

STRING OF US ATTACKS

NY, NJ SUSPECT VISITED AFGHANISTAN, PAKISTAN

Ahmad Khan Rahami, a 28-year-old Afghanistan-born American, was taken into custody on Monday morning following a shootout with police in the New Jersey town of Linden. Officers had been alerted by a bar owner who discovered a man sleeping in the doorway of his premises and thought he was a vagrant.

Rahami shot and injured two police officers, and he was himself shot several times before he was detained, taken to a local hospital and dispatched for surgery. The injuries of the New Jersey officers were not serious.

As New York prepared to host leaders from around the world attending the UN General Assembly, a portrait of the suspect emerged as a man whose attitude and outlook had changed, and darkened, over the last couple of years. Local media said the man who lived and worked with his parents above a fried chicken shop, had grown a beard and started wearing traditional Muslim clothes, after a series of visits to Afghanistan and Pakistan.



RAHAMI

CNN said Rahami travelled to Afghanistan multiple times, according to law enforcement sources. He was questioned every time he returned to the United States, as is standard procedure, but was not on the radar as someone who might have been radicalised.

It said that Rahami travelled to the Afghan city of Kandahar and to the Pakistani city of Quetta. Quetta is a stronghold of Islamic extremists, but also home to a large population of Afghan refugees.

MINNESOTA ATTACKER WAS HIGH-ACHIEVING STUDENT

Dahir Ahmed Adan, the Somali American named as the perpetrator of the weekend stabbing rampage in Minnesota, was a high-achieving student with no known history of violence.

Adan -- who police said was 20 years old, but community members said was 22 -- was shot and killed by an off-duty policeman after Saturday's attack, which the Islamic State group claimed as the work of one of its "soldiers."

Members of St Cloud's close-knit Somali refugee community expressed shock that one of their own had stabbed 10 people at a mall in the city 80 miles (130 kilometers) northwest of the state capital St Paul.

Adan's father, in an interview with the Minneapolis Star Tribune, said his son was born in Kenya but grew up in the United States. He said he had "no suspicion" of his son having any ties to terrorism.

The younger Adan graduated with honors from a local high school and was attending a nearby university, said local Abdul Kulane.

"He worked part-time as a private security officer," Kulane told a Sunday news conference.

"He was helpful to his family and as far as we know, he never had a violent history, as far as his family and the community can remember. He was a friendly and active community member."

Adam Hammer, a spokesman for St. Cloud State University, told AFP that Adan's "intended" major was information systems.

SOURCE: INDEPENDENT.CO.UK, AFP



ADAN



People inspect a damaged house after an air strike on the rebel held Urm al-Kubra town, western Aleppo city, Syria yesterday. The United Nations suspended all humanitarian convoys in Syria yesterday following the deadly air strike on aid trucks, as fighting intensified after the regime declared an end to a week-long truce.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Nations can 'do more' to help refugees

Says Obama in his final UN address as president

AFP, United Nations

US President Barack Obama yesterday called for the international community to step up aid for refugees.

"We have to open our hearts and do more to help refugees who are desperate for a home," he said in his final address to the UN General Assembly, adding that nations should stand by pledges of increased assistance "even when the politics are hard."

"We have to imagine what it would be like for our family, for our children. If the unspeakable happened to us," Obama said. "And we should all understand that ultimately our world will be more secure if we are prepared to help those in need and the nations who are carrying the largest burden with respect to accommodating these refugees."

Obama said all sides should welcome

pledges of assistance that were made at the ongoing UN General Assembly meeting in New York.

Obama also insisted diplomacy is the only way to end the brutal five-year conflict in Syria, as a ceasefire brokered by Washington and Moscow lay in tatters.

Obama urged Israel to end occupation and Palestinians accept Israel. "Surely Israelis and Palestinians will be better off if Palestinians reject incitement and recognize the legitimacy of Israel... (and if) Israel recognizes that it cannot permanently occupy and settle Palestinian land," he said.

Obama also said Russia was trying to recover "lost glory" through force.

He warned Russia that if it "continues to interfere in the affairs of its neighbors, it may be popular at home, it may fuel nationalist fervor for a time, but over time it is also going to diminish its stature and make its borders less secure."



Syria ceasefire not dead: Kerry

AFP, New York

US Secretary of State John Kerry insisted yesterday that hopes for a ceasefire in Syria remain alive after meeting with Russia and key powers with a stake in the civil war.

In brief remarks to reporters as he left a New York hotel after a meeting of the International Syria Support Group, Kerry said talks would reconvene later this week.

"The ceasefire is not dead,"

Kerry insisted, one day after the Syrian military declared a week-old truce over and launched new bombardments on rebel held cities.

The United Nations envoy Staffan de Mistura confirmed that there was still hope of reviving the ceasefire, but admitted that delegates agreed it was in danger.

The 23-nation ISSG, chaired by Kerry and his Russian counterpart Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, met in New York on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly.

The mood is that nobody wants to give this thing up," Britain's Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson told reporters.

"Quite frankly the Kerry-Lavrov process is the only show in town and we've got to get that show back on the road."



Clinton, Trump vie for world leaders' attention

AFP, New York

Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton met Egypt's president in New York on Monday as the two US presidential candidates tried to bolster their diplomatic credentials at the United Nations.

Democratic standard-bearer Clinton said last week that she would meet Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, along with leaders from Japan and Ukraine on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly.

She spent more than an hour locked in private discussions with the Egyptian leader, with aides later saying they had discussed issues ranging from counter-terrorism to human rights.

Trump's meeting with Sisi -- the first time the Republican presidential candidate has met a leader from the Muslim world -- appeared to be a response to his opponent's program.

The former reality TV star, who has previously called for a ban on Muslims entering the United States, spoke with Sisi at New York's La Guardia airport, after flying in from Florida.

Trump told Sisi -- who has been much-

criticised by rights groups for his intolerance of dissent -- that "under a Trump administration, the United States of America will be a loyal friend, not simply an ally, that Egypt can count on."

Trump has called for "extreme vetting" of refugees entering the United States along with a ban on people from "terrorist nations."

But he also told Sisi about "his high regard for peace-loving Muslims," according to a statement released by his campaign.

In an interview with Fox television earlier on Monday, Trump alluded to the impending visit, saying that meetings with other foreign leaders were also on his agenda.

"I don't want to comment specifically on who but a couple of people are coming over. I've already met with a couple," he said.

As well as a sit-down with Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, Clinton also met Ukraine's President Petro Poroshenko, stressing that the US would help Kiev "in the face of Russian aggression" -- a dig at Trump, who has repeatedly praised President Vladimir Putin.

UNGA SIDELINES



A member of the Nepalese police bomb disposal unit prepares to defuse an improvised explosive device planted near a school in Kathmandu yesterday. Bombs were set off at three schools in Kathmandu while explosives were also recovered from five others schools in the Nepalese capital, with no casualties reported.

PHOTO: AFP

NEWS IN brief

858 people mistakenly granted US citizenship

AP, Washington

The US government has mistakenly granted citizenship to at least 858 immigrants from countries of concern to national security or with high rates of immigration fraud who had pending deportation orders, according to an internal Homeland Security audit released Monday. The Homeland Security Department's inspector general found that the immigrants used different names or birthdates to apply for citizenship.

Iran's president meets Castro in Cuba

AFP, Havana

Iranian President Hassan Rouhani arrived in Cuba Monday where he met with his counterpart, Raul Castro, and the Cuban president's older brother and predecessor, Fidel Castro. Rouhani had said ahead of the one-day visit that he wanted to stop in Cuba, a "friendly and revolutionary country," on his way to the United Nations General Assembly in New York.

A German charged with spying on Sikhs

AFP, Berlin

A German immigration official has been arrested and charged with espionage for an Indian secret service for allegedly spying on members of the Sikh religion, prosecutors said yesterday.

The 58-year-old German national, identified only by the initials T.S.P., was accused of "espionage activity and violation of professional secrecy rules in 45 cases," they said in a statement.

Working at an immigration office in the western town of Ostwestfalen, he accessed databases to pass on information on suspected extremist and opposition members of the religious group, said federal prosecutors.

Trump Jr likens refugees to poisoned candies

AFP, Washington

Donald Trump's eldest son triggered an online storm with a tweet comparing Syrian refugees to a bowl containing an assortment of tainted and untainted candies.

"This image says it all," Donald Trump Jr, 38, wrote Monday, in a tweet showing a picture of a white bowl filled with the popular, rainbow-colored Skittles candies.

Written above the image is: "If I had a bowl of skittles and I told you just three would kill you. Would you take a handful? That's our Syria refugee problem."

The Twitter post -- showing the familiar "Trump-Pence 2016" logo with the presidential campaign slogan "Make America Great Again!" -- was met with immediate scorn from users of the popular micro-blogging site.

"I'm not even big on Skittles but now I

will buy up every single packet," wrote @SarahSahim.

"Is Donald Trump's new campaign slogan 'Fear The Rainbow'?" wrote Twitter user @AngrySalmond.

Donald Trump, the 2016 Republican presidential candidate, has sparked waves of criticism with comments on race, immigrants and refugees, including calling for a ban on Muslim travelers to the United States.

Equally controversial was his pronouncement last year that many Mexican immigrants were drug smugglers and rapists.

The brash businessman also is strongly opposed to plans by President Barack Obama to allow 10,000 Syrian refugees into the United States by the end of this month.

Syria is in the grip of the worst humanitarian crisis since World War II, amid an exodus of more than 4.8 million fleeing the war-torn country.



N Korea rocket engine test 'a success': KCNA

AFP, Seoul

North Korea has successfully tested a new, high-powered rocket engine, state media said yesterday, a move Seoul said was designed to showcase its progress towards being able to target the US east coast.

The ground test comes less than two weeks after Pyongyang detonated what it said was a miniaturised atomic bomb.

Taken together, the two tests raise the prospect that the isolated state could be inching towards its ultimate goal of developing a nuclear-tipped missile that could hit Washington DC. State-run news agency KCNA trumpeted the engine test, which it said would give the country "sufficient carrier capability for launching various kinds of satellites."

Rocket engines are easily re-purposed for use in missiles, and outside observers say that Pyongyang's space programme is a fig leaf for weapons tests. The North's leader Kim Jong-Un hailed the test and called for more rocket launches to turn the country into a "possessor of geostationary satellites in a couple of years to come", KCNA said.

No God of war

Says Pope as faith leaders meet to discuss growing religious fanaticism, violence

AFP, Assisi

Pope Francis denounced those who wage war in the name of God yesterday, as he met faith leaders and conflict victims to discuss growing religious fanaticism and escalating violence around the world.

"The world is at war, the world is suffering," the Argentine pontiff said ahead of the meeting, which came as fighting resumed in Syria and US authorities investigated an attack possibly linked to the Islamic State group.

"There is no God of war," he said, calling on "all men and women of good will, of any religion, to pray for peace."

The annual World Day of Prayer event, established by John Paul II 30 years ago and held in the medieval town of Assisi in central Italy, aims

to combat extremism dressed up as religion and the persecution of people for their faiths.

The pope also reminded Western countries that while they had suffered a string of deadly jihadist attacks, there were parts of the world where cities were being flattened by fighting, prisoners were being tortured and families were starving to death.

"We are frightened... by some terrorist acts," he said during morning mass at the Vatican, "(but) this is nothing compared to what is happening in those countries, in those lands where day and night bombs fall."

"As we pray today, it would be good if we all felt shame, shame that humans, our brothers and sisters, are capable of doing this."

