

Qaeda plans attacks on US cities: report

REUTERS, New York
Federal officials have warned New York City authorities about possible attacks by the al Qaeda militant group around Election Day, putting local law enforcement on alert the weekend before Tuesday's vote, officials said yesterday.
Both the New York Police Department (NYPD) and the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey were given the information, the local agencies said.
"We are continuing with the high level of patrols at all of our facilities that we have had in place for some time now," said spokesman Steve Coleman of the Port Authority, which operates airports, tunnels and bridges around the New York City area.
He declined to offer specifics of the warning.
The NYPD said the threat report lacked specifics and was still being assessed.
"We are aware of the information. We have been working with the FBI through the Joint Terrorism Task Force and our Counterterrorism and Intelligence Bureaus," the NYPD said.
The United States has collected intelligence about a possible al Qaeda threat to attack around election time. As a consequence, some agencies sent bulletins to local and state officials flagging the information, a US government source in Washington told Reuters.
The source said, however, the nonspecific threat was relatively low level.

Hackers will disrupt polls

Says worried US officials

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK
The US government is worried hackers from Russia and other places across the globe will hack and disrupt the upcoming presidential election so they're coordinating unprecedented efforts to stop cyber-meddling come Election Day, current and former officials with the CIA and NSA told NBC News.
Russia has already been warned that any attempts at manipulating vote counts would result in serious breaches.
"The Russians are in an offensive mode and [the US is] working on strategies to respond to that, and at the highest levels," Michael McFaul, who served as US ambassador to Russia from 2012 to 2014, told the outlet.
One senior official with the Obama administration said that the Russian government wants to "sow as much confusion as possible and undermine our process in ways they've done elsewhere."
The official said the extra preparation is to "make sure that we have all the tools at our disposal and that we're prepared to respond to whatever it is that they do."
Several officials told NBC that while it would be extremely difficult for hackers to affect voter count, they can cause massive confusion and misperception.



US Democratic presidential nominee Hillary Clinton poses with singer Pharrell Williams for a selfie backstage before a campaign rally in Raleigh, North Carolina. Melania Trump, the wife of Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump, speaks during a rally for her husband at the Main Line Sports Center in Berwyn, Pennsylvania.



PHOTO: AFP

Trump gains ground on Clinton: poll

REUTERS, New York
The race for the Oval Office tightened significantly in the past week, as several swing states that Republican Donald Trump must win shifted from favoring Democrat Hillary Clinton to toss-ups, according to the Reuters/Ipsos States of the Nation project.
The two presidential candidates are now tied in Florida and North Carolina, and Clinton's lead in Michigan has narrowed so much that the state is too close to call. Ohio remains a dead heat and Pennsylvania is now tilting to Clinton.
While Clinton remains the odds-on favorite to win Tuesday's election, Trump now has a plausible route to victory, especially if there is a sharp fall in turnout among African-Americans from the levels of the 2012 election.
Still, Trump must win both Florida and North Carolina to have a good chance of winning the White House. Clinton could lose both states and still win.
The States of the Nation project estimates Clinton's odds of winning the needed 270 Electoral College votes at about 90 percent, down from 95 percent last week. If the election had been held

on Wednesday, the project estimates, she would have had 256 solid electoral votes and an estimated final tally of about 302 votes, to 236 for Trump. Last week, she had 278 solid votes and a final tally of 320 votes, to 218 for Trump.
By any measure, however, Trump has had a good run in the past week. He has seen his support grow in 24 states while losing ground in 11. Conversely, Clinton's support grew in 13 states while shrinking in 22.
Trump's gains came in a period in which he had few new controversies to fend off, while Clinton faced renewed scrutiny of her email practices.
Most respondents to the latest survey were asked about their support for the candidates after FBI Director James Comey announced last Friday the agency was examining newly discovered emails that might pertain to Clinton's use of a private email server while she was secretary of state.
Comey had concluded in July at the end of a year-long FBI probe of the email issue that there were no grounds to bring any charges against Clinton. His brief letter to Congress last week said the new trove of emails might or might not be significant.



Trump silent in ads, Clinton talks up kids

AP, Washington
Donald Trump has shown more than 586 hours of television ads in the general election, and until now something has been missing: his voice.
There is no footage of him speaking, no archival recordings to build out his life story and no direct-to-camera appeals to voters. He doesn't utter a word other than the legally required recording, "I'm Donald Trump, and I approve this message," at the end of his commercials.
That's about to change. In one of the final ads of the race, the Republican presidential nominee will take his case to the voters, his campaign says.
AP found a lack of Trump's voice in his own commercials and an overabundance of his words in Clinton's.
Clinton's chief advertising message is that she fights for children. Her ads dive into photo and video archives to showcase those parts of her resume, and actor Morgan Freeman describes Clinton in melodious cadence as "a woman who spent her life helping children and families."
"I've spent my life fighting for children, and I'm not stopping now," Clinton says in an ad that's been broadcast more than any other during the general election. The spot does not go into specific policy or achievements, but shows Clinton over the decades talking about children.
The same message is delivered in a new, end-of-campaign spot that has rocketed to the top of her play list. This one shows parents marking off the heights of their kids as Clinton says a country is judged by what it does for its children.
Clinton strategist Joel Benenson said such ads remind people of the work Clinton has done and tell voters something they may not know about her work for children, families and women. He also said it strikes a clear contrast with Trump.

NEWSIN brief

Myanmar cop killed in Rakhine

REUTERS, Yangon
Myanmar officials said yesterday a police officer was killed and one wounded in an assault on a guard post in northwestern Rakhine State, in the latest violence in the area. The military has flooded the northern part of the state near the border with Bangladesh since Oct 9, when militants believed to be Rohingya Muslims attacked police border posts, killing nine officers.

Tunisia minister sacked after Saudi remarks

AFP, Tunis
Tunisia's religious affairs minister was fired yesterday for "attacking the foundations of diplomacy" after he publicly suggested the conservative form of Islam practised in Saudi Arabia had links to extremism. A government statement said Prime Minister Youssef Chahed had relieved Abdeljalil Ben Salem of his position due to his "attack" on Tunisia's diplomatic principles.

Pak violates ceasefire 99 times after strike

PTI, Jammu
Pakistani troops have violated the ceasefire 99 times along the Line of Control (LoC) in Jammu and Kashmir, targeting Indian posts and civilian areas, after the surgical strike by the army on PoK-based terrorist launching pads, a senior Indian Army officer said yesterday. A total of 18 people were killed in Pakistani shelling and firing along IB and LoC in Jammu.
Two US trainers shot dead in Jordan
AFP, Amman
Two US trainers were killed and a third American wounded in an exchange of fire yesterday at a Jordanian air force base, the Jordanian army said. It was not immediately clear who initiated the shooting, which the army said took place at the gate of Al-Jafr base in southern Jordan.



Displaced children who had fled from Mosul stand with their family in line to receive aid at Al-Khazer refugee camp, east of Mosul, Iraq yesterday. IS fighters unleashed a deluge of bombs and gunfire yesterday on Iraqi forces punching into the streets of Mosul for the first time, forcing some units into a partial pullback. Story on page 16.

Scandal 'all my fault'

Says S Korea president, denies religious cult links

AFP, Seoul
South Korean President Park Geun-Hye yesterday agreed to be questioned in a formal corruption probe, portraying herself as an over-trusting, "lonely" leader who dropped her guard with a close friend arrested for fraud.
In a highly personal televised address to the nation, Park said the scandal involving her long-time confidante Choi Soon-Sil was "all my fault", but denied reports linking her and Choi to a religious cult.
The scandal has shattered public trust in Park's presidency, and a new Gallup poll showed her approval rating had plummeted to just five percent -- an all-time low for a sitting South Korean president.
"These latest developments are all my fault and were caused by my carelessness," Park said, adding that she had suffered "excruciating heartbreak" for being the cause of so much public concern and distress.
A formal investigation is focused on

allegations that Choi, 60, leveraged her close relationship with Park to coerce local firms into donating large sums to dubious non-profit foundations that she then used for personal gain.
Park said she would not seek to hide behind presidential privilege if required to give testimony.
"If necessary, I am willing to sincerely respond to prosecutors' investigations," she said.
South Korea's constitution does not allow a sitting president to be prosecuted, but some senior officials have suggested questioning as part of a wider investigation is permissible.
Park, who appeared close to tears at times, said she had been living a "lonely life" as president and had turned to Choi for company and help.
"Looking back, I allowed my guard to drop as she stood by my side during difficult times," she said.
"I trusted my personal relationship, but was careless and not tough enough with my acquaintances," she added.



Pak to deport Nat Geo green-eyed 'Afghan girl'

AFP, Peshawar
An Afghan woman immortalised on a National Geographic cover will be sent back to the war-torn homeland she first fled decades ago, after a Pakistani court ordered yesterday that she be deported.
Sharbat Gula, whose blazing green eyes were captured in an image taken in a Pakistan refugee camp by photographer Steve McCurry in the 1980s that became the magazine's most famous cover in history, was arrested last week.
She was accused of living in Pakistan on fraudulent identity papers following a two-year investigation, one of thousands of refugees using fake ID cards.
The illiterate mother-of-four pleaded guilty yesterday, her lawyer Mubashar Nazir told AFP, and the court sentenced her to 15 days imprisonment and a 110,000 Pakistani rupee (\$1,050) fine.
"She has already spent 11 days in jail," Nazir said, meaning she could be freed as early as Monday.
An Afghan consulate official said that the fine imposed on Gula has already been paid and confirmed she would be released Monday.
"We... will take her to Afghanistan in an honourable way on Monday," Abdul Hameed Jalili, counselor for refugees at the Afghan consulate in Peshawar, told AFP.

Amnesty International slammed the decision, calling it a "grave injustice".
"For decades, she was known as the world's most famous refugee and seen as a symbol of Pakistan's status as a generous host," said Champa Patel, Amnesty International's South Asia Director.
"Now, by sending her back to a country she hasn't seen in a generation and her children have never known, her plight has become emblematic of Pakistan's cruel treatment of Afghan refugees."
The 1985 National Geographic image of Gula, then aged 12, made her the face of Afghanistan's decades-long refugee crisis.
After a 17-year search, the photographer McCurry tracked Gula down to a remote Afghan village in 2002 where she was married to a baker and the mother of three daughters at the time.
Pakistani officials say she applied for the fraudulent ID card in Peshawar in 2014.
The photo attached to the application has the same piercing green eyes and sculpted face seen in McCurry's famous image, only lined by age and surrounded by a black hijab covering her hair completely.
Her children will also return with her. Gula, who is suffering from hepatitis C, has told media her husband passed away several years ago.



Humanitarian pause in Syria's Aleppo broken

AP, Beirut
Two Russian soldiers and a Syrian journalist were injured in Syria's Aleppo yesterday when mortar rounds struck one of the exit corridors designated for the evacuation of rebels and residents from the eastern besieged part of the city during a temporary halt in fighting announced by Russia.
For several hours into the 10-hour halt, no one approached the corridors, where webcam footage shared by the Russian Defense Ministry also showed no activities there. By early afternoon however, about four hours before the halt expired, Syrian state media said seven mortar shells from the rebel-held side of the city hit one of the corridors in the northern part of the city.
The Russian Defense Ministry said the two Russian servicemen were lightly wounded during a rebel shelling of the humanitarian corridor in the western section of the Castello road in north Aleppo.

French police clear Paris migrant camp

AFP, Paris
Hundreds of French police cleared a huge migrant camp in northeast Paris yesterday in a fresh sign of the government's determination to take refugees off the streets and into shelters.
The evacuation of 3,800 people from the Stalingrad area of the city came less than two weeks after the demolition of the notorious "Jungle" camp in the northern port city of Calais.
Starting at dawn, police arrived to wake people sleeping in tents or on mattresses under an overhead metro line, 15 minutes' walk from the Gare du Nord railway station.
The operation proceeded calmly and in orderly fashion, with many migrants confused about where they would be taken on the government-chartered buses but there were no signs of resistance.
"Where are they taking people? Somewhere in Paris or outside?" asked Abderrahmane, a 19-year-old from Guinea.
The area around Stalingrad, a gritty multi-ethnic part of the capital, is a magnet for migrants arriving in Paris and police have repeatedly cleared camps there, only for them to spring back into life days later.
But six months before elections, Socialist President Francois Hollande has said he is determined to take refugees off the streets and has said France needs to show them a better welcome.
While some activists praise this fresh



political will to tackle a long-standing problem, they stress that France has been slow to react to a crisis that has grown in intensity over the last two years.
It has lagged behind other countries, Germany in particular, in providing appropriate lodgings for refugees to seek safety.
"Our worry is always the same: that the facilities in the shelters are absolutely not the same standard," local activist Valerie Osouf told AFP, who criticised dirty and costly hotel rooms being used in some cases.
Paris Mayor Anne Hidalgo has announced the creation of the city's first refugee transit camp, which will have an initial capacity for 400 men. It is set to open this month in a disused railway yard in the north of the capital.
In Stalingrad, the arrival of the first bus before dawn yesterday was greeted with cheers from a crowd of hundreds of Afghans who had gathered, bags packed, to take it.