

AMBASSADORS KILLED IN THE LINE OF DUTY



RUSSIAN KILLING
Russia's ambassador to Turkey, Andrei Karlov, is shot dead by a Turkish policeman crying "Aleppo" and "revenge" at an art exhibition in Ankara on December 19, 2016.

SIX US ENVOYS SLAIN
US ambassador Chris Stevens and three other American staff are killed when a mob of Libyan protesters storm the US consulate in Libya's second city Benghazi on September 11, 2012.

Ambassador to Afghanistan **Rolph Dubs**, killed in February, 1979 during a rescue attempt by government forces after being abducted in Kabul by radical Islamists.

Ambassador to Lebanon **Francis E Meloy**, who, with a second diplomat and his embassy's driver, is abducted in Beirut in June 1976 and killed by a pro-Palestinian Lebanese group.

Ambassador to Cyprus **Rodger P Davies**, shot in his embassy in Picosia in August 1974, during a demonstration by Greek Cypriots.

Ambassador to Sudan **Cleo A Noel** taken hostage, along with two other diplomats, by Palestinian commandos and executed in March, 1973.

Ambassador to Guatemala **John Gordon Mein**, abducted in August 1968 and executed by armed rebels.

FRENCH ENVOYS
French ambassador in Beirut, **Louis Delamare**, is shot dead in his car in the Lebanese capital on September 4, 1981. Syria is suspected of involvement, over France's diplomatic role in the Lebanon civil war.

BOLIVIAN ENVOY
Philippe Bernard, France's ambassador to the then Zaire, now the Democratic Republic of Congo, is killed by a stray bullet as trouble breaks out in the capital Kinshasa on January 28, 1993.

BOLIVIAN ENVOY
Bolivia's ambassador to Paris, **Joaquin Zenteno Anaya**, is shot near the Seine river on May 11, 1976, in a killing claimed by a group calling itself the International Che Guevara Brigades.

SOURCE: AFP

Russia seeks answers

Putin says attack aimed at harming Moscow-Ankara ties; six detained

AFP, Ankara

A team of Russian investigators arrived in Ankara yesterday to uncover how an off-duty policeman assassinated Moscow's ambassador in an art gallery, as Turkey made its first arrests over the murder.

Veteran diplomat Andrei Karlov was shot four times in the back by Turkish policeman Mevlut Mert Altintas, 22, in a brazen attack as he opened an exhibition of Russian photography on Monday.

The killing stunned Ankara and Moscow, which have rowed repeatedly over the Syria conflict but in recent weeks have begun cooperating closely on the evacuations from war-wrecked Aleppo.

An unprecedented three-way meeting on Syria between the foreign ministers of Turkey, Russia and Iran in Moscow went on yesterday despite the assassination.

"We have to know who directed the hand of the killer," Russian President Vladimir Putin declared, and agreed with Turkish opposite number Recep Tayyip Erdogan in an unprecedented move to send a Russian investigative team to the scene.

Welcoming Turkish counterpart Mevlut Cavusoglu at the start of the Syria talks in Moscow, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov confirmed the team had arrived in Ankara.

"This tragedy forces all of us to fight more decisively against terrorism," Lavrov told Cavusoglu.

ENVOY KILLING IN TURKEY



Lavrov meets Turkey FM, urges no 'concessions to terrorists'

US shuts its embassy in Ankara after shooting incident

Russian media says envoy murder won't shatter ties

Dramatic images showed Karlov stumble and then crash to the ground on his back as Altintas brandished his gun at terrified onlookers who covered behind cocktail tables at the Ankara gallery.

The gunman shouted "Allahu Akbar" ("God is greatest") and said all those responsible for what has happened in Syria and Aleppo would be held accountable.

Altintas had set off the metal detector security check when he entered the exhibition in central Ankara as he was carrying a gun, the pro-government Sabah daily said.

But after showing his police ID, he was waved through. He was killed by police after a 15-minute standoff.

Altintas was born in the town of Soke

in the Aegean region of western Turkey and attended a special school for training future policemen.

Six people have been detained over the attack, including the sister, mother, father and uncle of Altintas, Turkish media said.

Ankara mayor Melih Gokcek, known for his outspoken comments, speculated on Twitter that the gunman may be linked to the group of exiled Turkish cleric Fethullah Gulen, blamed for the July coup aimed at toppling Erdogan.

Gulen, who denies having any link to the failed coup, issued a statement condemning "in the strongest terms this heinous act of terror".

Hours after the assassination, an individual fired outside the main gate of the US embassy in Ankara.

The mission said in a statement that no-one was hurt and the individual was detained but the embassy and consulates in Istanbul and Adana were closed for normal operations.

Karlov's body was in an Ankara morgue and later flown back to Moscow after a ceremony at Ankara airport, Turkish media reports said.

Cavusoglu announced in Moscow that the street where the embassy is located would be named after the 62-year-old envoy.

The killing came after days of protests in Turkey over Russia's role in Syria, although Moscow and Ankara are now working closely together to evacuate citizens from the battered city of Aleppo.

Trump vows to wipe out terror

Blames 'Islamist terrorists' for 'slaughter' of Christians in Berlin

AFP, Washington

President-elect Donald Trump vowed Monday, a month before he takes office, to wipe "terrorists" off the face of the Earth, after a series of high-profile attacks in Germany, Turkey and Switzerland.

German police have so far spoken of a possible terror attack after a truck plowed through a crowd, killing at least 12 and injuring dozens more in scenes reminiscent of July's deadly truck attack in the French city of Nice.

But still, Trump condemned the "horrifying terror attack." "ISIS and other Islamist terrorists continually slaughter Christians in their communities and places of worship as part of their global jihad," he added, referring to the Islamic State group.

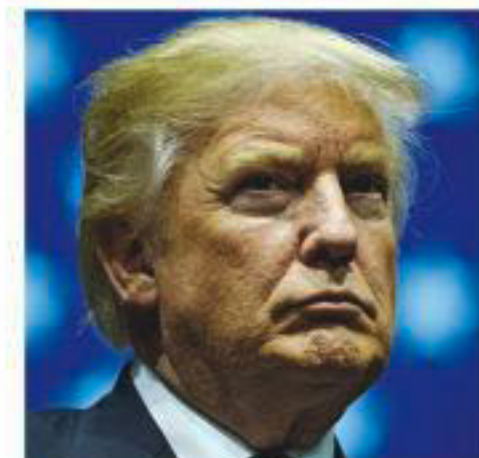
Trump then promised: "These terrorists and their regional and worldwide networks must be eradicated from the face of the Earth, a mission we will carry out with all freedom-loving partners."

In Ankara, a policeman shot dead Russia's ambassador to Turkey. Trump called the gunman a "radical Islamic terrorist." Turkey and Russia stand on opposite sides of the Syria conflict with Ankara backing rebels trying to topple Moscow's ally President Bashar al-Assad.

But the rhetoric has warmed considerably since a reconciliation deal was signed earlier this year and a Russian and Turkish-brokered accord has helped the evacuation of citizens from Aleppo in the last days.

As a billionaire real estate investor, Trump has curried favor with Moscow through his business dealings over the decades. Those ties are coming under fire after US intelligence agencies found that Russia had tried to sway the US election via a cyber hack.

At the same time, relations between the former Cold War foes are at a very low point.



Electoral College seals Trump win

AFP, Washington

America's Electoral College on Monday confirmed Donald Trump's election as the 45th president of the United States, unswayed by a desperate bid by die-hard opponents to bar the Republican's path to the White House.

Six weeks after his upset victory over the Democrat Hillary Clinton, Trump sailed as expected past the 270 votes needed to make his victory official according to US media, clearing the way for him to succeed Barack Obama on January 20.

"We did it!" the 70-year-old billionaire tweeted after the results came in. "Thank you to all of my great supporters, we just officially won the election (despite all of the distorted and inaccurate media)."

In a statement released by his team, the president-elect welcomed the "overwhelming vote" in his favor, while reaching out to the Democrats who sought against the odds to block him.

"With this historic step we can look forward to the bright future ahead," he said. "I will work hard to unite our country and be the president of all Americans."

Under normal circumstances, the college vote is a little-watched, rubber stamp formality in which electors -- most of them party members -- officially cast ballots for the candidate that won the popular tally in their state.

This time, however, the divisive nature of the campaign, Trump's provocative personality, and Clinton's lead of nearly three million votes in the popular tally combined to raise the stakes.

To bar Trump's road to the White House, they needed to convince at least 37 Republican electors to abandon their candidate.

The odds of that happening were considered next to none.



(Clockwise from left) Swiss police officers hold a blanket to cover a dead body found near a Muslim prayer hall, central Zurich, on Monday, after three people were injured by gunfire; a Muslim man prays at a makeshift memorial for the Berlin truck attack victims in Berlin, yesterday; and police inspect the truck that killed at least 12 people and injured dozens more.



PHOTO: AFP

NEWSIN brief

IS claims deadly attack at Jordan tourist spot

AFP, Amman

The Islamic State jihadist group yesterday claimed responsibility for an attack at a popular tourist destination in Jordan that killed 10 people including policemen and a Canadian. Four "soldiers of the caliphate" with machine-guns and hand grenades carried out Sunday's assault targeting "apostate" security forces and citizens of coalition battling jihadists in Syria and Iraq, an IS statement said.

Three people dead in Venezuela cash unrest

AFP, Caracas

A weekend of looting and clashes left at least three people dead in Venezuela, authorities said Monday, as anger roiled over a chaotic currency reform that left many without cash. A man, a woman and an adolescent boy were shot dead when violence erupted Saturday in the town of La Paraguará, in the southern state of Bolívar, the attorney general's office said.

22 dead in clashes in Yemen's Taz

AFP, Aden

At least 22 people were killed in clashes between government forces and rebels on the outskirts of the flashpoint city of Taz in southwest Yemen, military sources said yesterday. The fighting late Monday north of Taz, held by loyalists but partly surrounded by Shia Huthis and their rebel allies, left at least 14 rebels and eight soldiers dead, they said.

25,000 people evacuated

Says Red Cross; Syria army urges remaining rebels to quit the devastated city; UN plans new peace talks in February

AFP, Aleppo

Syria's army yesterday urged the last remaining rebels and civilians to leave the bombed-out eastern quarters of Aleppo as it prepares to take full control of the devastated city.

The evacuation of east Aleppo is seen as a pivotal moment in the nearly six-year war that has killed more than 310,000 people and triggered a major humanitarian and refugee crisis.

At least 25,000 people have left rebel districts of east Aleppo since evacuations began last week, according to the International Committee of the Red Cross, which is overseeing the operation.

Thousands more were still waiting to be bused out, spokeswoman Ingy Sedky said.

She said that 750 people had been

evacuated in parallel from Fuua and Kafraya, two Shia-majority villages in northwest Syria besieged by rebels, as part of the deal.

In east Aleppo yesterday, soldiers using megaphones called on the remaining fighters and civilians to exit the opposition districts, a military source told AFP.

ALEPPO CRISIS

"The army is expected to enter (Aleppo) to clean the area after the fighters leave," the source said.

Buses and ambulances have been bringing rebels and civilians on a tense journey from Aleppo's battered east into government-held neighbourhoods, and back into rebel-held territory west of the city.

Thousands of people -- mostly women and children -- squeeze onto

buses with whatever belongings they can carry, many in tears and others shivering in the cold, according to AFP correspondents who made the trip.

The UN Security Council on Monday unanimously adopted a French-drafted resolution with the backing of Russia to monitor the evacuations from Aleppo.

Syria's UN ambassador, Bashar al-Jaafari, accused Western powers of scrambling to send observers to east Aleppo to rescue what he described as foreign spies supporting the opposition forces.

UN envoy Staffan de Mistura said in New York that he hoped to convene new peace talks in Geneva in February.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said yesterday that the evacuation from Aleppo should finish within a couple of days.

China returns seized US sea drone

AFP, Washington

China has returned a US underwater probe it seized in the South China Sea, the Pentagon confirmed after Beijing's capture of the craft sparked a dispute between the two powers.

The Chinese navy handed over the drone near where it was seized, the Pentagon said, repeating US condemnation of Beijing's actions in what it says are international waters.

"This incident was inconsistent with both international law and standards of professionalism for conduct between navies at sea," Pentagon press secretary Peter Cook said in a statement late Monday.

SHOOTING IN ZURICH Muslim prayer hall shooter found dead

AFP, Geneva

Swiss police yesterday said that they had found the body of a man suspected of opening fire and injuring three men at a Muslim prayer hall in Zurich.

The attack on Monday evening is not believed to be linked to the so-called Islamic State (IS) movement, a statement added.

"We assume that the dead person we found is the perpetrator of the shooting at the Islamic centre in Zurich," Zurich police said in a tweet.

The body was found after a search for the shooter near the scene. The announcement came after a man, around 30 years old, burst into the Islamic Centre in central Zurich around 5:30 pm (1630 GMT) on Monday and began shooting, according to police.

He "fired several shots at the worshippers," before fleeing, police said. Most of those at the Islamic Centre were from North Africa, Somalia and Eritrea, according to the ATIS news agency.

A police spokesman told the RTS public broadcaster that the youngest and oldest victims were both seriously injured, while the 35-year-old was slightly hurt in the shooting.

They did not immediately provide any details about the suspected motive for the shooting.



A hotel severely damaged by an earthquake is pictured in Esmeraldas, province of Esmeraldas, northwestern Ecuador on Monday. A 5.7-magnitude earthquake followed by 37 aftershocks rattled Ecuador's Pacific coast before dawn, causing three deaths and heavy damage to hotels and homes in resort towns, officials said.

Missing flight MH370 not in search zone

Experts say plane might have plunged further north

AFP, Sydney

Missing flight MH370 is almost certainly not in the current search zone in the remote Indian Ocean and may be further north, new analysis showed yesterday, but authorities indicated the hunt may not be expanded.

No trace has been found in the massive underwater search off Australia for the jet lost en route from Kuala Lumpur to Beijing on March 8, 2014, carrying 239 passengers and crew.

However, more than 20 pieces of debris recovered mostly on western Indian Ocean shorelines have been identified as likely, or definitely, from the doomed Malaysia Airlines plane.

With scouring of the wild 120,000 square kilometre (46,000 square mile) swathe of sea coming to an end, Australian and international experts, including from Boeing

and Inmarsat, met in Canberra last month to review their evidence and modelling.

They concluded the plane was not where they have been looking, the Australian Transport Safety Bureau (ATSB), which has been leading the mission, said in a report.

"There is a high degree of confidence that the previously identified underwater area searched to date does not contain the missing aircraft," it said.

The area being searched was initially based on satellite analysis of the jet's likely trajectory after it diverted from its flight path coupled with aircraft dynamics and meteorological data.

This indicated the last known location was somewhere along an arc sweeping north into Central Asia or south into the Indian Ocean. The northern corridor was quickly discounted in the belief the plane would have been detected.

