

TALIBAN ATTACK IN AFGHANISTAN
4 Americans killed in US base attack
 AFP, Kabul

Four Americans were killed yesterday in a suicide bombing inside the largest US military base in Afghanistan, Pentagon chief Ashton Carter said, in a major breach of security.

The Taliban claimed responsibility for the bombing inside the heavily fortified Bagram Airfield, north of the capital Kabul, which left 16 other US service members and a Polish soldier wounded as the insurgents ramp up attacks on Western targets.

The dead included two American soldiers and two contractors, in an assault which highlights rising insecurity in Afghanistan nearly two years after US-led Nato forces formally ended their combat operations.

The blast was caused by a suicide attacker who blew himself up near a dining facility inside the base, said Waheed Sediqi, spokesman for the governor of Parwan province where Bagram is located.

"The attacker was one of the Afghan labourers working there," Sediqi told AFP.

Bagram district governor Abdul Shakoor Qudusi described the explosion around 0100 GMT as "powerful", saying it reverberated across the area. The base was put on lockdown following the attack.

The attack represents a brazen security breach inside one of the most heavily guarded military installations in Afghanistan. The United States has around 10,000 troops in Afghanistan, with the largest contingent stationed at the Bagram base.

The base is enveloped by multiple layers of Afghan and American guards, security cameras and watch towers, and a surveillance blimp keeps a close watch on the surrounding areas.



ANTI-TRUMP PROTESTS
 Protesters are detained by Los Angeles Police Department officers after a rally against the election of Republican Donald Trump as President of the United States in Los Angeles, California, yesterday. Inset, A demonstrator is treated for a gunshot wound in Portland, Oregon.



Trump will not harm Paris climate deal
 Hopes UN chief
 AFP, United Nations

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon voiced confidence on Friday that Donald Trump will shed the strident rhetoric that propelled him to the White House and engage with the world to confront global crises like climate change.

Ban told AFP in an interview that he hopes to meet with the US president-elect in the coming weeks to explain how the United Nations expects the United States to "continue to work for humanity."

"This is what he said during the campaign period, on the campaign trail," Ban said in the interview. "Now, post-election, when he creates his transition team with experts and people with vision and expertise, I am sure that the United States will continue to play a leading role," he said.

During his campaign, Trump described global warming as a hoax invented by the Chinese, vowing to renege on US pledges to cut down greenhouse gas emissions.

Ban argued that there was a strong consensus in the United States and across the world on the need to address global warming, suggesting Trump would be recklessly out-of-sync if he scrapped the deal.

"Now business communities are fully on board. Civil society members are fully on board. How can one change all this course? It's a huge trend," he said.

"It will create serious problems if anybody wants to undo it, or unravel all this process."

We must teach Donald Trump what Europe is
 Says Juncker amid uncertainty over US-EU ties

AFP, Luxembourg

US President-elect Donald Trump must get up to speed on how Europe works in order to avoid "two years of wasted time" when he assumes his new role, European Commission chief Jean-Claude Juncker said Friday.

"Mr Trump, during his campaign, said that Belgium was a village somewhere in Europe," Juncker said in his frank remarks to students in Luxembourg on the reality TV star's stunning election victory.

"We must teach the President-elect what Europe is and how it works," Juncker said, adding: "I believe we'll have two years of wasted time while Mr Trump tours a world he doesn't know."

Juncker said that Trump had called Nato into question, which could have "harmful consequences" because it is the model of Europe's defence.

The populist had also "taken a view of refugees and non-white Americans that does not reflect European convictions and feelings", he added.

In June, Trump caused mirth on the continent when he called Belgium a "beautiful city", apparently confusing the country with its capital Brussels-- the seat of the European Union and Nato.

"The Americans, as a general rule, have no interest in Europe," Juncker said in his remarks to the students.

On Wednesday, after Trump's shock victory over rival Hillary Clinton, Juncker and European Council Chief Donald Tusk invited him to a EU-US summit to discuss issues including terrorism and Ukraine.

"We should spare no effort to ensure that the ties that bind us remain strong and durable," the two said in their letter to the president-elect.



Voter turnout at 20-year low in 2016
 CNN ONLINE

Voter turnout this year's US election dipped to nearly its lowest point in two decades.

While election officials are still tabulating ballots, the 126 million votes already counted means about 55% of voting age citizens cast ballots this year.

That measure of turnout is the lowest in a presidential election since 1996, when 53.5% of voting-age citizens turned out.

As election officials go through outstanding ballots -- such as provisional ballots and those with write-ins -- the turnout figures will change.

But it would take another 18.7 million votes to reach the high point for turnout of 2008, when nearly 64% of voting age citizens cast a ballot.

Early results in some of the key states that propelled President-elect Donald Trump to his win reveal that more voters cast ballots this year than in 2012, even though overall turnout was down.

Full measures of turnout won't be clear for as long as several more weeks, when election officials in the various states finish tabulating and certify the results. The figures also do not include people of age who are ineligible to vote or have not registered.

'She couldn't have been nicer'
 Trump showers praise on Clintons

AGENCIES

Showing a softer part, Trump showered Hillary Clinton with praise describing the election night call he received from her conceding that he had won.

"It was a lovely call, and it was a tough call for her -- I mean, I can imagine," he said in the interview to CBS, excerpts of which were aired Friday.

"I mean, for me, it would have been very, very difficult. She couldn't have been nicer. She just said, 'Congratulations, Donald, well done!'"

And I said, "I want to thank you very much, you were a great competitor," he said, praising his vanquished political foe as "very strong and very smart."

He also described a call he received from her husband, former president Bill Clinton, who he said "couldn't have been more gracious."

Trump said he wouldn't rule out approaching the former US leader for advice.

The comments echo Trump's remarks after a meeting with President Barack Obama on Thursday, when he said he looked "forward to dealing with the president in the future," including receiving Obama's counsel.

When asked whether he would seek the advice of Bill Clinton, Trump said "I would certainly think about that."

"He's a very talented guy, I mean, this is a very talented family," Trump said.



Battle for Mosul intensifies

AGENCIES

Elite Iraqi forces were engaged in "intense" fighting with jihadists in eastern Mosul yesterday, an officer said, as civilians gathered on the city's outskirts to flee.

Iraqi forces launched a massive operation to retake the country's second city from the Islamic State.

As fighting raged deeper in the city, civilians, some of them carrying white flags, walked toward its outskirts, gathering near an Iraqi military truck that would take them out of the city to safety.

More than 49,000 people have been displaced since the Mosul operation began, the International Organisation for Migration said yesterday.

Aid workers have said that a million or more people could be displaced by the battle for Mosul, meaning that the worst may still be ahead.

In Syria, government forces have recaptured all of the areas taken by rebel fighters in a recent assault intended to break the regime siege on eastern Aleppo, a



Syrian pro-government forces walk around in the village of Minyan, west of Aleppo, yesterday, after they retook the area from rebel fighters.
 PHOTO: AFP

monitor said yesterday.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said the army had recaptured key areas including the western district of Dahiyet al-Assad and the village of Minyan outside the city.

The monitor said over 450 fighters and civilians had been killed since the rebels began their latest bid to break the siege on October 28. More than 300,000 people have been killed in Syria's five-year war.

Meanwhile, Russia yesterday said a flotilla of warships is now in the eastern Mediterranean off the Syrian coast after being sent to reinforce Russia's military in the area.

The battle group has travelled to Syria from the North Sea through the English Channel in the biggest such naval deployment in recent years as part of Russia's military intervention in Syria.

Russia says it has ceased strikes on rebel-held east Aleppo since October 18 and has also held brief unilateral ceasefires on the ground it calls "humanitarian pauses."

PARIS MASSACRE

Bataclan hall to reopen with Sting concert
 AFP, Paris

Rock star Sting was to reopen the Bataclan, the revered Paris concert hall where jihadists massacred 90 people, with a hugely symbolic show to mark the first anniversary of France's bloodiest terror attacks.

Scores of survivors of the Bataclan assault -- the worst of the gun and suicide attacks across the city that night which left 130 dead -- will attend the concert, the dominant event in a week-end of otherwise low-key commemorations.

On Friday, November 13, 2015, a night of horror began with three suicide bombers who blew themselves up outside the Stade de France national stadium.

Other Islamic State gangs opened fire on defenceless people on cafe terraces, but the worst nightmare was in the Bataclan, where covering or wounded concert goers were coldly shot dead one by one.

In comments published yesterday, France's Prime Minister Manuel Valls vowed to end "Islamist terrorism" once and for all.

"(People) are concerned, we owe them the truth. Yes, terrorism will strike us again," warned Valls in a statement published by several European newspapers.

"But yes, we have in ourselves all the resources to resist and all the strength to beat it. We Europeans will defeat Islamist terrorism!"

Today, French President Francois Hollande and Paris Mayor Anne Hidalgo will unveil plaques to the victims outside the national stadium, the Bataclan and bars and restaurants targeted that night.

A year later, nine people out of the around 400 injured in the rampage are still in hospital.

WAR IN IRAQ, SYRIA

- Regime rolls back rebel gains in Aleppo
- Russian warship flotilla reaches Syrian coast
- UN says more than 49,000 people now fled Mosul

MOVE TO SECOND BREXIT REFERENDUM

'More than 80 MPs' plot to stage Parliamentary vote

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

More than 80 British MPs are said to be plotting to stage a vote calling for another referendum of the terms of Brexit, it has emerged.

Liberal Democrat leader Tim Farron, who has already pledged to vote against the triggering of Article 50 along with a group of other MPs, said they will now stage Parliamentary vote to call for a second Brexit referendum.

Eighty-four politicians will reportedly support Liberal Democrat leader Tim Farron in staging the vote, a source told The Telegraph.

Theresa May's Government is appealing a High Court ruling that stated she must get Parliament's approval before triggering Article 50, which formally begins the Brexit negotiations with Brussels.

On Friday Farron said unless a referendum was called his party would vote against the Government on the triggering of Article 50.

He told the BBC: "Article 50 would proceed but only if there is a referendum on the terms of the deal and if the British people are not respected then, yes, that is a red line and we would vote against the government."

The Lib Dem leader described the potential deal as a "stitch-up" that no one voted for, telling the BBC Radio 4's Today programme: "We believe what started with democracy in June must not now end up as a stitch-up deal being imposed on the British people that absolutely no one voted for."

Farron is reportedly being backed by MPs from a number of different parties including the Lib Dems, the SNP, SDLP and 20 Labour backbenchers.

Labour has pledged not to block Article 50, but a number of Jeremy Corbyn's backbenchers, including Owen Smith and David Lammy, intend to defy him by calling for a second referendum.

Ministers have previously said Article 50 is "irreversible", prompting the High Court to decide that by not consulting Parliament, May would be taking rights away from British citizens that were previously voted on by MPs.



People march toward the Presidential Blue House during a rally against President Park Geun-hye in central Seoul, South Korea, yesterday. Park faced mounting pressure to step down as hundreds of thousands of demonstrators marched in the capital to protest allegations that she let a friend meddle in state affairs.
 PHOTO: REUTERS