaeda head Ayman al-Zawahiri, for supporting ousted Islamist president Mohamed Morsi.

Saudi to send 3 field hospitals

AFP, Jeddah

Saudi King Abdullah yesterday ordered the dispatch of three fully-equipped field hospitals to Egypt, a day after backing Cairo in its deadly crackdown on Muslim Brotherhood protesters.

The hospitals will come with a full staff of doctors and technicians, the unnamed official said.

King Abdullah pledged on Friday the kingdom's support to Egypt's fight on "terrorism", as the army and security forces continued a bloody crackdown on supporters of deposed Islamist president Mohamed Morsi.

Mubarak retrial adjourned

CNN ONLINE

A Cairo court yesterday adjourned the retrial of former President Hosni Mubarak over charges of involvement in the killing of protesters during the country's 2011 revolution.

A judge postponed the retrial to August 25th. Mubarak faces charges connected to the killing of protesters during the revolution. He was forced from office in February 2011 following two weeks of mass street protests.

Iran calls on OIC to intervene in Egypt

AFP, Tehran

The Iranian foreign minister on Friday urged the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation to intervene in member state Egypt to contain a deadly crackdown on Islamists, state television reported.

Mohammad Javad Zarif said a police crackdown on two protests camps set up by supporters of deposed Islamist president Mohamed Morsi that killed more than 600 people was a "massacre", it said.

NEWSIN brief

Pakistan to free 367 Indian prisoners

PTI, Islamabad

Pakistan will release 367 Indian prisoners next week to send a positive message to its neighbour amid high tension due to firing on the LoC, Pakistani sources said yesterday.

The two sides are trying to ease pressure on the Line of Control (LoC) after about two weeks of ceasefire violations that started after five Indian soldiers were killed in an attack by Pakistani troops early this month.

There are 491 Indian prisoners, including 437 fishermen and 54 civilians, in Pakistani prisons, sources said.

Indian cops nab top LeT terrorist

AFP, New Delhi

Indian police yesterday said they had arrested a top member of a banned militant outfit near the Nepal border accused of helping mastermind over 40 deadly bomb attacks across the country, including the 1993 Mumbai blasts.

Police accused Tunda, 70, of being a "well-known Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) explosive expert and terrorist" and said he was sought for his alleged role in 1993 serial blasts in Mumbai which killed at least 250 people in a single day.

MDC drops Mugabe re-election challenge

REUTERS, Harare

Zimbabwe's opposition MDC withdrew a court challenge against President Robert Mugabe's re-election through a vote the party had denounced as fraudulent, saying on Friday it would not get a fair hearing.

Mugabe, 89, and his ZANU-PF party were declared winners of the July 31 election but the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) led by outgoing Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai had filed a motion for the constitutional court to overturn the result.

Taliban attacks kill 17 Afghan civilians

AFP, Herat

At least 17 civilians have been killed in multiple Taliban attacks in Afghanistan, officials said yesterday, underscoring increasing insecurity for ordinary people as foreign forces complete their withdrawal next year.

An insurgent attack on a road construction workers' camp in Karukh district in the western province of Herat left nine construction workers dead overnight.

Why US hasn't cut Egypt aid

CNN ONLINE

The slaughter of hundreds in Egypt this week was horrifying. The response of the United States to that slaughter seemed puny and impotent.

Around the world critics suggested the United States was either effectively condoning the violence or sending a strong message that it wouldn't penalize the Egyptian military for this or future harshness. It didn't help that after his statement the president slipped off for a round of golf.

The unnecessarily callous optics of the golf game aside, the unsettling reality is that America's options were puny and likely to have very little effect. Indeed, the White House wisely avoided falling into the trap of "feel good measures:" bold gestures that may resonate but ultimately won't work.

Some argue the United States should suspend the delivery of some or all the \$1.3 billion in annual aid it sends to the Egyptian government. But this would only further reduce the limited influence US have over the Egyptian military.

It is important to remember that after Egyptian President Mohamed Morsi's overthrow, governments from the Persian Gulf in a matter of days offered the new Egyptian government 10 times the amount the United

States gives each year. Not only did this shift the balance of influence away from the United States, but it also raises the possibility that they might well have replaced any funds US withdrew, blunting the impact of any actions.

It is also important to remember that the situation in Egypt is not black and white. While there is no excuse for the kind of massacres that took place this week, the Muslim Brotherhood also has a share of responsibility for the situation on the ground. The Morsi government regularly abused its authority, trampled on basic human rights and was so widely reviled in Egypt that its overthrow was welcomed by tens of millions of citizens.

Had the United States been tougher back then and had it worked more with the international community to tie total aid flows to prevent Morsi era irregularities, it could have helped forestall the current situation.

This last overall point contains the secret to effective US leverage over Egypt and many countries these days. The United States cannot have much impact acting alone.

This is the hard choice for America: Embrace the risks and costs of real engagement or accept those associated with a much more passive role. This doesn't mean US have to be foolish. The world doesn't need more Iraqs.

West nearly brokered Egypt peace deal

AFP, Washington

The United States and its European and Gulf allies were close to a peace deal two weeks ago between Mohamed Morsi supporters and Egypt's military, The Washington Post reported yesterday.

The deal called for supporters of the ousted president to abandon their street camps in exchange for a promise of non-violence from the authorities, the Post said, citing Bernardino Leon, the European Union's envoy for Egypt.

The peace deal, which also included a probe into competing claims of violence, was supposed to lead to talks between the interim government and the Muslim Brotherhood, but former vice president Mohammed El-Baradei apparently could not convince

army chief General Abdel Fattah al-Sisi to agree, Leon told the paper.

El-Baradai resigned in protest on Wednesday as the government unleashed a bloody crackdown on the protesters.

The proposed deal, according to the Post, came after weeks of visits to Cairo and lobbying by diplomats including Leon, US deputy secretary of State William Burns, and the foreign ministers of Qatar and the United Arab Emirates.

"It was a quite simple package the four of us were supporting," Leon told The Post.

The two Gulf states, along with Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, are sending more money to Egypt than the United States is, officials told the newspaper. Qatar has especially emerged a leading supporter of the Brotherhood, according to the Post.



Fattah al-Sisi



El-Baradai



PHOTO: AFP

Life rafts from the sunken ferry St Thomas Aquinas float in front of a cargo ship yesterday whose bow was destroyed after it collided with the ferry the night before off the town of Talisay near the Philippines' second largest city of Cebu.

Ferry disaster kills 31 in Philippines

Country mourns as search suspended for 171 missing

AFP, Cebu

Stormy weather forced Philippine rescuers to suspend a search for 171 people missing yesterday after a crowded ferry collided with a cargo ship and quickly sank, with 31 others confirmed dead.

The St Thomas Aquinas ferry was carrying 831 passengers and crew when the vessels smashed into each other late on Friday night in a dangerous choke point near the port of Cebu, the Philippines' second-biggest city, authorities said.

Coastguard and military vessels, as well as local fishermen in their own small boats, frantically worked through the night and the following morning to haul 629 people out of the water alive.

But when bad weather whipped up the ocean mid-afternoon, authorities suspended the search with 171 people still unaccounted for.

A navy spokesman also said powerful currents had earlier prevented divers from assessing all of the sunken ferry to deter-

mine how many people had died and were trapped inside.

Fabric said rescuers had not given up hope that there were other survivors who were still drifting at sea.

But Rear Admiral Luis Tuason, vice commandant of the coastguard, said the death toll would almost certainly rise.

"Because of the speed by which it went down, there is a big chance that there are people trapped inside," he said, adding the ferry sank within 10 minutes of the collision.

The cargo ship, Sulpicio Express 7, which had 36 crew members on board, did not sink. Television footage showed its steel bow had caved in on impact but it sailed safely to dock.

Tuason said it appeared one of the vessels had violated rules on which lanes they should use when travelling in and out of the port, without specifying which one.

Authorities blamed human error for the disaster. The captain of the ferry survived, coastguard authorities said.

Qaeda attack on Kurds kills 18 in Syria

AFP, Beirut

Al-Qaeda loyalists attacked a mainly Kurdish town in northeastern Syria sparking fighting in which 18 people were killed, two of them ambulance crew, a watchdog said yesterday.

The assault on the strategic border town of Ras al-Ain, from which the jihadists were expelled by Kurdish militiamen in July, sparked an exodus of civilians into neighbouring Turkey, an activist said.

Elsewhere in Syria, rebels attacked a pro-regime militia checkpoint in a majority Christian area of Homs province, killing six civilians and five militiamen, the Observatory said.

At least 182 people were killed across Syria on Friday, the group added.

US de-classifies 'Area 51'

Says it was landing site for U2 planes, not UFOs

AFP, Washington

A newly declassified CIA document confirms the existence of famed Area 51 in Nevada, but conspiracy theorists will be disappointed the spy agency offers no proof of alien spaceship landings in the desert.

Area 51 has long been fodder for science fiction films and wild UFO tales claiming the US government imposed secrecy over the site northwest of Las Vegas to cover up evidence of extra-terrestrials touching down on Earth.

Instead of encounters with flying saucers, the documents released by the Central Intelligence Agency on Thursday recount a less sensational history of Area 51 -- as a testing range for the government's U-2 spy plane during the Cold War.

The CIA in-house history makes no mention of the legendary "Roswell incident," when a weather balloon crashed in New Mexico in 1947. UFO true believers allege it was an alien spacecraft that went down, and that Area 51's hangars had hidden evidence of extra-terrestrial corpses.

But according to the CIA, the government



secrecy surrounding Area 51 was not about Martians but about hiding a new spy plane from the Soviets.

The U-2 reconnaissance aircraft was designed to snoop on the Soviet Union at high-altitude, and its development was top-secret.

In April 1955, the CIA chose a remote dry lakebed in the Nevada desert as a testing ground, which was designated on maps as Area 51.

Test flights for the U-2 aircraft were conducted at a much higher altitude than commercial airliners or other military planes. This led to many complaint from the pilots from commercial airliners.

Anxious to avoid exposing the ultra-secret U-2 program, Air Force officers explained the sightings as merely due to natural phenomena.

The 400-page report, titled "Central Intelligence Agency and Overhead reconnaissance: The U-2 and Oxcart Programs, 1954-1974," was released as a result of a Freedom of Information request dating to 2005 from the National Security Archives at George Washington University.

82 child soldiers rescued in Congo

AFP, Kinshasa

More than 80 children, some as young as eight years old, have been rescued from an armed group in the southeastern Democratic Republic of Congo and are being reunited with their families, the UN said Friday.

The 82 youngsters, including 13 girls, had been recruited by force by the Mai Mai Bakata-Katanga militia who are active in the restive province of Katanga, the UN peacekeeping mission in DR Congo (MONUSCO) said in a statement.

The youngsters, aged eight to 17, were separated from the militia on August 11 and 15 thanks to the joint effort of local child protection agencies in the province, MONUSCO added. The children had reportedly been recruited over the past six months.

Forty of the rescued children "were immediately reunited with their families, while the remaining are receiving interim care pending reunification," the statement read.

MONUSCO head Martin Kobler said the UN was "extremely concerned" about ongoing reports of active recruitment by armed groups in eastern DR Congo.

"Children face unacceptable risks when they are recruited for military purposes," he said.

"The recruitment of children, particularly those under 15 years of age, could constitute a war crime and those responsible must be held to account," it added.

Female ANP leader killed in Pakistan

AFP, Peshawar

Gunmen shot dead a secular female politician from Pakistan's troubled northwest after breaking into her home at night, police said yesterday.

Najma Hanif, 35, was a senior member of the Awami National Party (ANP) which is known for its outspoken views against the Taliban and backed military operations against the insurgents while it ruled the restive Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province.

Police said the attackers, who have not yet been identified, used a silenced pistol.

"One or two attackers entered the house and killed her," a police officer said.

The motive behind the shooting was unclear.