

ISIS steps up assault on Iraq's Ramadi

Islamic State (ISIS) has stepped up its assault on the western Iraqi city of Ramadi, launching a series of suicide bomb attacks on a government compound.

Anbar provincial council member Athal al-Fahdawi told the BBC the compound was within range of ISIS weapons and that it and the city were "in great danger".

Military reinforcements sent to Ramadi were not sufficient to repel the jihadists' attacks, he warned.

Earlier this month government forces dealt a major blow to ISIS by recapturing the city of Tikrit. Iraq has said it would follow the victory with campaigns in Anbar province, much of which has been controlled by IS since early 2014. But ISIS responded by launching its own offensives on Ramadi and the Baiji refinery.



Clockwise from top left, Participants with Israeli flags pass a barbed wire fence at the former Nazi German Auschwitz-Birkenau death camp during the 'March of the Living' at in Oswiecim, Poland ; A group of people attend a religious ceremony held in front of a train wagon used in Nazi Germany to transport Jews to concentration camps; and Jews stood in silence as sirens wailed across the country marking Holocaust memorial day and 70 years since the liberation of the Nazi death camps where more than six million Jews died during WWII.

PHOTO: AF



Colombia truce tatters after Farc attack

Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos lifted a suspension of air strikes against the Farc after the Marxist guerrillas were suspected in the killing of 10 soldiers in a pre-dawn attack Wednesday.

The attack in western Colombia, which also left 20 soldiers wounded, was the deadliest since the start of peace talks more than two years ago, officials said.

Late last year the Farc declared a unilateral ceasefire in a bid to advance peace talks that have been under way in Havana since November 2012.

More than 200,000 people have died and another five million have been uprooted as a result of the five-decade conflict.

Russia blames US for world security crises

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Top Russian officials yesterday accused the United States of seeking political and military dominance in the world and sought to put blame on the West for international security crises, including the conflict in east Ukraine.

Evoking Cold War-style rhetoric, Russian Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu said a drive by the United States and its allies to bring Kiev closer to the West was a threat to Moscow and had forced it to react.

"The United States and its allies have crossed all possible lines in their drive to bring Kiev into their orbit. That could not have failed to trigger our reaction," he told an annual security conference in Moscow.

Russia annexed Crimea from Ukraine last March following what it says was an "unconstitutional coup" in which street protests toppled a Moscow-allied Ukrainian president in Kiev after he ditched a deal to move closer to the European Union.

Separatist unrest then spread to eastern, Russian-speaking regions of Ukraine where fighting between Kiev's troops and

pro-Russian rebels killed more than 6,000 people.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov told the conference, attended by envoys from China, Iran, Pakistan and some of Russia's allies, that Kiev had to deliver on its obligations under peace agreements reached in Minsk to "safeguard unity of the Ukrainian state".

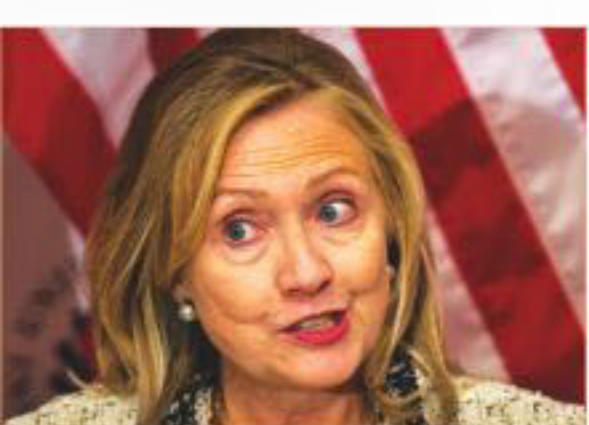
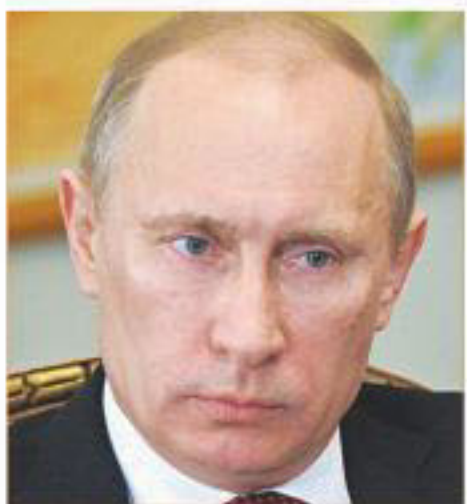
Both said Moscow saw the development of the U.S.-led missile shield in Europe as tilting the post-war balance of power and a threat to its strategic nuclear deterrent capability. Shoigu said Moscow was taking steps to counteract that.

Meanwhile, Russian President Vladimir Putin yesterday admitted that the Soviet Union had sought to forcibly impose the Soviet model on Eastern Europe after World War II.

"We have to admit this. And there's nothing good about it."

Putin, however, accused the United States of trying to impose its own will just as the Soviet Union had in the past.

"The Americans are acting in a similar way by trying to impose their model around the world," Putin said. "They will also fail."



Clinton risks being seen as Obama proxy

AP, Norwalk, Iowa

Hillary Rodham Clinton came to Iowa to give voters an intimate glance of who she'd be as president. What they got instead was a glimpse into the complicated relationship between the current inhabitant of the White House and the woman who hopes to follow in his path.

The Midwestern state's caucuses will kick off the presidential nomination process in 2016. In 2008, Clinton lost the caucuses — and ultimately the nomination — to Barack Obama, a stunning defeat for the former first lady who had been considered the Democratic primary front-runner that year.

On her second try, Clinton appears unlikely to face a formidable Democratic opponent in the primary. Still, she is trying to show Democratic voters that she's taking nothing for granted.

On a two-day swing through Iowa, the opening act of her 2016 campaign, Clinton embraced two of the most politically fraught planks of Obama's legacy: the health care law and the push for an immigration overhaul. But even as she cast herself as continuing the Obama administration's domestic policies, Clinton carefully drew a subtle contrast between her leadership and that of the president.

"I want fix our political system. I want to get things done," she told small business owners, sitting between cardboard fruit cartons at a produce company warehouse. "We have to start breaking down the divisions that have paralyzed our politics."

Clinton's success will depend, at least in part, on how she walks the fine line between praising Obama enough to maintain the support of his loyal coalition, particularly the black and millennial voters who overwhelmingly backed his candidacy, and out-

ing enough distance to woo independents frustrated with Washington partisanship.

Just days into her early campaign, that strategy is already on display.

While Clinton's kickoff video was an upbeat appeal to inherit the diverse coalition that twice elected Obama, at events in Iowa she took a more downbeat tone, describing the middle-class dream as slipping away from many Americans.

"Unfortunately the deck is still stacked in favor of those at the top," Clinton said on Wednesday. "We need to reshuffle the cards and begin to play a different hand."

In polling conducted by CNN last month, 57 percent of Americans said their "perfect candidate" would be someone who changed most policies of the Obama administration. Already, Republicans are stressing the deep ties between the two, describing Clinton's candidacy as a "third Obama term."



A migrant from Syria holds her child upon arrival in Greece at the port of Lesbos island, yesterday. The conflict in Syria has left more than 220,000 dead since it began four years ago with an uprising against President Bashar al-Assad, a key monitoring group said yesterday. The head of the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, Rami Abdel Rahman said more than 67,000 of the dead were civilians, including more than 11,000 children.

PHOTO: AFP

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