

Axe attack on NY police 'terrorist act'

AFP, New York

A axe attack on rookie New York police officers was a "terrorist act" carried out by a self-radicalized loner who had been in the military and recently converted to Islam, police said.

"This was a terrorist act," police commissioner Bill Bratton told a news conference Friday, a day after the attack, saying he was "very comfortable" describing it as a "terrorist attack."

Bratton said police believed that Thompson acted alone and was self-directed.

Police said Zale Thompson, 32, had looked at websites about terrorist groups such as al-Qaeda and ISIS, and acts of violence, including beheadings and Wednesday's deadly attack in Canada.

Officer Kenneth Healy, 25, is in hospital in a critical but stable condition after being injured in the back of the head during the attack Thursday in broad daylight in a busy shopping area of Queens.

Another officer was hit in the arm.

In an attack that lasted just seven seconds, Bratton said Thompson charged with a hatchet in his hand, striking two officers before he was shot dead by the two other officers, who were uninjured.

A 29-year-old female bystander was accidentally shot and is also in hospital in a critical but stable condition, Bratton said.

Police said Thompson converted to Islam two years ago, and that relatives described him as a "recluse" and "lately depressed." He had no police record in New York but had come into contact with the force as a victim of assault when he was 16, and was arrested six times in California in 2003-04.



US GUN VIOLENCE From left, clockwise, Students from Marysville-Pilchuck High School grieve during a vigil at the Grove Church on Saturday in Marysville, Washington. The alleged 15-year-old killer Jaylen Fryberg; and a police officer consoles two students after the shooting.



PHOTO: AFP

SCHOOL SHOOTING IN US Jitted by rejection, he opened fire

MAIL ONLINE

Jaylen Fryberg, the 15-year-old shooter at Marysville-Pilchuck High School in Washington on Friday, was said to have been left heartbroken 'over a girl' and had been suspended from his football team over 'racist comments'.

The popular schoolboy who was a member of the football and wrestling team shot five people with his 'father's gun', killing one, before turning the gun on himself. Earlier this month, the freshman was crowned homecoming prince.

As with previous such shootings, the episode revived debate on gun control, even though the gun involved was legally acquired.

Jarron Webb, 15-year-old friend of Jaylen, told the Seattle Times Fryberg was angry at the girl for spurning his advance and that he shot her dead as payback for her rejection.

There could have been more victims of the attack, but teacher Megan Silberberger is believed to have run into the room and grabbed Jaylen's arm as he was reloading the gun.

He was also an avid hunter and gun enthusiast. A few months ago, he shared a picture online showing off a new rifle he had received for his birthday.

The shooting lasted just two minutes between 10.41am and 10.43am on Friday. The horrific attack has left the entire community reeling. Authorities are now scrambling to determine a possible cause for the shooting as the four survivors fight for their lives in hospital.

ISIS used 'chem arms in Kobani'

Claim Kurds as US-led strikes pound jihadists in Iraq, Syria

AGENCIES

Kurds battling the so called Islamic State (ISIS) militants for control of Kobani fear the extremist group may have used an unidentified chemical weapon, according to officials and one of the few doctors still working in the besieged Syrian town as US-led air strikes continued to pound jihadists.

Patients with blisters, burning eyes and breathing difficulties turned up at a clinic after a blast was heard on Tuesday evening, Dr Walat Omar said. He described the symptoms as abnormal and said he could not identify their cause, but suspected a chemical weapon.

"Some had red patches and blisters on their skins, others had difficulties breathing and others were vomiting, with painful throats, and others with burning eyes and noses. There was one patient, all his body was covered in red patches and blisters," Omar said in a telephone interview that was periodically disrupted by heavy explosions.

The report came as Iraqi officials on Friday said the ISIS militants used chlorine gas during fighting with Iraqi security forces and Shia militiamen last month north of Baghdad.

ISIS is thought to have obtained stocks of ageing but still potent chemical weapons when it seized Iraqi army bases where they were stored, the New York Times reported earlier



this month.

In June, the group took control of a sprawling complex that had been the heart of Saddam Hussein's chemical weapons programme, Al-Muthanna State Establishment. There may also have been chemical weapons buried or abandoned elsewhere, that were not destroyed by US forces or the Iraqi military.

Stocks manufactured before 1991 are dirty, corroded and not always easy to identify or use, but can still cause serious injury.

When contacted by Guardian, one expert said that, although the blisters were not typical, the symptoms overall were consistent with a possible sulphur mustard poisoning. Intense fighting

has made it impossible to get doctors the equipment they need to do definitive tests for the use of chemical weapons.

Meanwhile, the US-led military coalition pounded the ISIS group Friday and yesterday, with 22 air strikes in Iraq and one in Syria, the Pentagon said.

Eleven of the bombings in the heavy barrage targeted ISIS units, buildings, positions and vehicles near the strategic Mosul Dam. A further four strikes hit near Fallujah, while others targeted Baiji, Qurayat al Hajaj and other locations in Iraq.

The sole strike in Syria, near Kobane, destroyed an artillery piece, Centcom said, and was conducted by US aircraft.

US to blame for almost all the world's major conflicts

Putin accuses US policies for world's instability

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

Russian President Vladimir Putin has accused the US of undermining global stability, and warned that the world will face new wars if Washington does not respect the interests of other nations.

During a speech in the Russian city of Sochi, the President argued that while Moscow does not see Washington as a threat US foreign policy has created chaos. Citing the wars in Iraq, Libya and Syria, he went on to accuse the US and its allies of "fighting against the results of its own policy".

"They are throwing their might to remove the risks they have created themselves, and they are paying an increasing price," Putin told political experts at the Black Sea resort.

"I think that the policies of the ruling elite are erroneous. I am convinced that they go against our interests, undermine trust in the United States," he said without offering

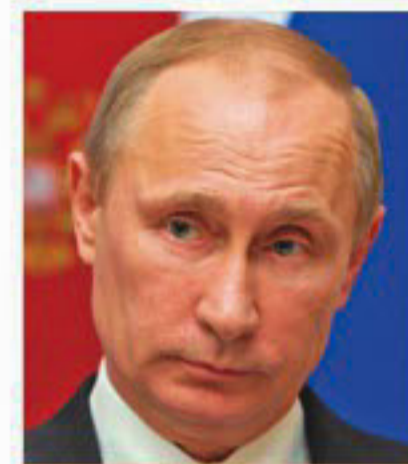
specific examples.

"The probability of a series of acute conflicts with indirect and even direct involvement of major powers has sharply increased," he said. "Ukraine is an example of such conflicts that influence a global balance of forces, and, I think, not the last one."

Addressing the ongoing crisis in Ukraine, which has dragged Russia-West relations to their lowest point since the Cold War, Putin admitted that Russia had helped former Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich to flee in February.

Putin went on to accuse Western powers of supporting the overthrow of pro-Russian Yanukovich, and claimed leaders had dismissed Russia's legitimate interests in its neighbour.

Putin also argued that the interests of Russia and other nations need to be taken into account to stabilise the global situation.



NEWS IN brief

California shooting spree kills 2 cops

REUTERS, California

Two California sheriff's deputies were killed and two others were wounded in a shooting spree that started in a motel parking lot in Sacramento on Friday, authorities said. Marcelo Marquez, 34, and a female companion, who were described on Twitter by the California Highway Patrol as armed and dangerous, were taken into custody, police said.

Clashes, drone strike 'kill dozens' in Yemen

AFP, Sanaa

Fighting between Shia rebels and Sunni tribesmen allied to al-Qaeda has left dozens dead in central Yemen, while a suspected US drone strike killed 10 jihadists, tribal sources said yesterday. The fighting has raised fears of Yemen -- located next to oil kingdom Saudi Arabia and important shipping routes in the Gulf of Aden -- collapsing into a failed state.

India clears defence projects worth \$13.1b

AFP, New Delhi

India's Hindu nationalist government yesterday cleared long-delayed projects worth \$13.1 billion to modernise the nation's ageing Soviet-era military hardware and boost its domestic defence industry, a report said. The move underscores the desire of the government to update the country's military as it looks to defend itself, especially after recent deadly border clashes with Pakistan and a tense standoff with Chinese troops.



Egypt's President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi (C), surrounded by top military generals, addresses journalists following an emergency meeting of the Supreme Council of the armed Forces in Cairo, yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Egypt's Sinai in lockdown after troops killings

AFP, Cairo

A state of emergency came into force across parts of Egypt's Sinai Peninsula yesterday as the military pounded suspected jihadists after 30 soldiers were killed in a suicide car bombing.

The European Union and United States both denounced the latest attack.

It was the deadliest attack on the country's security forces since the army deposed Islamist president Mohamed Morsi last year, to the fury of his supporters.

The state of emergency in the north and centre of the Sinai will remain in place for three months, the president's office said. A curfew is in force from 5:00 pm to 7:00 am.

The military launched fresh air strikes in northern Sinai yesterday, killing eight suspected militants, security officials said.



US President Barack Obama hugs nurse Nina Pham, who was declared free of the Ebola virus after contracting the disease while caring for a Liberian patient in Texas, during a meeting in the White House in Washington, DC, on Saturday.

PHOTO: AFP

Ukraine goes to polls under shadow of war

AFP, Kiev

Ukrainians were to vote today in parliamentary elections overshadowed by a bloody pro-Russian uprising in the east, but described by President Petro Poroshenko as a historic chance to set the country on a pro-Western path.

In his final address to the nation before polls opened, Poroshenko yesterday said that the election would "complete the transfer of power" begun in the revolution last February that overthrew Moscow-backed president Viktor Yanukovich.

"You will see, this will be an entirely new parliament," he said, calling for a legislature that was "reforming, not corrupt, pro-Ukrainian and pro-European, not pro-Soviet."

His Petro Poroshenko Bloc was forecast to emerge as the biggest party in the 450 seat legislature, although without an absolute majority, meaning he will have to form a coalition, probably with harder-line nationalists.

Polls show a majority of Ukrainians support economic and democratic reforms -- especially a crackdown on corruption -- leading eventually to European Union membership.

Of Ukraine's 36.5 million voters, about 1.8 million in Russian-controlled Crimea and three million more in separatist-controlled areas of Lugansk and Donetsk provinces were not expected to vote.

However, the optimism and energy of the revolution have been sucked out by Russia's seizure of the Crimea region and a pro-Russian insurgency in the industrial Donbass region that has killed more than 3,700 people.

Campaign ends in Brazil; polls today

AFP, Rio De Janeiro

Brazil's leftist President Dilma Rousseff and center-right challenger Aecio Neves wrapped up their campaigns yesterday in the hardest-fought election in the country's recent history.

Brazilians vote today in a run-off to choose the next leader of the world's seventh-largest economy, with the incumbent in the lead by six to eight points, according to the two polls.

Rousseff, 66, a former guerrilla who was jailed and tortured for fighting Brazil's 1964-1985 dictatorship, spent yesterday morning in her southern stronghold of Porto Alegre, where she was holding a march.

Neves, the business-world favorite, was meanwhile in his native state of Minas Gerais to pay a visit to the grave of his grandfather Tancredo, who was elected president in 1985 but died before taking office.

Breakthrough in cancer treatment

Stem cells that can kill cancer have been engineered by scientists

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

Harvard scientists have discovered a new way to fight brain cancer with stem cells, a recent study has revealed.

The team of scientists, who experimented on mice, used genetically engineered stem cells that released cancer killing toxins, while leaving healthy cells unaffected.

Most importantly, the modified cells were able to emit the tumour killing poison without succumbing to its effects.

In the tests the main brain tumour was surgically removed, before the stem cells were placed at the site of the tumour in a biodegradable gel, to eradicate the remaining cancerous cells.

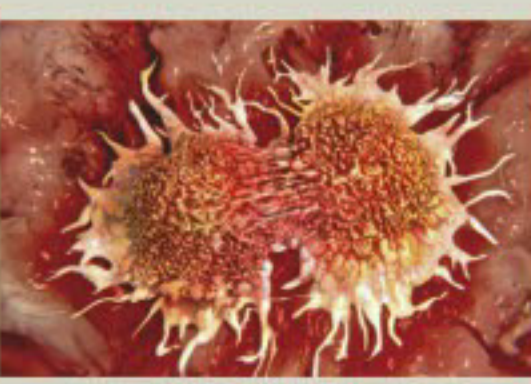
It is considered a breakthrough in cancer treatment by experts.

The study, published in the Stem Cells journal, was the fruit of years of work around stem cell therapy for cancer.

Dr Khalid Shah, who led the team based at Massachusetts General Hospital and the Harvard Stem Cell Institute, said: "Cancer-killing toxins have been used with great success in a variety of blood cancers, but they don't work as well in solid tumours because the cancers aren't as accessible."

"A few years ago we recognised that stem cells could be used to continuously deliver these therapeutic toxins to tumours in the brain, but first we needed to genetically engineer stem cells that could resist being killed themselves by the toxins."

He added: "Now, we have toxin-resistant stem cells that can make and release cancer-killing drugs."



Obama reassures Ebola-wary American public

AFP, Washington

President Barack Obama told Americans Saturday that they must be "guided by the facts, not fear" when it comes to the deadly Ebola virus, as he urged a sensible vigilance.

"Patients can beat this disease. And we can beat this disease," Obama said in his weekly address to the nation, as he sought to reassure the Ebola-wary public that the disease does not spread easily.

The announcement came less than a week after the fiancée and almost 50 other people who had been in contact with a Liberian man, Thomas Eric Duncan, who died after becoming the first Ebola patient diagnosed in the United States, emerged from 21 days of quarantine with no signs of illness.

"In Dallas, dozens of family, friends and others who had been in close contact with the first patient, Mr Duncan, were declared free of Ebola -- a reminder that this disease is actually very hard to catch," Obama said.

Meanwhile two American nurses who contracted Ebola while caring for Duncan were declared cured Friday. One was healthy enough to leave the hospital and meet Obama for a hug.

The good news for the nurses came as the city of New York was dealing with its first case after an American doctor, Craig Spencer, was diagnosed with Ebola on Thursday after returning from Guinea, where he had helped tend the sick.

Nearly 4,900 people have died of Ebola so far this year, mainly in Liberia, Guinea and Sierra Leone.