

# NEWSIN brief

**Train hits car outside NYC; 7 killed**  
AFP, New York

A packed commuter train crashed into a car on the rails outside New York City during Tuesday evening rush hour, killing seven people, officials said. The driver of the car and six people in the first carriage of the train were killed when the train slammed into an SUV vehicle around 6:30pm, triggering an explosion and fire, Governor Andrew Cuomo told a late night news conference.

**N Korea strikes down US talks on nukes**  
AFP, Seoul

North Korea on Wednesday ruled out resuming dialogue with the "gangster-like" United States, and vowed to respond to any US aggression with nuclear strikes and cyber warfare. The bellicose statement from the country's top military body, the National Defence Commission, came after reported moves by Washington and Pyongyang to revive long-stalled six-nation talks on denuclearisation.

**US to purge intel on foreigners after 5 yrs**  
AFP, Washington

US spy agencies will expunge intelligence on foreigners gleaned from phone or email intercepts after five years, unless it has security value, according to a policy review released Tuesday. Two years after whistleblower Edward Snowden revealed a vast overseas digital dragnet that snared, among others, German Chancellor Angela Merkel, the US government said it is changing how it handles the trove of intel.

**Canada FM John Baird steps down**  
AFP, Ottawa

Foreign Affairs Minister John Baird, who carved out a more assertive role for Canada on major international issues, announced Tuesday he is stepping down and will not stand in upcoming elections. The surprise departure of one of Prime Minister Stephen Harper's most trusted lieutenants is a major loss as the conservative leader seeks a fourth mandate to govern in October elections. The 45-year-old Baird gave no reason for his decision to step down.

**17 killed in new DR Congo attack**  
AFP, Goma

At least 17 people have been hacked to death in the Democratic Republic of Congo, which has been plagued by a spate of massacres blamed on Ugandan rebels, police said yesterday. The attack took place overnight in the city of Beni.

## Calls mount for Ukraine truce

**112 killed as hospital shelled**  
AFP, Donetsk

Shelling at a hospital in east Ukraine killed four people yesterday ahead of a visit to Kiev by US Secretary of State John Kerry that will see possible arms supplies high on the agenda. The latest deaths came as international pressure grew for an immediate halt to surging violence which has seen hundreds of civilians killed in recent weeks as pro-Russian rebels pushed into government-held territory. An AFP journalist saw a body lying next to the crater from a mortar blast that shattered the windows at the hospital in a western suburb of the rebel stronghold Donetsk. Eight other civilians were killed in clashes around the region over the past 24 hours, rebel and government officials said. As the death toll ticked up EU foreign affairs head Federica Mogherini called for an immediate ceasefire to allow civilians to escape the fighting. Observers from the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe have demanded a "local temporary truce" around the battleground town of Debaltsevo for the next three days. As fighting raged, US Secretary of State John Kerry will jet to Ukraine today with hopes growing among Kiev's pro-Western leaders that long-standing demands for the US to supply arms could be met. Washington -- fearful of becoming embroiled in a proxy war with Russia -- has so far provided non-lethal assistance to Ukraine.



## TAIWAN plane crash

From top, These pictures show how a passenger plane with 58 people on board plunging into a river near Taiwan's capital Taipei after clipping a bridge on the freeway. Rescue personnel lift a passenger from the waters from the crash site. Inset, A wounded woman is being rescued. At least 31 people were killed when the TransAsia Airways plane plunged into a river in Taiwan. Story on page 16.

PHOTO: AFP, MAIL ONLINE



## Chad takes on Boko Haram

**Kills more than 200; militants retaliate, slaughter dozens of civilians**

AFP, Fotokol

Nigerian Boko Haram fighters went on the rampage in the Cameroonian border town of Fotokol yesterday, massacring civilians and torching a mosque before being repelled by regional forces.

The onslaught came a day after Chad sent troops across the border to flush the jihadists out of the Nigerian town of Gamboru, which lies some 500 metres from Fotokol on the other side of a bridge.

Chad's army said it had killed more than 200 Boko Haram militants in the intervention -- the first by regional forces against Boko Haram on its home ground.

But some of the insurgents escaped and slipped back across the border into Fotokol at dawn to make a fresh stand.

"Boko Haram inflicted so much

damage here this morning. They have killed dozens of people," Umar Babakalli, a resident of Fotokol, told AFP by telephone.

Several residents said civilians' throats were slit and that the town's main mosque was torched.

After several hours of clashes Cameroonian troops, backed by Chadian forces who scrambled back from Nigeria to help guard the town, managed to repel the assault.

"People are coming back little by little to assess the damage. The survivors among the attackers have left the town," a source close to the Cameroonian security services said.

No official death toll was immediately available.

On Tuesday, nine Chadian soldiers were killed and 21 were injured in Gamboru after around 2,000 troops backed by armoured vehicles poured

across the border to take the fight to Boko Haram after days of clashes.

The sound of automatic gunfire could still be heard yesterday in the town as the troops combed the town for remaining rebel elements.

The intervention came days after the African Union backed plans for a 7,500-strong five-nation regional force to take on the extremists, who control vast swathes of northeast Nigeria.

France is supporting the operations by carrying out reconnaissance flights over border areas of Chad and Cameroon to provide them with intelligence, defence officials in Paris said.

At least 13,000 people have been killed and more than a million forced from their homes since Boko Haram launched an insurgency in 2009.

The group has stepped up its attacks in recent weeks, in a move believed to be aimed at disrupting the elections.

## Top Muslim body calls for 'crucifixion' of ISIS jihadists

**Jordan state TV says pilot was killed one month ago**

AFP, Cairo

Al-Azhar, Sunni Islam's most prestigious centre of learning, expressed outrage at the Islamic State group for burning to death a captive Jordanian pilot, saying its militants deserve to be killed or crucified.

After a video was released showing the caged fighter pilot, Maaz al-Kassasbeh, dying engulfed in flames, the Cairo-based authority's head, Ahmed al-Tayib, expressed his "strong dismay at this cowardly act".

"This requires the punishment mentioned in the Koran for these corrupt oppressors who fight against God and his prophet: killing, crucifixion or chopping of the limbs."

"Islam forbids killing of the innocent human soul... It forbids mutilating the human soul by burning or in any other way even during war against an enemy that attacks you," Tayib added in a statement.

Saudi Arabia's new King Salman also called the burning alive of a Jordanian fighter pilot "inhuman and contrary to Islam".

Salman condemned the "odious crime" which he said was against all values of humanity.

In a video posted online Tuesday, ISIS claimed to have killed Kassasbeh, 26, by burning him alive in a cage.

His plane went down in Syria in

December. Meanwhile, Jordanian state television said pilot Maaz al-Kassasbeh was killed a month ago.

It said the captured airman had been killed by the group on January 3, before the jihadists offered to spare his life and free a Japanese journalist in return for the release



A girl holds a poster of the slain pilot during a candlelit vigil in Amman on Monday.

of a female would-be suicide bomber on death row in Jordan.

The extremists had threatened to kill Kassasbeh unless Amman handed over Iraqi jihadist Sajida al-Rishawi. Jordan has executed Rishawi in retaliation.

## Britain nods to '3-parent' babies

AFP, London

Britain on Tuesday became the first country in the world to allow the creation of babies with DNA from three people after MPs voted for the controversial procedure.

Lawmakers at the House Commons voted by 382 to 128, a majority of 254, in favour of allowing the creation of in-vitro fertilisation (IVF) babies with DNA from three people, a move aimed at preventing serious inherited diseases being passed on from mother to child.

Under the change to the laws on IVF, as well as receiving the usual "nuclear" DNA from its mother and father, the embryo would also include a small amount of healthy so-called mDNA from a woman donor.

"Families who know what it is like to care for a child with a devastating disease are best placed to decide whether mitochondrial donation is the right option for them," said



Jeremy Farrar, director of health charity Wellcome Trust, "We welcome this vote to give them that choice."

The bill is expected to be rubber-stamped by the House of Lords, the

upper chamber of parliament, later this month, paving way for the procedure to begin next year.

The change could apply to up to 2,500 women of reproductive age in Britain with hereditary mitochondrial diseases but opponents say it opens the way to the possibility of "designer babies" in future.

Mitochondrial DNA (mDNA) is passed through the mother and mitochondrial diseases cause symptoms ranging from poor vision to diabetes and muscle wasting.

Mitochondria are structures in cells which generate the energy that allows the human body to function.

Health officials estimate around 125 babies are born with the mutations in Britain every year.

## 'Saudis knew of plot to down Air Force One'

**Claims convicted 9/11 terrorist; Riyadh denies allegation**

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

A convicted terrorist has claimed that Saudi Arabian officials supported al-Qaeda financially in the years leading up to 9/11 and discussed shooting down Air Force One during Bill Clinton's presidency.

Zacarias Moussaoui made the claims, which Saudi officials deny, in a statement submitted from a maximum security prison in the US where he is serving a life sentence for conspiring in the 2001 attacks that killed nearly 3,000 people.

His testimony -- which was not subject to cross examination -- was part of a lawsuit by relatives of the victims against Saudi Arabia, he claimed prominent members of the Saudi royal family donated significant amounts to al-Qaeda in the late 1990s, the New York Times reported.

Moussaoui, who attended London's South Bank University, also claimed that he

discussed shooting down the US President's plane with a Stinger missile with a member of staff from the Saudi Embassy in Washington.

In a statement refuting his latest allegations, a spokesperson at the embassy said there was "no evidence" to support Moussaoui's claim.

The 9/11 Commission Report found no evidence that any government other than the Taliban supported al-Qaeda before 9/11.

More than 100 pages of Moussaoui's testimony, given to lawyers inside the ADX Florence prison in Colorado in October, were filed in federal court in New York this week, Sky News reported.

Zacarias has made similar accusations before and his credibility has been repeatedly put in doubt, even by bin Laden himself, who released a tape before he was killed by American special forces denying the jihadist's claims that he was instructed to attack the White House with a Boeing 747 on 9/11, CNN reported.



Zacarias Moussaoui

## Lanka's new leader vows reconciliation

**Set to visit India as first foreign trip**

AFP, Colombo

New President Maithripala Sirisena yesterday vowed to end Sri Lanka's pariah status by working with the UN and promised national reconciliation, six years after the island's ethnic war ended.

In an address to the nation to mark Sri Lanka's 67th anniversary of independence, Sirisena and his ministers also pledged never again to allow the "land to be traumatised by the shedding of blood of innocents".

In a major sign of rapprochement, the country's main minority political party, the Tamil National Alliance, attended the national day celebrations for the first time in decades.

In last month's election Sirisena defeated long-time strongman Mahinda Rajapakse, who fell out with the West over allegations of wartime rights abuses by the security forces.

"We have to address our foreign policy problems. We will follow the UN charter and abide by the UN values," Sirisena said in a nationally televised address.

The US and the Commonwealth have already welcomed the new government's approach to work with the international community, a departure from the previous confrontational stance.

In contrast to Rajapakse, Sirisena's government used the national day to pay respects to all victims of the decades long separatist war which the UN says had claimed at least 100,000 lives between 1972 and 2009.

Sirisena has lifted both the economic embargo and travel restrictions on the north since coming to power. He has also offered to return Tamil-owned land taken over by the military to set up businesses run by the security forces.

Meanwhile, India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi yesterday announced that Sirisena would visit New Delhi later this month on what is expected to be his first foreign trip since winning power.

"I look forward to welcoming President Sirisena later this month," Modi said on his Twitter account. Sirisena has previously said India would be his first port of call as president.



## UAE quits anti-ISIS air campaign

AFP, Washington

The United Arab Emirates pulled out of the air campaign fighting Islamic State militants after the capture of a Jordanian pilot who has since been killed by the extremists, the New York Times reported yesterday.

The pilot was captured in December and Islamic State militants released a video Tuesday showing the man in a cage being burned alive.

The key US ally in the campaign suspended air strikes in December after the capture, fearing for the fate of its pilots, the Times said, quoting US officials.

The United Arab Emirates want the US to improve its search-and-rescue efforts, including the use of V-22 Osprey tilt-rotor aircraft, in northern Iraq, closer to the battleground.

As it stands, the US-led mission is based in Kuwait, administration officials said, according to the Times.

It said UAE pilots will not rejoin the fight until the Ospreys -- which take off and land like helicopters but fly like planes -- are deployed in northern Iraq.

But UAE officials questioned if American military rescue teams would have been able to reach the pilot even if there had been more time for a rescue effort, administration officials said.