



United States Department of State

Washington, D.C. 20520

NOV 27 2015

Case No. F-2011-03401

Ms. Kate Bailey
Judicial Watch
425 Third St. SW, Suite 800
Washington, DC 20024

Dear Ms. Bailey:

I refer to our letter dated October 16, 2015, regarding the release of certain Department of State records under the Freedom of Information Act (the "FOIA"), 5 U.S.C. § 552.

We have completed the review and coordination of 15 records from the files of the Office of the Executive Secretariat ("S/ES") that are responsive to your request. We have determined that 2 of these documents may be released in full and 13 may be released in part.

We have also completed the review and coordination of two documents recently provided to the Department by Mr. Jake Sullivan and determined that both may be released in part.

In addition, the review of the S/ES records has identified 129 documents containing information that was submitted to the Department by a third party as potentially exempt from disclosure as privileged or confidential information under Exemption 4 of the FOIA, 5 U.S.C. § 552(b)(4). These documents are being referred to the submitter of the information for review pursuant to Executive Order 12600 and the Department's implementing regulations, 22 C.F.R. § 171.13.

The review of additional records from S/ES and the materials recently provided to the Department by Ms. Huma Abedin, Ms. Cheryl Mills, and Mr. Jake Sullivan is ongoing. We will keep you informed as your case progresses.

If you have any questions, your attorney may contact Department of Justice attorney James Todd at (202) 514-3378. Please be sure to refer to the case number, F-2011-03401, and the civil action number, No. 13-772, in all communications about this case.

Sincerely,

Susan C. Weimer for

John F. Hackett, Director
Office of Information Programs and Services

Enclosures: As stated.

FOIA Exemptions

- (b)(1) Information specifically authorized by an executive order to be kept secret in the interest of national defense or foreign policy. Executive Order 13526 includes the following classification categories:
- 1.4(a) Military plans, systems, or operations
 - 1.4(b) Foreign government information
 - 1.4(c) Intelligence activities, sources or methods, or cryptology
 - 1.4(d) Foreign relations or foreign activities of the US; including confidential sources
 - 1.4(e) Scientific, technological, or economic matters relating to national security, including defense against transnational terrorism
 - 1.4(f) U.S. Government programs for safeguarding nuclear materials or facilities
 - 1.4(g) Vulnerabilities or capabilities of systems, installations, infrastructures, projects, plans, or protection services relating to US national security, including defense against transnational terrorism
 - 1.4(h) Weapons of mass destruction
- (b)(2) Related solely to the internal personnel rules and practices of an agency
- (b)(3) Specifically exempted from disclosure by statute (other than 5 USC 552), for example:
- | | |
|----------------|---|
| ARMSEXP | Arms Export Control Act, 50a USC 2411(c) |
| CIA PERS/ORG | Central Intelligence Agency Act of 1949, 50 USC 403(g) |
| EXPORT CONTROL | Export Administration Act of 1979, 50 USC App. Sec. 2411(c) |
| FS ACT | Foreign Service Act of 1980, 22 USC 4004 |
| INA | Immigration and Nationality Act, 8 USC 1202(f), Sec. 222(f) |
| IRAN | Iran Claims Settlement Act, Public Law 99-99, Sec. 505 |
- (b)(4) Trade secrets and confidential commercial or financial information
- (b)(5) Interagency or intra-agency communications forming part of the deliberative process, attorney-client privilege, or attorney work product
- (b)(6) Personal privacy information
- (b)(7) Law enforcement information whose disclosure would:
- (A) interfere with enforcement proceedings
 - (B) deprive a person of a fair trial
 - (C) constitute an unwarranted invasion of personal privacy
 - (D) disclose confidential sources
 - (E) disclose investigation techniques
 - (F) endanger life or physical safety of an individual
- (b)(8) Prepared by or for a government agency regulating or supervising financial institutions
- (b)(9) Geological and geophysical information and data, including maps, concerning wells

Other Grounds for Withholding

- NR Material not responsive to a FOIA request excised with the agreement of the requester

From: Caitlin Klevorick [redacted]
Sent: Monday, August 24, 2009 7:55 AM
To: Cheryl Mills; Ami Desai
Cc: Abedin, Huma; Sullivan, Jacob J
Subject: Re: CGI

RELEASE IN PART
B6

REVIEW AUTHORITY: Barbara Nielsen, Senior Reviewer

B6

The only difference with closing plenary is that there is usually some look back at the week (last year it was a short video) and wjc usually gives closing remarks (ami-wld wjc still close the session with them? Assume so).

Last year was the only year there has been a speaker at the closing. It went wjc intro gordon brown. Brown spoke (and then left) and wjc did the last commitments and closed the session.

One question is if we want to see if there is a decent mass of fs related commitments to announce together at closing as a "mega" commitment.

Ami- spoke w Mariela who will get me the commitments slate as it develops.

Thanks

From: Cheryl Mills
Date: Mon, 24 Aug 2009 04:45:48 -0400
To: Amitabh Desai [redacted]
Subject: Re: CGI

B6

great - then doing the same thing makes sense as at other sessions and yes, it would be helpful to have list of commitments during whole session so she can reference more than those just around her speech

On Sun, Aug 23, 2009 at 10:09 PM, Amitabh Desai [redacted] wrote:
We can arrange it however HRC prefers - ordinarily, WJC announces these and then either introduces a guest or a panel discussion - that needn't be directly related to the announcements. (These kind of announcements are made at the beginning of every session at CGI, relating to a wide variety of issues/countries.) HRC could reference these, and/or reference any other announcements made at cgi on sep 22-25, or she needn't reference any of them. We could give you a list of all announcements as they get scheduled as we get closer to the meeting, and anything else that would be helpful.

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From: Cheryl Mills
To: Amitabh Desai
Cc: abedinh@state.gov; cklevorick [redacted]; Sullivan, Jacob J
Sent: Sun Aug 23 20:49:38 2009
Subject: Re: CGI

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I think this is fine but here's my question - how does this work - are these announced before or after she speaks and what relationship are they supposed to bear to what she says?

adding Jake.

cdm

On Sat, Aug 22, 2009 at 3:59 PM, Amitabh Desai [redacted] wrote:

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Dear Huma and Cheryl,

Looking ahead to HRC's possible participation at CGI in the Closing Plenary on Friday, September 25, below are the commitments that would be highlighted by WJC during the Closing Plenary (the first two are new commitments; the third and fourth are progress reports on previous commitments). Would any of these be concerning from your perspective? Thanks, Ami

New Commitment Announcement #1: Addressing Sexual Violence Against Girls (2009)

Commitment By: US Center for Disease Control; CDC Foundation; UNICEF; UNFPA; UNIFEM; UNAIDS; The Nduna Foundation; Grupo ABC

Key Person(s): Dr. Tom Frieden, US Centers for Disease Control (alternate: Rodney Hammond); Ann Veneman, UNICEF; Thoraya Obaid, UNFPA; Joanne Sandler, Acting Executive Director, UNIFEM; Michele Sidibe, UNAIDS; Amy Robbins, The Nduna Foundation; Nizan Guanes, Grupo ABC; Gary Cohen, Charlie Stokes, President of the CDC Foundation (announcement pass)

Geographic Scope: Africa, Latin/South America, Asia

This commitment seeks to reduce the global prevalence of sexual violence against adolescent and pre-adolescent girls, with particular focus on countries where such violence contributes to the spread of HIV/AIDS and other diseases. Through in-country and global partnerships, the commitment makers will implement CDC methodology to measure and track sexual violence against girls, establish a multifaceted media effort to influence social and behavioral norms, and establish appropriate policy and leadership interventions to achieve sustainable long-term change. CGI assisted in catalyzing partnerships and served as the coordinating mechanism for the steering committee

Suggested Announcement Format (5 minutes): Short video clip of the issue this commitment will address, followed by commitment announcement by WJC. All organizations involved (Tom Frieden, US Centers for Disease Control; Rep from CDC Foundation; Ann Veneman, UNICEF; Toharaya Obaid, UNFPA; Rep from UNIFEM; Michele Sidibe, UNAIDS; Amy Robbins, The Nduna Foundation; Nizan Guanes, Grupo ABC; Gary Cohen, BD) would be on stage with WJC.

New Commitment Announcement #2: TBD

Commitment Progress Report #1: Securing Children's Right to Growth and Development through Good Food (2007)

Commitment By: Britannia Industries

Key Person(s): Vinita Bali, Managing Director, Britannia Industries

Geographic Scope: India

In 2007, Britannia Industries Limited partnered with the GAIN Business Alliance to develop vitamin and mineral-fortified products in key lines of its existing food products, explore the launch of new categories of products, and drive awareness and advocacy campaigns to help improve nutrition levels among poor households in India. To date, Britannia's products reach 40% of Indian households, and has now helped alleviate Iron deficiency among 180 million children in India, primarily through its Tiger Banana product and proactive advocacy campaigns.

Suggested Announcement Format (5 minutes): Brief verbal update by Vinita Bali, CEO of Britannia Industries, with images in the background.

Commitment Progress Report #2: Launching the World's Largest Micro-Insurance Initiative (2008)

Commitment By: LeapFrog Investments

Key Person(s): Andrew Kuper, Founder and CEO, LeapFrog Investments

Geographic Scope: India, Pakistan, South Africa, Ghana, Kenya

In 2008, LeapFrog Investments committed to launch the world's first and largest micro-insurance fund. It will grow and support businesses that provide affordable, quality, and relevant insurance products to poor communities, as well those who are excluded from conventional insurance services such as people with disabilities or HIV/AIDS. Over the course of ten years, it will invest \$100 million to enable 25 million low-income individuals have access to such key services. It will initially target households in India, Pakistan, South Africa, Ghana, Uganda and Kenya, where demand for microinsurance products is high. Companies involved will have the chance to engage in a project that is beneficial from a business perspective, while also having a great social impact. Within just 9 months, LeapFrog investments has already raised \$44 million in investments for this microinsurance fund.

Suggested Announcement Format (5 minutes): Short video clip of commitment. Verbal Progress Update by Andy Kuper on stage with images as backdrop.

From: Fuchs, Michael H
Sent: Friday, October 22, 2010 7:22 PM
To: 'Amitabh Desai'; Mills, Cheryl D; Sullivan, Jacob J
Subject: RE: Taiwan

RELEASE IN PART
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No concerns with either

REVIEW AUTHORITY: Barbara
Nielsen, Senior Reviewer

-----Original Message-----

From: Amitabh Desai [redacted]
Sent: Friday, October 22, 2010 5:31 PM
To: Fuchs, Michael H; Mills, Cheryl D; Sullivan, Jacob J
Subject: RE: Taiwan

B6

Just checking-in on this. Thanks, Ami [redacted]

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-----Original Message-----

From: Amitabh Desai
Sent: Wednesday, October 20, 2010 6:49 PM
To: Fuchs, Michael H; Mills, Cheryl D; Sullivan, Jacob J
Subject: RE: Taiwan

WJC is being invited to meet in Taiwan with President MA Ying-jeou. Would State recommend doing this meeting or not doing this meeting? Also welcome your thoughts on whether WJC going to Vietnam and Taiwan looks bad because we aren't going to mainland China? Thanks, Ami

-----Original Message-----

From: Fuchs, Michael H [mailto:FuchsMH@state.gov]
Sent: Friday, September 17, 2010 5:24 PM
To: Amitabh Desai; Mills, Cheryl D; Sullivan, Jacob J
Subject: RE: Taiwan

No concerns.

any details on the trip you could send would be great. thx

-----Original Message-----

From: Amitabh Desai [redacted]
Sent: Friday, September 17, 2010 9:11 AM
To: Fuchs, Michael H; Mills, Cheryl D; Sullivan, Jacob J
Subject: RE: Taiwan

B6

Just checking-in on this. Thanks, ami

-----Original Message-----

From: Fuchs, Michael H [mailto:FuchsMH@state.gov]
Sent: Thursday, September 16, 2010 2:16 PM
To: Mills, Cheryl D; Amitabh Desai; Sullivan, Jacob J
Subject: RE: Taiwan

Yes, am checking now

-----Original Message-----

From: Mills, Cheryl D
Sent: Thursday, September 16, 2010 2:14 PM
To: 'adesai [REDACTED] Sullivan, Jacob J
Cc: Fuchs, Michael H
Subject: Re: Taiwan

B6

Mike can you check and advise?

Thx

----- Original Message -----

From: Amitabh Desai [REDACTED]
To: Sullivan, Jacob J
Cc: Mills, Cheryl D; Fuchs, Michael H
Sent: Thu Sep 16 13:59:23 2010
Subject: RE: Taiwan

B6

Dear Jake, know you're swamped. We are getting pushed very hard to accept/decline this. Welcome your feedback as soon as possible. THANKS.

-----Original Message-----

From: Amitabh Desai
Sent: Tuesday, September 14, 2010 5:48 PM
To: Sullivan, Jacob J
Cc: Mills, Cheryl D; Fuchs, Michael H
Subject: Taiwan

Dear Jake, would State have concerns about WJC visiting Taiwan? He's been invited to give a speech in Taipei in mid-November, to Taiwanese business community. UNI Strategic is conference organizer - headquartered in Singapore and Michael Chen, Wing Tan and Roger Tie currently serve as CEOs. Welcome your feedback - seems we need to make a decision on this soon, or else we'll lose the invite. Thanks, Ami

From: Amitabh Desai [redacted]
Sent: Friday, May 18, 2012 6:42 PM
To: Mills, Cheryl D
Cc: Fuchs, Michael H; Sullivan, Jacob J
Subject: FW: Request for a phone conversation by Mel Weiss

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REVIEW AUTHORITY: Barbara
Nielsen, Senior Reviewer

Would USG have any concerns about WJC doing this? Thanks, Ami

From: Lois Silverman [redacted]
Sent: Thursday, May 17, 2012 09:04 AM
To: Hannah Richert
Subject: Request for a phone conversation by Mel Weiss

B6

Dear Hannah – Mel Weiss would like to talk to President Clinton about an event at which Gary Ackerman is going to be honored during his last days as a sitting Congressman.

Israel Policy Forum (IPF) is recognizing Congressman Ackerman at their annual Gala for his leadership in Congress in promoting a strong US-Israel relationship and a lasting two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. IPF is looking to host this event in November right after the presidential election, near the time of the annual memorial of the assassination of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, who was an early advocate of the creation of the Israel Policy Forum in 1993.

President Clinton gave a landmark speech to IPF in one of his last addresses as President in January of 2001. Mel believes that President Clinton's returning to IPF would be a way to spotlight the leadership Gary has shown, and to recall the courageous leadership Yitzhak Rabin displayed, which is sorely needed today.

Can you please let me know when we can schedule a phone call with Mel and President Clinton to discuss this idea.

Thank you so much for your time and consideration, Hannah.
Have a very safe, productive trip.

Yours, Lois

Lois H. Silverman
Senior Operations Manager
Israel Policy Forum
229 West 43rd Street - 10th Floor
New York, NY 10036

[redacted]

B6

Lois H. Silverman
Senior Operations Manager
Israel Policy Forum
229 West 43rd Street - 10th Floor
New York, NY 10036



B6

From: Amitabh Desai [redacted]
Sent: Monday, June 11, 2012 6:51 PM
To: Mills, Cheryl D; Fuchs, Michael H; Sullivan, Jacob J; Abedin, Huma
Subject: FW: Luca International Group LLC on behalf of the US China Energy Summit

B6

Would USG have any concerns about WJC taking this and directing the proceeds to the Clinton Foundation? Don Walker is concerned about the host and agrees with us it's strange we can't get any more information on this host and they have no track record of prior events. We'd welcome your thoughts. Thanks, Ami

From: Don L Walker [redacted]
Sent: Wednesday, May 16, 2012 1:27 PM
To: Terry Krinvic
Cc: Raena Davis; ClintonGroup
Subject: Luca International Group LLC on behalf of the US China Energy Summit

RELEASE IN PART
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REVIEW AUTHORITY: Barbara Nielsen, Senior Reviewer

B6

Dear Terry,

We've received the following firm invitation for President Clinton from **Luca International Group LLC on behalf of the US China Energy Summit**. They are inviting President Clinton to speak at Summit on **Friday, July 27, 2012 in San Francisco, CA**. We have secured a fee of **\$200,000** plus roundtrip private jet.

Please let me know if this is something you would like to accept. Below are the specific details of the invitation, including the Agenda for the event:

Please note: Douglas Boxer (Senator Boxer's son) is involved with this invitation.

Primary Date Offered: Friday, July 27, 2012

Alternate Dates: They are flexible about the date between July 27th and August 10th (or even into late August). As you know, President Clinton is in Salt Lake City on August 13th. Perhaps we can tie the two events together.

Honorarium and Travel Expenses: \$200,000 plus roundtrip private jet.

****PLEASE NOTE** that any income earned in California is subject to a 7% non-resident withholding tax. Documentation will be sent showing the taxes were withheld on your behalf. Your financial advisor/accountant may use this document to file a CA return to reclaim all or a portion of the taxes withheld.

Sub-Sponsors:
California State Friendship Committee
China Enterprise Reform & Development Society

Agenda:
9:30am - 10:00am - photoline reception not to exceed 50 people
10:00am - 11:00am - speech including moderated Q and A

Taping: Archival purposes only

Press: The event is open to the press, but President Clinton's speech will be closed.

Sponsor description:

ABOUT THE US CHINA ENERGY SUMMIT

In their own words, "The US China Energy Summit (UCES) is a non-profit organization whose focus is helping both individuals and entrepreneurs in China learn and utilize resources related to American's energy investment and policies. UCES focuses on building relationships with both the diplomatic and financial sectors within the United States and China in order to build and strengthen their business relationships and to help maximize the resources for the future of the two countries. Additionally, UCES strive to be a social responsible corporate citizen and therefore actively utilizes its best practices to promote green power and energy to preserve the environment."

ABOUT LUCA OIL

In their own words, "At LUCA, we specialize in acquisition, exploration and development of oil, natural gas, and minerals primarily in Alaska, Louisiana, Montana, North Dakota, Texas, and the Gulf of Mexico. LUCA derives the greater part of its revenue from oil and gas drilling and production. With over 100 years of combined experience along with the latest new technology, we provide our investors with numerous partnerships that are producing oil and natural gas for consumers and making profits for our investors. LUCA is headquartered in Fremont, CA with offices in Oakland, CA, San Gabriel, CA, Houston, TX and Beijing, China."

NOTE: The US China Energy Summit is incorporated as a non profit in California and was established on May 2, 2012 to run this conference. The Summit is run by and is being paid for by Luca International Group LLC. Both the US China Energy Summit and Luca are housed at the same address. Luca is at Suite 410 and US China Energy Summit at Suite 400. They share the same advisors and officers.

Luca International Group, LLC

Name of CEO or President: Bingqing Yang

Where is this sponsor headquartered? Please list the exact address.

39650 Liberty Street, Suite 410, Fremont, CA 94538

What is the formal name of this sponsor? Or what is the official name that the sponsor typically does banking under? Luca International Group, LLC

Are there any other subsidiaries of this company? If yes, please list them.

Luca Oil, LLC; Luca Operation, LLC; Luca Resource Group, LLC; Luca Barnett Shale Joint Venture, LLC; Luca Energy Fund, LLC; Luca To-Kalon Energy, LLC

Is the CEO(s) of this sponsor either CEO(s) or President of any other organizations? Yes

Luca International Group, Luca Oil, LLC; Luca Operation, LLC; Luca Resource Group, LLC; Luca Barnett Shale Joint Venture, LLC; Luca Energy Fund, LLC; Luca To-Kalon Energy, LLC

CHINA ENTERPRISE REFORM & DEVELOPMENT SOCIETY

China Enterprise Reform and Development Society is a national top class organization with 17 years operation history. It was founded with the approval of State Council of People's Republic of China, registered by State Ministry of Civil Affairs and is in the charge of State-owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission.

Address: 1002, B1 Building of Changyuan Tiandi, number 18, Suzhou Street, Haidian District, Beijing of China 100080

Who is the CEO(s) of your company? Zhiping Song

Is the CEO(s) of your company either CEO(s) or President of any other organizations? China National Building Materials Group Corporation, China National Pharmaceutical Group Corporation

California State Friendship Committee

Founded to promote goodwill between California and China
Address: 626 Jackson Street, San Francisco CA 94133
Website: none
Phone: 415-407-5411
Fax: 415-282-0176

Who is the CEO(s) of your company? Francisco Hsieh
Is the CEO(s) of your company either CEO(s) or President of any other organizations? Special Assistant to CA Assembly Speaker Pro Tempore Fiona Ma

Nature of Event: US China Energy Summit sponsored by Luca Oil goal is to bring Chinese Investors to the US Energy Sector. This one day event will be promoted publically to potential attendees. This event has been held in Asia in the past, but this is the first year in the USA.

Past Speakers: This is the first year the event is being held.

Attendees: 400 entrepreneurs, financial professionals in the energy green-tech industry in China and the U.S.; individual investor and financial institutions interested in learning the energy policy and investment trend in the energy sector.

Lexis Nexis: US China Energy Summit: Nothing untoward
Luca International Group LLC: Nothing untoward
Bingqing Yang: Nothing untoward

Recommendation: Provided this passes the STATE and OWJC vet, I don't see a reason why we shouldn't accept and try to tie it in with the Salt Lake City event.

Please let us know if President Clinton would like to accept this invitation.

All the best,

Don

Don Walker
President
The Harry Walker Agency, Inc.
Direct Dial:
Fax: 646-227-4901

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RELEASE IN PART
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REVIEW AUTHORITY: Barbara Nielsen, Senior
Reviewer

From: Amitabh Desai [redacted]
Sent: Monday, June 11, 2012 4:04 PM
To: Mills, Cheryl D; Abedin, Huma; Fuchs, Michael H; Sullivan, Jacob J
Subject: FW: Forbes Emerging Markets

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This did not clear our internal vet, but WJC wants to know what state thinks of it if he took it 100% for the foundation. We'd welcome your thoughts. Thanks, Ami

From: Don L Walker [redacted]
Sent: Wednesday, June 06, 2012 8:57 AM
To: Terry Krinvic
Cc: Raena Davis; ClintonGroup
Subject: Forbes Emerging Markets

B6

Dear Terry,

We've received the following firm invitation for President Clinton from **Forbes Emerging Markets** to speak at their launch event for Forbes Afrique Magazine on **Friday, July 20, 2012** in **Brazzaville, Congo (YES, the Congo)**. We have secured a fee of **\$650,000** inclusive of all travel (including jet, advance, etc.)

As this event is coming up quickly the Sponsor has indicated that they will need an answer on this invitation by Friday, June 15, 2012.

I anticipate the location for the event and the parties involved might give you pause. We have gently asked if the venue must be in the Congo, and if the Head of State involvement is necessary. They tell us that both are mandatory. For that reason we anticipate you will want us to quickly decline. With that said, we did want to present the invitation for your review and consideration.

Please let me know how you would like us to handle. Below are the specific details of the invitation, including the Agenda for the event:

Event Date: Friday, July 20, 2012

Alternate Dates: Saturday, July 21st – Thursday, July 26th

Honorarium and Travel Expenses: \$650,000 inclusive of all expenses (including jet, advance, etc.)

Note: Our contract will be with F. Afrique Media.

Title Sub-Sponsors: Orion Oil

Agenda:

3:00PM - 3:30PM: Photo line reception not to exceed 50 people

3:30PM - 4:30PM: Speech plus moderated Q&A - moderator will be Christopher 'Kip' Forbes. Kip is Vice Chairman of the Forbes Publishing company.

4:30PM - 4:45PM: Pres. Clinton is asked to spend 15 minutes post-speech to greet and say goodbye to ten dignitaries and hosts. They will include his host, President Sasou of Brazzaville Congo; Joseph Kabila, President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo; Jean Ping, President of the African Union; Jerry Rawlings,

former President of Ghana and Yayi Boni, President of Benin. There will be a few others as well and those names will be provided closer to the event date.

NOTE: We're told that the VIP's listed above are confirmed to attend this event once the date is set.

Special Requests: As you'll see in the above agenda, they want to do a HoS greet after the speech. They tell us this is a mandatory part of the offer.

Press: As this event is hosted by a media organization, this event is open the press. However, they tell us it is limited to Forbes media only.

Sponsor description: This event would be hosted by the Publisher of a Francophone African foreign license of Forbes Magazine. This version of Forbes Magazine will be the first west african edition of Forbes magazine and will be catered to the 23 francophone countries in their native language.

Who is the CEO(s) of your company? Lucien Ebata

Where is your company headquartered? Please list the exact address. 60 fifth ave New York N.Y.10011

What is the formal name of your organization? Or what is your official name that you typically do your banking under? f . Afrique Media

Are there any other subsidiaries of your company? If yes, please list them. no

Is the CEO(s) of your company either CEO(s) or President of any other organizations? yes orion oil

#1 Primary Sponsor:

Name of Organization ORION OIL LTD

Address: 3642 Blvd. du 30 Juin, Kinshasa/Gombe DRC

Website: Orion-oil.com

Name of CEO or President: Lucien Ebata

Where is this sponsor headquartered? Please list the exact address. 3642 Blvd. du 30 Juin, Kinshasa/Gombe DRC

What is the formal name of this sponsor? Or what is the official name that the sponsor typically does banking under? L Ebata/Orion Oil Ltd

Are there any other subsidiaries of this company? If yes, please list them. Orion Oil SPRL, Orion Oil and Gas

Is the CEO(s) of this sponsor either CEO(s) or President of any other organizations? Forbes Afrique Media

Is the CEO or President affiliated with any other companies, or organizations? If so please all list them below:

Affiliations of President or CEO: n/a

In their own words, "Founded in 2004, ORION is the result of the merger between Entreprises Minières Orion, which was created under the Canadian Joint-Stock Company Law, and Entreprises Orion, which was founded in Congo-Brazzaville under the OHADA (Organisation for the Harmonisation of Business Law in Africa) treaty. The former company, which in 2004 held an operating permit for over 4,000 square meters in the Kelle-Mbomo region in Congo-Brazzaville, specialized in the prospecting, exploration, processing and marketing of ore and fossil substances, particularly alluvial gold and jewellery diamonds. The latter was engaged in supplying production equipment and materials to crafts operators, logging, crude oil and refined products.

The group's principal activity today is the direct purchase and export of some 5 million barrels of crude oil per month around the world. We also supply several countries along the African coast and Central Africa with some 100,000 metric tonnes of refined products each month."

Nature of Event: This is a launch event for Forbes Afrique Magazine, a foreign license of Forbes Magazine, written in French for the West African business audience. This event is similar to recent events Forbes foreign

licensees have hosted in Argentina, Brazil, South Africa etc. They tell us the main goal is to present to the best/brightest of francophone africa that the region now has a dedicated edition of Forbes Magazine in their native language. They will have multiple speakers throughout the day to celebrate the launch.

Past Speakers: As this is the inaugural event there are no past speakers.

Attendees: 150 - Invitees only ... c-level and business leaders as well as Presidents, state dignitaries, including his host, President Sasou of Brazzaville Congo; Joseph Kabila, President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo; Jean Ping, President of the African Union; Jerry Rawlings, former President of Ghana and Yayi Boni, President of Benin.

Other speakers: President Sasou of Brazzaville Congo. In addition, they plan to invite Colin Powell and Kofi Annan, as well as other regional leaders.

Lexis Nexis:

Brief vet on the Republic of Congo (Congo-Brazzaville): The Republic of Congo is one of sub-Saharan Africa's main oil producers, although 70% of the population lives in poverty. Oil is the mainstay of the economy, and in recent years the country has tried to increase financial transparency in the sector. In 2004 the country was expelled from the Kimberly Process that is supposed to prevent conflict diamonds from entering the world's supply market. This followed investigations which found that the country could not account for the origin of large quantities of rough diamonds that it was officially exporting. IMF debt relief to the country was delayed in 2006 following allegations of corruption (BBC).

President Denis Sassou Nguesso: He is one of Africa's longest-serving leaders, having first come to power in 1979, when he was installed as president by the military. President Sassou Nguesso led the then-Marxist-Leninist single-party state until 1992, when he lost his position in the country's first multiparty elections. As presidential elections scheduled for July 1997 approached, tensions mounted between supporters of incumbent President Pascal Lissouba and those of President Sassou Nguesso, escalating into all-out civil war at the beginning of June. The entry of Angolan troops in support of President Sassou Nguesso a few months later precipitated the end of the brief but bloody war, and he returned to power. He gained his latest seven-year term after elections in July 2009 which were boycotted by the opposition, and from which the main opposition candidate was excluded (BBC, July 2011).

Personal spending: In recent years the President's personal spending, and that of his family, has come under scrutiny. A French judge announced in May 2009 that he would launch a landmark investigation into whether the President (as well as Gabon's late president Omar Bongo and Equatorial Guinea's President Teodoro Obiang Nguema) plundered state coffers to buy luxury homes and cars in France. A complaint filed by Transparency International France accused the leaders of acquiring millions of dollars of real estate in Paris and on the French Riviera and buying luxury cars with embezzled public money (BBC).

Brief vet on the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC): The DRC's history has been one of civil war, corruption, and conflicts with several rebel militias and government factions from neighbouring states. The Second Congo War and its aftermath have been particularly devastating in recent years, claiming more than 5.4 million lives (as of 2008, Reuters January 2008), drawing in nine African nations, and arming more than twenty groups. Although the war formally ended in 2003, fighting occurs intermittently, and the prevalence and intensity of sexual violence against women in eastern Congo is widely described as the worst in the world (*Washington Post*, September 2007). Ongoing strife and poverty continue to take a staggering toll. Malaria, diarrhea, pneumonia, and malnutrition are top killers: the majority of deaths are due to easily treatable and preventable diseases through the collapse of health systems and the disruption of livelihoods (International Rescue Committee, 2008).

President Joseph Kabila Kabange: Assumed office in January 2001, ten days after the assassination of his father, then-President Laurent-Désiré Kabila; He was confirmed as president through elections in July 2006, and won a second term through more controversial elections in 2011. He is a former guerrilla fighter, who participated in nearly a decade of war that ravaged the country. He fought alongside his father in a military campaign from the east that toppled dictator Mobutu Sese Seko in 1997 after more than 20 years (BBC, December 2011). The BBC reports, "The five-year civil war led to shady business deals to mine its rich resources, but Mr Kabila has not been directly implicated in any. The same cannot be said of "the Kabila boys", his close circle of advisers. One of them, Katumba Mwanke, a minister at the presidency, was forced to resign because of accusations in a 2002 United Nations report that he was profiteering from the war through deals made with Zimbabwean officials," (December 2011).

Recommendation: Given President Kabila and others involvement we anticipate you'll want us to quickly decline.

Please let us know how President Clinton would like us to handle this invitation.

All the best,

Don

Don Walker
President
The Harry Walker Agency, Inc.
Direct Dial [redacted]
Fax: 646-227-4901
[redacted]

B6

B6

From: Fuchs, Michael H
Sent: Tuesday, June 05, 2012 1:26 PM
To: Sullivan, Jacob J
Subject: RE: National Iranian American Council ("NIAC")?

RELEASE IN
PART B5,B6

Roger

From: Sullivan, Jacob J
Sent: Tuesday, June 05, 2012 1:19 PM
To: Fuchs, Michael H
Subject: Re: National Iranian American Council ("NIAC")?

REVIEW AUTHORITY: Barbara Nielsen, Senior
Reviewer

You should lay out the challenges to Ami.

From: Fuchs, Michael H
Sent: Tuesday, June 05, 2012 11:24 AM
To: Sullivan, Jacob J
Subject: FW: National Iranian American Council ("NIAC")?

I checked with NEA on Ami's question about NIAC. See thoughts below. what do you think?

From: Djerassi, Alexander M
Sent: Tuesday, June 05, 2012 11:20 AM
To: Fuchs, Michael H
Subject: FW: National Iranian American Council ("NIAC")?

Take a look – lemme know what you think

SBU
This email is UNCLASSIFIED.

From: Staples, David A (NEA/PPD)
Sent: Tuesday, June 05, 2012 11:13 AM
To: Murad, Eshel William; Rhee, Jane; Djerassi, Alexander M
Cc: Snipe, Aaron D
Subject: RE: National Iranian American Council ("NIAC")?

Agree with both comments. I have chatted with NIAC folks over the years, recently a lunch where this conference was discussed. Since we do have a relationship with NIAC not a problem from that point of view.



B5

[Redacted]
[Redacted]
[Redacted]

Thanks,

David A. Staples
Outreach Coordinator
Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs
202-776-8405

SBU
This email is UNCLASSIFIED.

From: Murad, Eshel William
Sent: Tuesday, June 05, 2012 11:05 AM
To: Rhee, Jane; Djerassi, Alexander M; Staples, David A (NEA/PPD)
Subject: RE: National Iranian American Council ("NIAC")?

Funny. I was just working on the following response. [Redacted]

[Redacted]

This email is UNCLASSIFIED.

From: Rhee, Jane
Sent: Tuesday, June 05, 2012 11:01 AM
To: Djerassi, Alexander M; Murad, Eshel William; Staples, David A (NEA/PPD)
Subject: RE: National Iranian American Council ("NIAC")?

[Redacted]

As a desk, we maintain contact with the organization on a number of issues, as we do with other Iran-focused organizations (one of its employees is a former Iran desk officer as well).

Bill – anything to add?

Regards,

B5

B5

B5

B5

Jane

SBU

This email is UNCLASSIFIED.

From: Djerassi, Alexander M
Sent: Tuesday, June 05, 2012 10:47 AM
To: Rhee, Jane; Murad, Eshel William; Staples, David A (NEA/PPD)
Subject: Re: National Iranian American Council ("NIAC")?

Any thoughts on NIAC?

Thanks

From: Fuchs, Michael H
Sent: Tuesday, June 05, 2012 10:43 AM
To: Djerassi, Alexander M
Subject: FW: National Iranian American Council ("NIAC")?

Can you run this by the right folks in NEA?

From: Amitabh Desai [redacted]
Sent: Monday, June 04, 2012 1:15 PM
To: Mills, Cheryl D; Sullivan, Jacob J; Fuchs, Michael H
Subject: National Iranian American Council ("NIAC")?

B6

Would USG have any concerns about WJC doing a paid speech for National Iranian American Council ("NIAC")? We have been approached by the National Iranian American Council ("NIAC") for President Clinton to speak at a fundraising gala they are putting on. Background on the organization and the event they sent along. Would welcome your reactions.

Thanks, Ami

- NIAC's mission is two-fold: 1. educate and encourage the Iranian-American community to get involved in the civic process, and 2. educate elected officials and their staff about issues important to our community.
- We are the largest Iranian-American grassroots organization, with approximately 4,000 dues-paying members and approximately 43,000 supporters on our distribution list.
- We are a 501c3 non-profit, non-partisan organization.
- The conference is the first and only of its kind – bringing Iranian Americans from across the country to our nation's capital to learn about government, meet with key policymakers and influencers and network with their fellow NIAC members.

From: Sullivan, Jacob J
Sent: Wednesday, November 09, 2011 3:42 PM
To: Fuchs, Michael H
Subject: RE: Beijing

RELEASE IN PART
B5, B6

B5

[Redacted]

From: Fuchs, Michael H
Sent: Wednesday, November 09, 2011 3:22 PM
To: Sullivan, Jacob J
Subject: Fw: Beijing

REVIEW AUTHORITY: Barbara Nielsen, Senior
Reviewer

Thoughts?

From: Carlson, Aubrey A
Sent: Wednesday, November 09, 2011 03:10 PM
To: Petruzzi, Julie N; Fuchs, Michael H; Lang, Stephan A; Harrell, Peter E; Harris, Jennifer M
Subject: RE: Beijing

B5

[Redacted]

This email is UNCLASSIFIED.

From: Petruzzi, Julie N
Sent: Wednesday, November 09, 2011 3:04 PM
To: Fuchs, Michael H; Lang, Stephan A; Carlson, Aubrey A; Harrell, Peter E; Harris, Jennifer M
Subject: RE: Beijing

My two cents, for what they're worth. [Redacted]

B5
B5

[Redacted]

-Julie

This email is UNCLASSIFIED.

From: Fuchs, Michael H
Sent: Wednesday, November 09, 2011 2:57 PM
To: Lang, Stephan A; Petruzzi, Julie N; Carlson, Aubrey A; Harrell, Peter E; Harris, Jennifer M
Subject: Fw: Beijing

Thoughts on the below?

From: Amitabh Desai [redacted]
Sent: Wednesday, November 09, 2011 02:21 PM
To: Mills, Cheryl D; Abedin, Huma; Fuchs, Michael H; Sullivan, Jacob J
Subject: RE: Beijing

Just checking on this given proximity of the event date. Thanks, Ami

From: Amitabh Desai
Sent: Tuesday, November 08, 2011 11:59 AM
To: Mills, Cheryl D; Abedin, Huma; 'Fuchs, Michael H'; Sullivan, Jacob J
Subject: Beijing

The Chinese Government is inviting WJC to an event in Beijing on December 10-12, celebrating China's accession to the WTO ten years ago. Details are below. Would USG have any particularly positive or negative feelings about this?
Thanks, Ami

From: Du Shuang-Gmail [mailto:[redacted]]
Sent: Friday, October 07, 2011 9:58 AM
To: Amitabh Desai
Cc: zhangshaogang; wangzhen; qian li; Terry Krinvic; Logan Koffler; [redacted]
Subject: Re: RE: Info about the high-level forum

Dear Ami

Just got some info from Beijing, as far as we know, President Hu will attend the event. We really hope President Clinton can attend the event as we attach great importance to his support of China's accession to WTO.
Looking forward to your response and hope we can start working on detailed arrangements, such as invitation letter, as soon as possible.

Best

Du Shuang
Commercial Office
Chinese Embassy

2011-10-07

Du Shuang [redacted]

发件人: Amitabh Desai
发送时间: 2011-09-30 17:23:07
收件人: Du Shuang [redacted]
抄送: zhangshaogang; wangzhen; qian li; Terry Krinvic; Logan Koffler
主题: RE: Info about the high-level forum

Dear Du Shuang, many thanks for your detailed note. We appreciate this invitation. Will President Hu be attending this event during the time that President Clinton has been invited? Sincerely, Ami

B6

B6

B6

B6

B6

Mr. Amitabh Desai
Director of Foreign Policy
William J. Clinton Foundation
+1-212-348-0031 Office
[redacted] Direct line
[redacted] Mobile
+1-866-335-7650 Fax

B6

B6

This e-mail, and any attachments thereto, is intended only for use by the addressee(s) named herein and may contain legally privileged and/or confidential information. Any unauthorized use or dissemination of this message in whole or in part is strictly prohibited. If you have received it by mistake please notify the sender by return e-mail and delete this message from your system.

Please consider the environment before printing this e-mail.

From: Du Shuang-Gmail [mailto:[redacted]]
Sent: Friday, September 30, 2011 3:06 PM
To: Amitabh Desai
Cc: zhangshaogang; wangzhen; qian li
Subject: Info about the high-level forum

B6

Hello Ami,

I am Du Shuang from Commercial Office of Chinese Embassy.

Here are some info about the high-level forum celebrating the tenth anniversary of China's accession to WTO.

1. Purpose of High-level Forum

As the summit of all events commemorating the 10th Anniversary of China's Accession to the WTO, the High-level Forum hosted by the Central Government of China aims to take stock of China's successful practices in promoting reform and development by opening up to the outside world, and to reaffirm China's strong commitment to further opening-up characterized by mutual benefit and win for all.

2. Attendance of H.E. President Clinton

Twelve years ago, under the capable leadership of H.E. President Clinton and Chinese leaders, the U.S. and China successfully signed the Bilateral Agreement on China's WTO Accession. That Agreement greatly accelerated China's negotiation process, symbolizing a critical step forward for China to enter into the WTO. China's WTO membership has not only enabled it to integrate with globalization in a broader and deeper way, but also contributed to the growth and prosperity of world economy.

As an eyewitness and advocate of China's entry into the WTO, H.E. President Clinton is of prime importance and special significance to the Forum. As VIP Guest of the Forum, President Clinton will meet and take photographs with China's top leaders attending this occasion. He will also be invited to address the audience at the Forum for around five minutes.

3. Expenses Arrangement

The Chinese side will cover the accommodation and transportation expenses of H.E. President Clinton and his assistants during their stay in Beijing from December 10th to 12th (two nights and 3 days) as well as their international travel expenses (round trip air- tickets).

4. Forum Participants

China's top leaders will be present and make a keynote speech at the Forum. Some foreign personages have been invited, including Director-General of the WTO (already confirmed participation), Secretary-General of UNCTAD (already confirmed participation), President of the World Bank, Managing Director of the IMF, former British Prime Minister and former President of the European Commission. In addition, Chinese provincial and ministerial leaders as well as officials from relevant departments of the Central Government will also participate in the Forum.

If you require any more info, pls let us know.

Best

Du Shuang
Commercial Office
Chinese Embassy

From: Amitabh Desai [redacted]
Sent: Monday, June 11, 2012 6:51 PM
To: Mills, Cheryl D; Fuchs, Michael H; Sullivan, Jacob J; Abedin, Huma
Subject: FW: Luca International Group LLC on behalf of the US China Energy Summit

B6

Would USG have any concerns about WJC taking this and directing the proceeds to the Clinton Foundation? Don Walker is concerned about the host and agrees with us it's strange we can't get any more information on this host and they have no track record of prior events. We'd welcome your thoughts. Thanks, Ami

From: Don L Walker [redacted]
Sent: Wednesday, May 16, 2012 1:27 PM
To: Terry Krinvic
Cc: Raena Davis; ClintonGroup
Subject: Luca International Group LLC on behalf of the US China Energy Summit

RELEASE IN
PART B6

B6

Dear Terry,

We've received the following firm invitation for President Clinton from **Luca International Group LLC on behalf of the US China Energy Summit**. They are inviting President Clinton to speak at Summit on **Friday, July 27, 2012 in San Francisco, CA**. We have secured a fee of **\$200,000** plus roundtrip private jet.

Please let me know if this is something you would like to accept. Below are the specific details of the invitation, including the Agenda for the event:

Please note: Douglas Boxer (Senator Boxer's son) is involved with this invitation.

Primary Date Offered: Friday, July 27, 2012

Alternate Dates: They are flexible about the date between July 27th and August 10th (or even into late August). As you know, President Clinton is in Salt Lake City on August 13th. Perhaps we can tie the two events together.

Honorarium and Travel Expenses: \$200,000 plus roundtrip private jet.

****PLEASE NOTE** that any income earned in California is subject to a 7% non-resident withholding tax. Documentation will be sent showing the taxes were withheld on your behalf. Your financial advisor/accountant may use this document to file a CA return to reclaim all or a portion of the taxes withheld.

Sub-Sponsors:
California State Friendship Committee
China Enterprise Reform & Development Society

REVIEW
AUTHORITY:
Barbara Nielsen,
Senior Reviewer

Agenda:
9:30am - 10:00am - photoline reception not to exceed 50 people
10:00am - 11:00am - speech including moderated Q and A

Taping: Archival purposes only

Press: The event is open to the press, but President Clinton's speech will be closed.

Sponsor description:

ABOUT THE US CHINA ENERGY SUMMIT

In their own words, "The US China Energy Summit (UCES) is a non-profit organization whose focus is helping both individuals and entrepreneurs in China learn and utilize resources related to American's energy investment and policies. UCES focuses on building relationships with both the diplomatic and financial sectors within the United States and China in order to build and strengthen their business relationships and to help maximize the resources for the future of the two countries. Additionally, UCES strive to be a social responsible corporate citizen and therefore actively utilizes its best practices to promote green power and energy to preserve the environment."

ABOUT LUCA OIL

In their own words, "At LUCA, we specialize in acquisition, exploration and development of oil, natural gas, and minerals primarily in Alaska, Louisiana, Montana, North Dakota, Texas, and the Gulf of Mexico. LUCA derives the greater part of its revenue from oil and gas drilling and production. With over 100 years of combined experience along with the latest new technology, we provide our investors with numerous partnerships that are producing oil and natural gas for consumers and making profits for our investors. LUCA is headquartered in Fremont, CA with offices in Oakland, CA, San Gabriel, CA, Houston, TX and Beijing, China."

NOTE: The US China Energy Summit is incorporated as a non profit in California and was established on May 2, 2012 to run this conference. The Summit is run by and is being paid for by Luca International Group LLC. Both the US China Energy Summit and Luca are housed at the same address. Luca is at Suite 410 and US China Energy Summit at Suite 400. They share the same advisors and officers.

Luca International Group, LLC

Name of CEO or President: Bingqing Yang

Where is this sponsor headquartered? Please list the exact address.

39650 Liberty Street, Suite 410, Fremont, CA 94538

What is the formal name of this sponsor? Or what is the official name that the sponsor typically does banking under? Luca International Group, LLC

Are there any other subsidiaries of this company? If yes, please list them.

Luca Oil, LLC; Luca Operation, LLC; Luca Resource Group, LLC; Luca Barnett Shale Joint Venture, LLC; Luca Energy Fund, LLC; Luca To-Kalon Energy, LLC

Is the CEO(s) of this sponsor either CEO(s) or President of any other organizations? Yes

Luca International Group, Luca Oil, LLC; Luca Operation, LLC; Luca Resource Group, LLC; Luca Barnett Shale Joint Venture, LLC; Luca Energy Fund, LLC; Luca To-Kalon Energy, LLC

CHINA ENTERPRISE REFORM & DEVELOPMENT SOCIETY

China Enterprise Reform and Development Society is a national top class organization with 17 years operation history. It was founded with the approval of State Council of People's Republic of China, registered by State Ministry of Civil Affairs and is in the charge of State-owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission.

Address: 1002, B1 Building of Changyuan Tiandi, number 18, Suzhou Street, Haidian District, Beijing of China 100080

Who is the CEO(s) of your company? Zhiping Song

Is the CEO(s) of your company either CEO(s) or President of any other organizations? China National Building Materials Group Corporation, China National Pharmaceutical Group Corporation

California State Friendship Committee

Founded to promote goodwill between California and China

Address: 626 Jackson Street; San Francisco CA 94133

Website: none

Phone: 415-407-5411

Fax: 415-282-0176

Who is the CEO(s) of your company? Francisco Hsieh

Is the CEO(s) of your company either CEO(s) or President of any other organizations? Special Assistant to CA Assembly Speaker Pro Tempore Fiona Ma

Nature of Event: US China Energy Summit sponsored by Luca Oil goal is to bring Chinese Investors to the US Energy Sector. This one day event will be promoted publically to potential attendees. This event has been held in Asia in the past, but this is the first year in the USA.

Past Speakers: This is the first year the event is being held.

Attendees: 400 entrepreneurs, financial professionals in the energy green-tech industry in China and the U.S.; individual investor and financial institutions interested in learning the energy policy and investment trend in the energy sector.

Lexis Nexis: US China Energy Summit: Nothing untoward

Luca International Group LLC: Nothing untoward

Bingqing Yang: Nothing untoward

Recommendation: Provided this passes the STATE and OWJC vet, I don't see a reason why we shouldn't accept and try to tie it in with the Salt Lake City event.

Please let us know if President Clinton would like to accept this invitation.

All the best,

Don

Don Walker

President

The Harry Walker Agency, Inc.

Direct Dial:

Fax: 646-227-4901

B6

B6

From: Amitabh Desai [redacted]
Sent: Monday, June 11, 2012 4:04 PM
To: Mills, Cheryl D; Abedin, Huma; Fuchs, Michael H; Sullivan, Jacob J
Subject: FW: Forbes Emerging Markets

B6

This did not clear our internal vet, but WJC wants to know what state thinks of it if he took it 100% for the foundation. We'd welcome your thoughts. Thanks, Ami

From: Don L Walker [redacted]
Sent: Wednesday, June 06, 2012 8:57 AM
To: Terry Krinvic
Cc: Raena Davis; ClintonGroup
Subject: Forbes Emerging Markets

B6

REVIEW AUTHORITY:
Barbara Nielsen,
Senior Reviewer

RELEASE IN PART B6

Dear Terry,

We've received the following firm invitation for President Clinton from **Forbes Emerging Markets** to speak at their launch event for Forbes Afrique Magazine on **Friday, July 20, 2012 in Brazzaville, Congo (YES, the Congo)**. We have secured a fee of **\$650,000** inclusive of all travel (including jet, advance, etc.)

As this event is coming up quickly the Sponsor has indicated that they will need an answer on this invitation by Friday, June 15, 2012.

I anticipate the location for the event and the parties involved might give you pause. We have gently asked if the venue must be in the Congo, and if the Head of State involvement is necessary. They tell us that both are mandatory. For that reason we anticipate you will want us to quickly decline. With that said, we did want to present the invitation for your review and consideration.

Please let me know how you would like us to handle. Below are the specific details of the invitation, including the Agenda for the event:

Event Date: Friday, July 20, 2012

Alternate Dates: Saturday, July 21st – Thursday, July 26th

Honorarium and Travel Expenses: \$650,000 inclusive of all expenses (including jet, advance, etc.)

Note: Our contract will be with F. Afrique Media.

Title Sub-Sponsors: Orion Oil

Agenda:

3:00PM - 3:30PM: Photo line reception not to exceed 50 people

3:30PM - 4:30PM: Speech plus moderated Q&A - moderator will be Christopher 'Kip' Forbes. Kip is Vice Chairman of the Forbes Publishing company.

4:30PM - 4:45PM: Pres. Clinton is asked to spend 15 minutes post-speech to greet and say goodbye to ten dignitaries and hosts. They will include his host, President Sasou of Brazzaville Congo; Joseph Kabila, President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo; Jean Ping, President of the African Union; Jerry Rawlings,

former President of Ghana and Yayi Boni, President of Benin. There will be a few others as well and those names will be provided closer to the event date.

NOTE: We're told that the VIP's listed above are confirmed to attend this event once the date is set.

Special Requests: As you'll see in the above agenda, they want to do a HoS greet after the speech. They tell us this is a mandatory part of the offer.

Press: As this event is hosted by a media organization, this event is open the press. However, they tell us it is limited to Forbes media only.

Sponsor description: This event would be hosted by the Publisher of a Francophone African foreign license of Forbes Magazine. This version of Forbes Magazine will be the first west african edition of Forbes magazine and will be catered to the 23 francophone countries in their native language.

Who is the CEO(s) of your company? Lucien Ebata

Where is your company headquartered? Please list the exact address. 60 fifth ave New York N.Y.10011

What is the formal name of your organization? Or what is your official name that you typically do your banking under? f . Afrique Media

Are there any other subsidiaries of your company? If yes, please list them. no

Is the CEO(s) of your company either CEO(s) or President of any other organizations? yes orion oil

#1 Primary Sponsor:

Name of Organization ORION OIL LTD

Address: 3642 Blvd. du 30 Juin, Kinshasa/Gombe DRC

Website: Orion-oil.com

Name of CEO or President: Lucien Ebata

Where is this sponsor headquartered? Please list the exact address. 3642 Blvd. du 30 Juin, Kinshasa/Gombe DRC

What is the formal name of this sponsor? Or what is the official name that the sponsor typically does banking under? L Ebata/Orion Oil Ltd

Are there any other subsidiaries of this company? If yes, please list them. Orion Oil SPRL, Orion Oil and Gas

Is the CEO(s) of this sponsor either CEO(s) or President of any other organizations? Forbes Afrique Media

Is the CEO or President affiliated with any other companies, or organizations? If so please all list them below:

Affiliations of President or CEO: n/a

In their own words, "Founded in 2004, ORION is the result of the merger between Entreprises Minières Orion, which was created under the Canadian Joint-Stock Company Law, and Entreprises Orion, which was founded in Congo-Brazzaville under the OHADA (Organisation for the Harmonisation of Business Law in Africa) treaty. The former company, which in 2004 held an operating permit for over 4,000 square meters in the Kelle-Mbomo region in Congo-Brazzaville, specialized in the prospecting, exploration, processing and marketing of ore and fossil substances, particularly alluvial gold and jewellery diamonds. The latter was engaged in supplying production equipment and materials to crafts operators, logging, crude oil and refined products.

The group's principal activity today is the direct purchase and export of some 5 million barrels of crude oil per month around the world. We also supply several countries along the African coast and Central Africa with some 100,000 metric tonnes of refined products each month."

Nature of Event: This is a launch event for Forbes Afrique Magazine, a foreign license of Forbes Magazine, written in French for the West African business audience. This event is similar to recent events Forbes foreign

licensees have hosted in Argentina, Brazil, South Africa etc. They tell us the main goal is to present to the best/brightest of francophone africa that the region now has a dedicated edition of Forbes Magazine in their native language. They will have multiple speakers throughout the day to celebrate the launch.

Past Speakers: As this is the inaugural event there are no past speakers.

Attendees: 150 - Invitees only ... c-level and business leaders as well as Presidents, state dignitaries, including his host, President Sasou of Brazzaville Congo; Joseph Kabila, President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo; Jean Ping, President of the African Union; Jerry Rawlings, former President of Ghana and Yayi Boni, President of Benin.

Other speakers: President Sasou of Brazzaville Congo. In addition, they plan to invite Colin Powell and Kofi Annan, as well as other regional leaders.

Lexis Nexis:

Brief vet on the Republic of Congo (Congo-Brazzaville): The Republic of Congo is one of sub-Saharan Africa's main oil producers, although 70% of the population lives in poverty. Oil is the mainstay of the economy, and in recent years the country has tried to increase financial transparency in the sector. In 2004 the country was expelled from the Kimberly Process that is supposed to prevent conflict diamonds from entering the world's supply market. This followed investigations which found that the country could not account for the origin of large quantities of rough diamonds that it was officially exporting. IMF debt relief to the country was delayed in 2006 following allegations of corruption (BBC).

President Denis Sassou Nguesso: He is one of Africa's longest-serving leaders, having first come to power in 1979, when he was installed as president by the military. President Sassou Nguesso led the then-Marxist-Leninist single-party state until 1992, when he lost his position in the country's first multiparty elections. As presidential elections scheduled for July 1997 approached, tensions mounted between supporters of incumbent President Pascal Lissouba and those of President Sassou Nguesso, escalating into all-out civil war at the beginning of June. The entry of Angolan troops in support of President Sassou Nguesso a few months later precipitated the end of the brief but bloody war, and he returned to power. He gained his latest seven-year term after elections in July 2009 which were boycotted by the opposition, and from which the main opposition candidate was excluded (BBC, July 2011).

Personal spending: In recent years the President's personal spending, and that of his family, has come under scrutiny. A French judge announced in May 2009 that he would launch a landmark investigation into whether the President (as well as Gabon's late president Omar Bongo and Equatorial Guinea's President Teodoro Obiang Nguema) plundered state coffers to buy luxury homes and cars in France. A complaint filed by Transparency International France accused the leaders of acquiring millions of dollars of real estate in Paris and on the French Riviera and buying luxury cars with embezzled public money (BBC).

Brief vet on the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC): The DRC's history has been one of civil war, corruption, and conflicts with several rebel militias and government factions from neighbouring states. The Second Congo War and its aftermath have been particularly devastating in recent years, claiming more than 5.4 million lives (as of 2008, Reuters January 2008), drawing in nine African nations, and arming more than twenty groups. Although the war formally ended in 2003, fighting occurs intermittently, and the prevalence and intensity of sexual violence against women in eastern Congo is widely described as the worst in the world (*Washington Post*, September 2007). Ongoing strife and poverty continue to take a staggering toll. Malaria, diarrhea, pneumonia, and malnutrition are top killers: the majority of deaths are due to easily treatable and preventable diseases through the collapse of health systems and the disruption of livelihoods (International Rescue Committee, 2008).

President Joseph Kabila Kabange: Assumed office in January 2001, ten days after the assassination of his father, then-President Laurent-Désiré Kabila; He was confirmed as president through elections in July 2006, and won a second term through more controversial elections in 2011. He is a former guerrilla fighter, who participated in nearly a decade of war that ravaged the country. He fought alongside his father in a military campaign from the east that toppled dictator Mobutu Sese Seko in 1997 after more than 20 years (BBC, December 2011). The BBC reports, "The five-year civil war led to shady business deals to mine its rich resources, but Mr Kabila has not been directly implicated in any. The same cannot be said of "the Kabila boys", his close circle of advisers. One of them, Katumba Mwanke, a minister at the presidency, was forced to resign because of accusations in a 2002 United Nations report that he was profiteering from the war through deals made with Zimbabwean officials," (December 2011).

Recommendation: Given President Kabila and others involvement we anticipate you'll want us to quickly decline.

Please let us know how President Clinton would like us to handle this invitation.

All the best,

Don

Don Walker
President
The Harry Walker Agency, Inc.
Direct Dial: [redacted]
Fax: 646-227-4901
[redacted]

B6

B6

From: Amitabh Desai [redacted]
Sent: Wednesday, September 05, 2012 1:30 PM
To: Nora Toiv ([redacted]); Fuchs, Michael H; Sullivan, Jacob J; Cheryl Mills; Huma Abedin (huma@clintonemail.com)
Subject: Turkey
Attachments: 4th Statutory Congress of AK Parti - Registration Form PDF.pdf; Bill Clinton.pdf

RELEASE IN PART
B6

B6
B6

REVIEW
AUTHORITY:
Barbara
Nielsen,
Senior
Reviewer

WJC received the attached invitation from PM Erdogan, to visit Turkey on September 30 for their party conference. We'd welcome USG's thoughts. Would it be helpful for WJC to send a letter for the event, or would it be better from USG perspective to steer clear of their domestic politics? Thanks, Ami

From: Görkem Barış Tantekin [redacted]
Sent: Wednesday, September 05, 2012 10:38 AM
To: Amitabh Desai
Cc: [redacted]
Subject: FW: The Fourth Statutory Congress of the Justice and Development Party (AK Parti)-Emergency

B6
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Hi Ami,

I hope this email finds you well. Please see attached a letter from the Honorable Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Prime Minister of the Republic of Turkey, inviting the Honorable Bill Clinton to participate in the upcoming National Convention of AK Parti to be held in Ankara on September 30, 2012.

Ms. Coskuner working for AK Parti's Foreign Relations Department is also cc'ed above.

We request your kind assistance in having the attached letter conveyed to its high addressee, and look forward to hearing back from you.

Please do not hesitate to contact Ms. Coskuner or me, if you have any questions regarding the invitation.

Thanks in advance, and best regards,

Baris

Baris Tantekin
Counselor
Turkish Embassy
Tel: [redacted]

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From: GİZEM ÇİĞDEM AK [redacted]
Sent: Wednesday, September 05, 2012 10:04 AM
To: Görkem Barış Tantekin
Subject: Fwd: The Fourth Statutory Congress of the Justice and Development Party (AK Parti)-Emergency

B6

----- Forwarded message -----

From: GİZEM ÇİĞDEM AK [REDACTED]

Date: 2012/9/4

Subject: The Fourth Statutory Congress of the Justice and Development Party (AK Parti)-Emergency

To: press@clintonfoundation.org

Cc: press@presidentclinton.com

Dear Colleague,

This is Gizem COSKUNER from Justice and Development Party, Turkey. The Fourth Statutory Congress of the Justice and Development Party (AK Parti) to be held in Ankara on Sunday, September 30, 2012. You can find the invitation and registration form in attachments. We are pleased to see Mr Clinton in our Congress. Detailed programme will be send. Registration form must be send at the latest 10th of September 2012. If you have any questions do not hesitate to ask. Please send a confirmation when you receive this e-mail. Thank you for your consideration.

Best Regards,

Gizem COSKUNER

AK Party Foreign Relations Department
[REDACTED]

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From: Sullivan, Jacob J
Sent: Wednesday, September 02, 2009 2:01 PM
To: Fuchs, Michael H
Subject: RE: Syria

Let's discuss.

RELEASE IN PART
B6

REVIEW AUTHORITY: Barbara Nielsen, Senior
Reviewer

-----Original Message-----

From: Fuchs, Michael H
Sent: Wednesday, September 02, 2009 1:52 PM
To: Sullivan, Jacob J
Subject: FW: Syria

I can check in with some people on this, but wanted to make sure you had seen it

-----Original Message-----

From: Amitabh Desai [redacted]
Sent: Monday, August 31, 2009 5:46 PM
To: Fuchs, Michael H
Cc: Sullivan, Jacob J
Subject: FW: Syria

B6

-----Original Message-----

From: Amitabh Desai
Sent: Thursday, August 13, 2009 6:56 PM
To: Jake Sullivan [redacted]
Subject: FW: Syria

B6

Dear Jake, just checking-in on this. Know your swamped. Thanks. Am [redacted]

-----Original Message-----

From: Amitabh Desai
Sent: Wednesday, August 05, 2009 3:56 PM
To: Jake Sullivan
Subject: Syria

Dear Jake, we'd welcome State's view on an invitation we've received for WJC to travel to Damascus in November 2009. Below is background information from the organizers. Thanks, Ami

The Saban Forum is an annual, high-level U.S.-Israel dialogue that alternates between Washington and Jerusalem. President Clinton has spoken at the Saban Forum, including in 2008 in Washington. This year, the Saban Forum is convening in Jerusalem from November 13-16 at the King David Hotel. Each time Saban goes to Jerusalem, a side trip is planned for the American delegation. In 2005, they traveled to Ramallah for meetings with the Palestinian leadership and a lunch with President Abbas. In 2007, the Saban Forum took the American delegation to Amman for meetings with senior Jordanian officials and a lunch with King Abdullah. This year, the Saban Forum is planning to take the American delegation to Damascus. In that context, Saban folks contacted Syrian Foreign Minister Walid Mouallem and Presidential adviser Bouthaina Shaaban to determine whether President Asad would be willing to host the American delegation. Saban folks report the Syrians expressed a keen interest in facilitating this and offered a date in mid-November for a

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meeting with President Asad. Saban folks are asking if President Clinton would have interest in joining or leading the delegation for the visit to Damascus and the meeting with President Asad.

Subject: Burma
From: Amitabh Desai [redacted]
Date: 9/26/12, 5:17 PM
To: "jake.sullivan" [redacted]

REVIEW AUTHORITY: Barbara Nielsen, Senior Reviewer

RELEASE IN PART B6

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TS said he wanted to see WJC to get advice on reforms since WJC has done reforms in US effectively
TS said HRC is a close friend so WJC is too
WJC commended TS for making tough decisions, said Myanmar has great potential
WJC mentioned work of CF and offered to help in any way
TS said he already had asked HRC about WJC foundation and wanted to invite WJC foundation to work in Myanmar in collaboration with gov agencies and other ngs, and also invite WJC to come and visit with family
WJC said would love to visit and would be happy to explore helping via foundation
TS invited WJC to open offices in Rangoon and Mandalay
They talked of importance of small farmers and agri-processing and processing of things like rubber
TS said please come to work via Foundation and also encourage investors to come
WJC offered to bring investor delegation to Myanmar
TS said they want labor-intensive industries
TS said political reforms are important but they have very little experience with democracy and they know that political reforms alone won't help - they want and need econ reforms
TS said priorities are farmers, children, mothers, and poverty alleviation, want to provide higher wages and more educational opportunities
TS said the assistance of people like WJC would give them confidence on further reforms
TS said China and Bangladesh potential markets for raw and processed goods
WJC stressed there is enormous interest in US to see Myanmar succeed - they have a moment now, and should seize it
TS said they need capital for investments, technology, and capacity
WJC said they have a good start b/c they have good organizational skills
WJC asked about energy and TS said they spend \$400 million importing oil. Electricity generated domestically via hydro and natural gas (which on-land is extracted by state association)
WJC said energy increasingly important relative to labor costs since manufacturing now requires less labor
Overall WJC committed to bring a trade delegation and said we'll look at health and education and present some options and then we and they can decide together on a plan and then WJC will go there to announce/do it

Original Message

From: Huma Abedin <Huma@clintonemail.com>
To: Amitabh Desai; 'cheryl.mills' [redacted]; 'Mfuchs.mike' [redacted]
[redacted]; 'jake.sullivan' [redacted]
Sent: Wed Sep 26 16:06:32 2012
Subject: Re: He had v good meeting with Libya and Burma

B6
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Yes hrc looking forward to hearing about burma. We meet at 543. I believe you have downloaded to jake?

Original Message

From: Amitabh Desai [redacted]
Sent: Wednesday, September 26, 2012 02:47 PM
To: cheryl.mills [redacted]; Huma Abedin; Mfuchs.mike [redacted]
[redacted]; jake.sullivan [redacted]
Subject: He had v good meeting with Libya and Burma

B6
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Happy to call you with download if helpful, Sincerely, Ami

JJS-DOS-0000a30

Obtained by Judicial Watch, Inc. via FOIA

PART B6

REVIEW AUTHORITY: Barbara Nielsen, Senior Reviewer

Subject: Re: FW: Libya/Clinton Global Initiative
From: Amitabh Desai
Date: 9/17/12, 11:11 AM
To: "cheryl.mills"
CC: "jake.sullivan"

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Libyan President Almagarif is asking for a meeting with WJC next week. (He is confirmed to come to CGL) Would you recommend accepting or declining the WJC meeting request? Thanks, Ami

----- Original Message -----

From: Cheryl Mills
To: Amitabh Desai
Cc: Jake Sullivan
Sent: Thu Sep 13 23:01:50 2012
Subject: Re: FW: Libya/Clinton Global Initiative

B6
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We would not have issues

On Thu, Sep 13, 2012 at 4:54 PM, Amitabh Desai

wrote:

B6

>> Would USG have concerns about Libyan President being invited to CGI? Odd
>> timing, I know. Thanks, Ami
>>
>>
>>

>> From: Dr. Fadai Nuah
>> Sent: Thursday, September 13, 2012 12:24 PM
>> To: Amitabh Desai
>> Subject: Libya/Clinton Global Initiative

B6

>> 13 September 2012

>> Mr. Amitabh Desai

>> Director for Foreign Policy

>> William J. Clinton Foundation

>> 55 West 125th Street

>> New York, NY 10005

>> Via email:

B6

JJS-DO6-0000014

>> Dear Mr. Desai,

>>
>>
>>

>> I am writing on behalf of the newly elected President of the General
>> National Congress of Libya, H.E. Dr. Mohamed Yousef Almagariaf.

>>
>>

>> Dr. Almagariaf will be addressing the United Nations this September in New
>> York as the Libyan Head of State and he expressed a wish to meet President
>> Clinton and to participate at the Clinton Global Initiative meeting in New
>> York as well.

>>
>>
>>

>> I have been designated to work with your office regarding all logistics
>> required for President Almagariaf's participation at the CGI event.

>>
>>
>>

>> We thank you for your cooperation and I am looking forward to meeting you in
>> the near future in New York.

>>
>>
>>
>>
>>

>> Sincerely,

>>
>>
>>

>> Dr. Fathi Nush

>>

>> Adviser to the President

>>

>> Foreign Affairs and International relations

>>

>>

B6



STATE DEPARTMENT

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MONDAY, OCTOBER 15, 2012 7:00 AM EDT

REVIEW AUTHORITY: Barbara Nielsen, Senior Reviewer

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SECRETARY OF STATE

How The Clinton's Might Have Saved Obama's Presidency

If Obama wins, it may be because the former president saved his presidency—but what exactly do the Clintons get in return?

Monday, October 15, 2012

New York Magazine

By John Heilemann

Four years ago, on September 11, Barack Obama made the pilgrimage to Harlem to have lunch with Bill Clinton. The meal was the first tête-à-tête between the soon-to-be president and the former one since the unpleasantness of the Democratic nomination contest, and feelings on both sides were still raw and fraught with suspicion. Clinton's staff had wanted to include a Harlem stroll and photo op as part of the visit, but Obama's people demurred—a standoff that led each camp to ascribe race-related motives to the other. Eager to avoid awkwardness, Obama kept the conversation focused on governance, not politics. But at the end, Clinton offered to hit the campaign trail for, or with, the nominee. Obama, fighting a stomach bug, said okay and then beat a hasty exit to avoid upchucking on Clinton's shoes.

In truth, neither side was delighted at the prospect of Clinton stumping for Obama. The latter's team believed that he wouldn't move many votes, and were only interested in having the two men appear onstage together to stop the press from harping on the fact that they had not. Clinton, meanwhile, was still simmering over his treatment during the primaries—in particular over Obama's assertion, before the Nevada caucuses, that "Ronald Reagan changed the trajectory of America in a way that ... Bill Clinton did not." On countless conference calls with his wife's campaign, Clinton had returned obsessively to the slight, which he saw not as a gambit to get inside his head (which it was) but as Obama's genuine opinion. "He would have been less angry if he thought it was tactical," a former Clinton aide remembers. "But he thought Obama actually believed he was a shitty president."

Dutifully, halfheartedly, Clinton headlined a handful of solo events for Obama that October. And then, on the Wednesday before Election Day, the pair enacted their one joint appearance, in Kissimmee, Florida. Clinton's speech on that frosty night was emphatic, at times hyperactive. "Folks, we can't fool with this!" he declared. "Our country is hanging in the balance; this man should be our

president!" But his talk was all of thirteen minutes long and entirely formulaic, festooned with not a single warm personal anecdote or insight.

Seated on a stool next to Clinton, Obama wore an impassive expression, as if he were being endorsed by a Kissimmee town councilman—or a former president whose vaunted rhetorical gifts were inferior to his own. "He thought it was fine," recalls a senior Obama adviser. "We were all watching on TV, and we thought it was fine, too. But by then, nobody cared that much. We were all just so far past the Clintons."

Four years later, two words leap to mind: As if. Today, Hillary Clinton is the most popular member of Obama's Cabinet, and her husband is not only his greatest but most tireless political ally. This past September 11, the Y-chromosome Clinton was in Miami, ripping Mitt Romney a new one over Medicare. Since then, Clinton has campaigned for Obama in New Hampshire and Nevada, raised money for him in Boston and with him in Los Angeles—and there is more to come. A TV ad with Clinton making the case for Obama's reelection has run 16,000 times in swing states across the country. Another, featuring a clip of Clinton's address at the Democratic convention, almost gives the impression that he is Obama's running mate. Then there is that speech itself, which another top Obama adviser tells me flatly is "the most important moment of the campaign so far."

The Barack-and-Bill double act on display this fall marks a new and intriguing phase in a psychological entanglement so rich that if Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung were alive, they would surely be squabbling over it instead of Sabina Spielrein's hysteria. No one close to Obama or Clinton even bothers with the pretense that there is any real affection between them. But most concur with the assessment of a Democratic operative with tentacles deep in both worlds: that "the relationship today is totally transactional—and highly functional."

What Obama stands to gain from the transaction is plain enough to see. The support of the political figure with the highest approval rating, 69 percent, of any in America. The suasive services of a surrogate who can talk the owls down from the trees. The imprimatur of a former president associated with a period of broad and deep prosperity, imbued with unparalleled credibility on matters economic, and possessing special traction with the white working- and -middle-class voters whom Obama has always had a hard time reaching. What Obama stands to gain, in other words, is a healthy boost in his quest for

reelection—one all the more invaluable in the wake of his dismal performance in the first debate.

The potential payoff for Clinton is more ineffable but no less substantial. Last time around, recall, Obama's candidacy was based in part on the consignment of Clintonism to the dustbin of history. But now, with Obama running unabashedly as the inheritor of that creed, Clinton is reveling in seeing his legacy restored to what he regards as its rightful status: a restoration that will mightily benefit his wife if she hurls herself at the White House again in 2016. Speculation on that topic is rife within the Clinton diaspora; no one has a clue as to whether or not Hillary will run. But, equally, no one doubts that her husband dearly wants her to—mainly because, among members of the tribe, he can't shut up about it.

Clintonism isn't the only thing being rejuvenated here, however. What's taking place is the revivification—and the -Godzilla-scale enlargement—of Clinton himself. In 2008, a not insignificant number of white liberals and African-Americans assailed him as, if not a racist, a race-baiter; he was battered and bruised, scalded and scarred, mired in self-pity. But in 2012, he has emerged as the Democrats' own Dutch: revered by his party, respected so much by the GOP that it dare not cross him, sanctified by the great heaving middle.

The irony, and it is thick as porridge, is that the instrument of this transformation has been the younger man whom Clinton once scorned as a usurper—acting with a degree of cold calculation that the elder cannot help but admire. "Obama engineered this reconciliation, and I think the whole time he was, like, 'Why do I have to do this?'" says Neera Tanden, president of the Center for American Progress and a former adviser to both Hillary and Obama. "He did it because he wanted to win, and this was the way to do it. But in the process, he's made Bill Clinton the king of the world."

Clinton, to be sure, has experienced regnant periods before, and every time they presaged a precipitous and self-inflicted fall. As his biographer David Maraniss has observed, Clinton's life is a ceaseless cycle of triumph, disgrace, and redemption—up and down, up and down, wash, rinse, and repeat. Among those in Clinton's orbit, the salient question is whether, at long last, the cycle has been broken. Or will the Maximum Canine, having shed his leash, soon find himself in the doghouse again?

A few hours before Obama ambled on to the debate stage in Denver, Clinton was 2,026 miles away, taking the podium on the president's behalf in the Field House at the University of New Hampshire in Durham. The speech Clinton uncorked inside the packed gymnasium was mostly an abbreviated reprise of his convention stemwinder. But it contained one new riff that, by the end of the night, millions of Democrats would find themselves wishing had come from Obama's mouth instead.

"I couldn't believe it the other day when the president's opponent said that the 47 percent of American people who don't pay income tax just wanna hang around and be dependent on the government and, you know, we just had to wean them off that because they didn't wanna pay income tax," Clinton said. "Now, a guy with a tax account in the Cayman Islands is attacking other people for not wanting to [pay taxes]? I mean, you gotta give him credit—like I said, that's like Congressman Ryan attacking Barack Obama for having the same Medicare savings he did. When you really bust somebody for doing what you did, it takes a lot of gall, you know? But lemme tell you who those 47 percent are ... Most of them are families who work."

Clinton could not have looked giddier—jabbing the air with his thumb, unfurling his trademark finger rolls and open-palmed laments, his face so flushed it looked as if butter would have melted on his forehead. New Hampshire, of course, is a special place for Clinton, the environs where, in 1992, he'd gloried in campaigning "until the last dog dies" and earned the sobriquet "the Comeback Kid." But the Granite State is also where, in 2008, his self-immolation began with his railing against Obama's Iraq War record as a "fairy tale." From then on, it was all downhill: the rope-line explosion in South Carolina, the comparison of Obama's victory in the Democratic primary there to that of Jesse Jackson's in 1988, the refusal, on the eve of their party's convention, to affirm that Obama was ready to be commander-in-chief.

To Obama, this behavior was a stark affirmation of the critique he had been offering of Clintonism: that it was based on "calculation, not conviction"; that it was polarizing, not unifying; that it was self-serving and ignoble. In *The Audacity of Hope*, Obama had written that the partisan wars of the Clinton years were an outgrowth of baby boomer "psychodrama." Watching WJC lose his mind in 2008, BHO thought, QED.

But after Obama sealed the nomination, his attitude toward the Clintons shifted to a sharp

differentiation. His rancor toward Hillary evaporated: Obama needed her support, wanted her on his side, and was willing to work for it. But Obama saw no benefit in kissing 42's ring, let alone his ass. I'd be happy to call him if it would make a difference, Obama told his confidants. But why waste my time if he's just gonna keep crapping all over me?

It was Obama's pursuit of Hillary to be secretary of State that sparked the first hints of détente. At first she didn't want the job, she required persuasion, and both Obama and her husband worked her hard. "The fact that Obama made the offer was a pretty damn big thing to Clinton," says a former lieutenant of his. "And the way Obama has treated her—as a partner, giving her State as her eminent domain—means even more to him."

With Hillary ensconced in Foggy Bottom, Bill turned his attention to his foundation and the Clinton Global Initiative (CGI) with renewed vigor. And while he'd emerged from the campaign with his share of wounds, he spent little time licking them—or hatching any rehabilitation project. "He did not sit down with a cadre of advisers and say, 'Okay, I need my four-year plan,' " says Joel Johnson, managing director of the Glover Park Group and a senior White House adviser in Clinton's second term. "He just did what he always does, which is to get back to work."

Which is not to say that Clinton was shy of opinions regarding Obama's performance in office. On policy, there was no daylight between them: Clinton was for Obama's stimulus, Wall Street reregulation, and especially health-care reform—and was vastly impressed by Obama's ability to get it passed, as Clinton had been unable to do. At the same time, he was baffled by Obama's failures at the basic blocking and tackling of politics, his insularity, and his alienation of the business community. As a former Clinton hand put it to the Washington Post, "He thinks that Obama gets all the hard stuff right but doesn't do the easy stuff at all."

Clinton, being Clinton, had plenty of advice in mind and was desperate to impart it. But for the first two years of Obama's term, the phone calls Clinton kept expecting rarely came. "People say the reason Obama wouldn't call Clinton is because he doesn't like him," observes Tanden. "The truth is, Obama doesn't call anyone, and he's not close to almost anyone. It's stunning that he's in politics, because he really doesn't like people. My analogy is that it's like becoming Bill Gates without liking computers."

Yet behind Obama's standoffishness was something more elemental: He didn't think he needed Clinton. He believed his administration was successful, that things were going fine. Then came the 2010 midterms and the shellacking administered to his party by the Republicans. Suddenly, the world changed—and Clinton's phone began to ring.

A month after the midterms, on December 10, Clinton met Obama in the Oval Office. The president had just negotiated a compromise with the GOP over extending the Bush-era tax cuts and was facing an insurrection on the left. After 70 minutes, the longest talk they'd had since Obama took office, they decided to stage an impromptu press conference. At the podium in the White House briefing room, Obama said he and Clinton had "just had a terrific meeting" and he thought "it might be useful" to "bring the other guy in" to "speak very briefly" about the tax-cut deal—while Obama left to attend a Christmas party.

Taking the microphone and affecting his best aw-shucks manner, Clinton said, "I feel awkward being here, and now you're going to leave me all by myself"—and then proceeded to demonstrate that awkwardness by fielding questions for 23 minutes after Obama bailed. But Clinton's defense of the deal was effective; the liberal rebellion was effectively quashed.

In that moment, the parallels between Obama's and Clinton's first two years became even more apparent. Both rode into office promising change; both found Washington more resistant to it than they'd imagined; both pursued politically unpopular initiatives and paid a heavy price; both had trouble holding their own caucuses together and met stiff Republican intransigence. And the similarities would only deepen in 2011. Just as Clinton battled with Newt Gingrich's self-styled revolutionary freshmen over the budget in his third year, culminating in a government shutdown, Obama did battle with John Boehner's bloody-minded tea-party freshmen over the federal debt ceiling, leading nearly to a default on America's debts and a historic downgrade of its credit rating.

Even after the double-barreled press conference, Obama continued to resist the idea of pulling Clinton closer. But the political fallout from the debt-ceiling debacle—with Obama's approval rating plummeting to its all-time low of 38 percent—was severe enough to convince the president and his team that they could no longer let obstinacy stand in the way of survival. And thus began a full-court Clinton press. A round of golf for him and Obama at the links on Andrews

Air Force Base in the early fall of 2011. Regular phone calls from the president soliciting his predecessor's opinions and advice. A visit to Harlem last November by Obama strategist David Axelrod, campaign manager Jim Messina, and pollster Joel Benenson, who together gave Clinton a full download on the campaign's voter research and the strategy it was honing for taking on Romney. And how did Clinton react? "How do you think?" asks one of the meeting's attendees. "He ate it up."

Three weeks later, 42 and 44 appeared at an event promoting green buildings—a pet project of Clinton's—in Washington. Each heaped praise on the other, but Obama's bouquets were especially lavish. "When Bill Clinton was president, we didn't shortchange investment," he said. "We lived within our means. We invested in our future. We asked everybody to pay their fair share. You know what happened? The private sector thrived, jobs were created, the middle class grew—its income grew—millions rose out of poverty, we ran a surplus. We were actually on track to be able to pay off all of our debt. We were firing on all cylinders. We can be that nation again."

When the event was over, a reporter called out, "President Clinton, do you have any advice for President Obama about the economy?" Obama, grinning widely, interjected wryly, "Oh, he gives me advice all the time"—as Clinton looked on, beaming.

Flattery will carry you a long way in life, and even further with Bill Clinton. Soon enough, he agreed in principle to do whatever he could to help with Obama's reelection: appear in ads, headline events, assist with fund-raising. But more than obsequiousness was at work in bringing on the thaw. "Clinton was pretty impatient with people on the left who were grouching that what Obama was doing wasn't good enough," says John Podesta, a former Clinton White House chief of staff. "He feels like Obama really did get a lot done and doesn't have too much time for people whining about, say, health care, saying, 'But it wasn't single-payer' or 'Where's the public option?'"

At the same time, Podesta goes on, Obama has abandoned his critique of Clintonism, substantively and politically. "One part of his argument was, 'Let's get beyond this baby-boom-Vietnam-crazy-shit angst that produced Gingrich, Clinton, blah blah, blah,'" he says. "But Obama, having gotten a dose of the polarization, has a deeper understanding that that isn't what it's about. The other part was, 'We're not gonna be too political, we're not gonna go small-bore, we're

gonna be visionary, da-da-da.' It was an appealing piece of his message to -college-educated white voters in the primary. But to middle-class and working-class voters, it's kinda an abstract theory, which is why Clinton has always appealed to them—he's the guy who's in there pitching every day, sweating it out, getting to work for them. And Obama, after [the debt-ceiling debacle], has transformed into, 'We're gonna fight for the middle class, we're gonna gut this out day to day.' So in some ways, Clinton came to Obama. But in other ways, Obama came to Clinton."

No path trod alongside Clinton, though, is ever paved with primrose; the presence of potholes is inevitable. In May, Clinton appeared on CNN's Piers Morgan Tonight, guest-hosted that evening by his friend Harvey Weinstein. The Obama campaign, along with the Democratic super-pac Priorities USA Action, had just begun the assault on Romney's career at Bain, but when Weinstein asked Clinton about that, Clinton veered wildly off-message. "I don't think that we ought to get into the position where we say this is bad work—this is good work," he said of private equity, adding that Romney had "a sterling business career." The reaction in Obamaland was instantaneous, apoplectic, and reflexively paranoid: What the fuuuuccck? Is this intentional? Is he trying to screw us? were the themes of the e-mail chain that rocketed around the campaign's upper echelon.

The next morning, the Obamans confronted Clinton through his aide Doug Band. At first, Clinton insisted he'd done nothing wrong—that he'd made it clear Romney was inferior to Obama on policy, on what he'd do as president. (This was true.) One -reading of what happened was that Clinton, a decidedly pre-YouTube pol, had failed to realize that the damaging portion of his interview would be ripped out of context and go viral. Another was that Clinton was throwing a purpose pitch, signaling to the Obamans that they should go after Romney while remaining aspirational and not further pissing off the business community. But a third, perhaps most persuasive interpretation was that Clinton was building Romney up to more effectively tear him down later. "Clinton always finds ways to compliment his opponents," says Johnson, "before elegantly sticking the knife in."

Clinton promptly clarified his comments and was fast forgiven by Chicago, and not just because, at a joint fund-raiser in New York with Obama days later, he dropped an anvil on Romney's head, maintaining that his policies would be "calamitous

for our country and the world." By then, Clinton was all-in with the campaign—raising cash, narrating a web video, cutting his direct-to-camera ad. But the biggest ask was yet to come: that Clinton take the stage as the marquee act for one night of the Democratic convention in Charlotte, North Carolina. On July 25, Obama called Clinton and formally offered him the gig.

The heft of the burden being laid on Clinton's shoulders is hard to overstate. With the convention consuming only three prime-time broadcast TV hours—the first dominated by Michelle Obama and focused on her husband's character, and the third by Obama and his vision of the future—Clinton would be required both to clarify the choice between Obama and Romney and to vouch for the president's economic stewardship, the one area in which the Republican enjoyed a persistent lead in the polls. "I saw [senior White House adviser David] Plouffe a few weeks before the convention," says a prominent Democrat. "He made no bones about the fact that Clinton's speech was far more important than Obama's, because Clinton is an economic arbiter like no other."

Clinton, who Maraniss has written "loves to be needed as much as he needs to be loved," was delighted—and set about tackling his assignment so early that it startled his longtime adjutants. "Several weeks before the speech, his assistant called me and said, 'The president wants input from a lot of people. Can you send us something?'" recalls Paul Begala. "A week or two later, I hadn't quite gotten around to it, and he called me personally and said, 'I haven't gotten anything from you.' This is weeks before the speech! He never does that!"

Clinton wasn't just seeking input: He was jonesing for facts and figures, constantly demanding them from Bruce Reed and Gene Sperling, two Obama-administration officials who also served Clinton and who'd been assigned to help with the speech. For four years, his most acute frustration with Obama has been over his inability or unwillingness to make the case for his achievements, to sell them to the country. Now Clinton saw an opportunity, and even a responsibility, to remedy the shortcoming. As he was brainstorming the speech, Clinton chanted one sentence like a mantra: "People need education, not eloquence."

Though Axelrod was in communication with Clinton, he was all too aware Chicago would have no input into the speech—which made him and his colleagues a touch queasy. "It took a leap of faith for them to do something they weren't scripting,"

says someone intimately involved with the process. "It was a week after Clint Eastwood, and the campaign was politely wondering, 'Um, when are we going to see it?'" Which put Reed and Sperling in the position of having to calm the horses. "We had to remind them," Reed tells me, "that Clintonworld has always run on a just-in-time business model."

Clinton rolled into Charlotte late on the night before his speech, then stayed up until 3 a.m. laboring over it. The next morning, he summoned an assortment of his oldest and most trusted hands—Begala, Podesta, Reed, Sperling, plus former White House press secretary Joe Lockhart, former national-security adviser Sandy Berger, and Hillary's infamous Svengali Mark Penn—to his suite at the Hilton to assist him in bringing the thing in for a landing.

For everyone in the room that day, the scene was at once intoxicatingly and achingly familiar. All had worked on innumerable high-stakes Clinton speeches in years past, from convention addresses to States of the Union to Election Night orations, and virtually every one had been just like this: a bunch of white guys around a table playing verbal pepper with the boss; Clinton armed with his yellow legal and a Sharpie, scratching out stanzas in his nearly illegible southpaw scrawl, handing them to his assistant to be typed up and printed out, and then furiously crossing out what he'd written and scribbling something new—periodically interrupting the flow to regale everyone with the latest jokes he'd heard.

Despite all the work Clinton had done beforehand, the speech was no more than half-written when his former aides arrived and already was way too long. But having seen this movie many times before, none were freaked or fazed. "Clinton is like a jazz musician," Reed says. "He knows all the songs. The only questions are which ones is he going to play, which ones fit together best, and in what order?"

At one point Begala, being mischievous but not without purpose, took out his iPad and showed Clinton a news story about Paul Ryan, who that morning in Iowa had snarked about 42's impending speech, "My guess is we will get a great rendition of how good things were in the nineties, but we're not going to hear much about how things have been the last four years." Clinton chuckled and replied, "Well, you know, I guess he's gonna be surprised."

Clinton, indeed, was loaded for bear when it came to Ryan and Medicare, as well as on Medicaid and welfare. But beyond those discrete areas of policy, he was focused on answering a time-tested question that the Obamans had been stumbling over: Are you better off today than you were four years ago? "It's difficult," says Begala. "His former pollster, Stan Greenberg, has been vociferous on this point. Stan says, 'If you try to tell people things have been great, they get angry with you, so don't do it.' But Clinton went right into the teeth of that."

Clinton thought the answer was obvious and provable, but knew he could go further—invoking his own legacy not to boast but bolster Obama, providing a rejoinder more potent than any the president could offer. For more than an hour in the early afternoon, Clinton compulsively wordsmithed the single line that would be rendered thus: "No president—not me, not any of my predecessors, no one—could have repaired all of the damage that [Obama] found in just four years." "He kept coming back to it and coming back to it and then rephrasing it again," recalls Begala. "He intuitively got that that one line was the heart of the speech, the whole ballgame."

Clinton was right about that, but the power of the line was much enhanced by what came a little earlier—the praise he heaped on Eisenhower, Reagan, Bush 41, and Bush 43. Initially, that paragraph had been preceded by one lauding all the Democratic presidents of his lifetime, but then Clinton decided to strike it. In elevating the Republicans alone, he realized, he would elevate himself, enhancing the perception of him as a neutral authority, not a partisan, and hence strengthening his later claim for Obama's record. "It's instinctual for him," says Lockhart. "He said, 'The way I'm going to make the second half of the speech work is doing the first part this way.'"

The rest of the afternoon was for cutting. Clinton had been allotted twenty minutes, but neither the folks in Chicago nor those in the room were added enough to believe that he would not run over. Still, in an effort to show Chicago a draft not quite as long as Infinite Jest, thousands of words were sliced away. But with dusk setting in and Axelrod about to jump out of his skin at having not seen the text, the speech still had a small defect: no ending. "Well, I could just riff," Clinton said, and everyone cracked up.

Around 7 p.m., just three hours before Clinton was set to take the stage, a draft was finally dispatched to Axelrod. Clinton took a nap, had a shower, then did a single rehearsal with a

teleprompter in his suite around 9:15—clocking in at 28 minutes.

The speech Clinton proceeded to uncork onstage bore a passing resemblance to the one he rehearsed, but no more than that. The text as prepared for delivery was 3,279 words; as actually delivered it was 5,888 and consumed 49 minutes. Much of what had been cut that day Clinton reinserted on the fly, but many of the best lines—popping Ryan for having "some brass" on Medicare, and arguing that Hillary's relationship with Obama was a healthy sign that democracy need not be a "blood sport"—were pure ad-libs. And for all the jesting about him just riffing his conclusion, that was exactly what he did, spinning out the tale about how George Washington was "criticized for being a mediocre surveyor with a bad set of false wooden teeth," and about how America always "come[s] through every fire a little stronger and a little better."

When the speech was over, and after Obama strode onstage and locked arms with Clinton, the current president was "pretty jazzed—and grateful," recalls one of his advisers. As for the former one, he went out to a party and then back to his suite, reconvening around 2 a.m. with the white guys who'd been there all day and were now over the moon. "All of Charlotte was on a high," Reed recalls. "But I don't think anyone was higher than Clinton."

If Clinton was the man of the hour in Charlotte, three weeks later in New York, at CGI, he demonstrated he was also the man to see. On the conference's last day, Romney and Obama both paid obeisance to him by gracing the stage. The Republican opened with a well-turned line regarding Clinton's introduction of him: "If there's one thing we've learned in this election season, by the way, it's that a few words from Bill Clinton can do a man a lot of good—all I gotta do now is wait a couple of days for that bounce to happen." And Obama followed up in a similar vein: "Thank you for your very kind introduction—although I have to admit I really did like the speech a few weeks ago a little bit better."

By the time of CGI, it was clear that Clinton's convention declamation had produced tangible effects, both micro and macro. Consider welfare. In the weeks leading up to the party conventions, the Romney campaign had been leaning hard into the issue, spending heavily on negative ads that featured Clinton as the admirable reformer whom Obama was undermining by "gutting" work requirements. In his speech, Clinton reviewed his

own history on welfare, laid out Obama's stance, and trashed the ads as "just not true."

By relying on a validator from the opposite party who is, ahem, alive, Team Romney had taken an obvious risk. "When you do that, you have to make sure that the person you're holding up as the referee isn't going to throw a flag on you," says Obama's lead pollster Joel Benenson. "Clinton threw a flag on them pretty definitively; there probably wasn't even an instant-replay review." And within days of his doing so, the Romney ads on welfare disappeared from the airwaves, never to be seen again.

But the broader changes in public opinion following the speech were even more dramatic and significant. In all the prior polling, two of the most troubling numbers for Obama had been the percentage of voters who perceived the country as headed in the right direction (which had been stuck in the low thirties) and who believed the economy was improving (in the high twenties as recently as July). By the end of September, however, the right-track number had shot up to 40 in the NBC News—Wall Street Journal survey, and the percentage of voters feeling optimistic about the economy had risen to 44. And not coincidentally, the president, after lagging Romney consistently on the question of who is better equipped to handle the economy, was in a statistical tie with his rival.

From right to left, a consensus congealed that the speech had been the cause of the movement. Judging from their Clinton-heavy advertising and Obama's relentless name-checking of WJC on the stump, the Obamans apparently agree. And, not surprisingly, so do the Clintonites. "Convention speeches usually get judged on the poetry, and the Democratic ones have been more known for expressing heroic failure: Ted Kennedy in 1980 or Mario Cuomo in 1984, which were great speeches but losing arguments," notes one of them. "But as an exercise in political persuasion, it's hard to think of a speech as effective as Clinton's. Then when you add to that his age and that he's been retired from office for twelve years, it's like Ted Williams flirting with hitting .400 at the age of 39."

Taken together, all of this led, as October dawned, to a sense of outsize optimism among Democrats that the election was basically in the bag—until, that is, Obama's dismal, nay disastrous performance at the first debate in Denver, which induced an immediate and convulsive wave of near panic. Ever since then, Team Obama has been struggling to deal with (and even flailing in the face of) Romney's Etch-A-Sketch maneuver

and the strategic conundrum it presents: whether to continue attacking him as a right-wing extremist, shift to assailing him as a flip-flopper, or attempt a delicate synthesis of the two approaches.

It was Clinton who, at his meeting with Axelrod, Benenson, and Messina in Harlem nearly a year ago, helped the Obamans find their way when they first approached this fork in the road. According to more than one attendee, Clinton said, in effect, that pursuing the flip-flopper line would be a mistake, because centrist voters would conclude that Romney was only lurching rightward to get through the GOP primaries and would switch back to being more moderate if he attained the Oval Office—an outcome those voters would happily accept. Therefore, Clinton counseled, it made more sense to stop tarring Romney as "coreless," as Team Obama had been doing, and instead paint him as excessively conservative and thus unacceptable to key voting groups such as suburban white women and Hispanics.

Precisely how Clinton would advise, or has advised, Obama to cope with Romney's latest bout of shape-shifting in the two remaining debates is unknown (at least by me). But last week, at a rally in Las Vegas, Clinton emitted some vivid clues. Delivering lines soaked in sarcasm but softened with a gleeful smile and whimsical cadences, he shredded Romney six ways to Sunday.

"I had a different reaction to that first debate than a lot of people did," Clinton said. "I thought, Wow, here's old Moderate Mitt—where you been, boy? I missed you all these last few years! But I was paying attention ... [when you were] Severe Conservative Mitt. That was how he described himself for two whole years, until three or four days before the debate, they all got together and said, 'Hey, Mitt, this ship is sinking faster than the Titanic, but people are still frustrated about the economy, they want it fixed yesterday, so just show up with a sunny face and say, 'I didn't say all that stuff I said the last two years. I don't have that tax plan I had for the last two years. You going to believe me or your lying eyes here?' ' Clinton giggled. "And if I'd been the president, I might have said, 'Well, I hate to get in the way of this—I miss you.' "

Can Obama find a way to dismember Romney so artfully, joyfully, and thoroughly? Upon the answer may hang the outcome of the election—and no doubt Clinton, for the good of the country, hopes he will. Yet in strictly personal and political terms, the 2012 election is for Clinton a no-lose

proposition. If Obama prevails, a decent hunk of the credit will accrue to Clinton, and precious little pleases him more than plaudits. But if Obama is defeated, the resulting oburgation will be heaped squarely on 44, and the only thing Clinton enjoys more than being credited is being blameless.

In either case, the outcome will likely have close to zero impact on what comes next for him, for that will be determined by his wife's decision about 2016. To date, Hillary has been adamant, privately and publicly, in her refusal to broach the topic. She isn't planning, isn't deliberating, isn't so much as contemplating another run for the White House, or so she says—though some of her former aides scoff at that. ("It's a lie," says one. "It's always a lie.")

But whatever the reality, this will not be a stance she'll be able to maintain for long. Within months of her departure from the State Department early next year, the pressure for a yea or nay will begin to mount. And it will only be made more severe by the fact that Obama, in the words of one Democratic panjandrum, "couldn't possibly be more disengaged from the question of party succession—he just doesn't give a shit."

The operating premise among most Democrats is that if Hillary does choose to dive in, the nomination will more than be hers for the taking: It will be handed to her on a silver salver, accorded her almost by acclamation. Yes, she was supposed to be inevitable in 2008. But this is four years later—four years in which she has been a ringingly successful secretary of State. Now that we've nominated and elected an African-American, goes the thinking in the party, the time is ripe for a woman. And she has earned it. And this will be her last chance. And she is ... Hillary.

Given the mammoth scale of the dysfunction that afflicted her operation the last time around, one question about this scenario is what her campaign might look like. Certainly, it is a question of burning interest in Clintonworld. Would Hillary, for instance, bring back Mark Penn? For many of the sharpest and most skillful Clintonistas, doing so would be a poison pill. ("Everyone hopes she'd have more sense," says a longtime FOB, "but Penn was there in the suite in Charlotte with her husband, which isn't exactly reassuring.")

An equally pertinent question revolves around the role that Bill himself would play. In 2008, his engagement was bipolar, borderline schizoid: at first, not involved enough, and then involved way too much. "It doesn't necessarily need to be crazy town," says a veteran of that campaign. "What

helped drive him crazy was being locked out for all those months, so maybe if it's a world where he is fully integrated, it would be much better."

Further increasing the odds that Clinton could play a constructive role is what has taken place in 2012. "Part of the problem last time was that he hadn't been on the field in a long time," says one of his longtime advisers. "Politics had changed. He'd only been around people telling him how wonderful he was, and rich people. He'd lost his fastball. But now he's been at it and stayed at it in the last couple years, and he's got his pitch back—although he probably can't go the full nine innings anymore."

Even if Hillary elects not to run, Bill may keep his oar in the water—and there are signs that he would like to. "I think he enjoys having a relationship with Obama," Neera Tanden says. "When I talk to people in the realm, I hear them trying to tell him, 'You know this is going to end in November.' And he's kind of pushing back a little."

Joel Johnson believes Clinton could help Obama (assuming he wins) with a renewed pursuit of a grand bargain on entitlements and taxes as Washington grapples right after the election with the so-called fiscal cliff. "It's no secret that Obama was ready to go pretty far out on entitlement reform with Boehner," says Johnson. "Who better to be a thought leader about that process than Clinton? In terms of making some of the hard decisions that Democrats are gonna have to make, and being able to talk about the beauty of a budget deal and what it can do for the economy. So I actually think he will have a postelection role in that intense period. The same credibility that he demonstrated in the convention speech can be applied to the legislative crisis that we're going to be in in the next six to eight months."

The idea of Clinton doing just that, or assisting his wife on her way to the White House, is appealing on a multitude of levels—just as his presence on the campaign trail now is impossible not to relish, almost regardless of your partisan inclinations. Clinton at his best has always been a wondrous spectacle to behold. The trick for him will be somehow to stay on the wave he's riding, to resist the darker impulses and indisciplines that reliably in the past have sent him tumbling headlong into the surf.

"For those of us who have been around for a long time, we're always worried about that, because, as they say in *Gone With the Wind*, tomorrow is another day," muses Podesta. "Today, everyone's in love with him. Tomorrow, who knows?"

How Obama Bungled The Syrian Revolution
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Washington Post

By Jackson Diehl

Mitt Romney and congressional Republicans are doing their best to portray the assault on the U.S. Consulate in Libya and its aftermath as a signal foreign policy disaster for Barack Obama. But my bet is that when historians look back on Obama's mistakes in the last four years, they will focus on something entirely different: his catastrophic mishandling of the revolution in Syria.

The deaths of Ambassador Chris Stevens and three other Americans in Benghazi were a calamity — but those losses were mainly the result of poor security decisions by mid-level State Department officials, not policy choices by Obama. The president's handling of Syria, on the other hand, exemplifies every weakness in his foreign policy — from his excessive faith in "engaging" troublesome foreign leaders to his insistence on multilateralism as an end in itself to his self-defeating caution in asserting American power.

The result is not a painful but isolated setback, but an emerging strategic disaster: a war in the heart of the Middle East that is steadily spilling over to vital U.S. allies, such as Turkey and Jordan, and to volatile neighbors, such as Iraq and Lebanon. Al-Qaeda is far more active in Syria than it is in Libya — while more liberal and secular forces are turning against the United States because of its failure to help them. More than 30,000 people — most of them civilians — have been killed, and the toll mounts by the hundreds every day.

Of course, Obama is not solely responsible for this mess. But his serial miscalculations have had the consistent if unintended effect of enabling Syria's Bashar al-Assad — first to avoid international isolation, then to go on slaughtering his own population with impunity.

Obama's Syria policy began in 2009 with the misguided idea of reaching out to the dictator. Within a month of his inauguration, Obama reversed the Bush administration's approach of isolating Assad. He later reopened the U.S. Embassy and dispatched senior envoys, such as George Mitchell.

The problem with this policy was not just the distasteful courting of a rogue regime but the willful disregard of the lessons absorbed by George W. Bush, who also tried reaching out to Assad, only to learn the hard way that he was an irredeemable thug. Yet Obama insisted on

reversing Bush's policy of distancing the United States from strongmen like Assad and Hosni Mubarak — a monumental miscalculation.

When the uprising against Assad began in March of last year, the administration's first reaction was to predict that he could be induced to coopt it. "Many . . . believe he's a reformer," said Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. That illusion caused the administration to stand by for months while Assad's security forces gunned down what were then peaceful pro-democracy marchers; not until August 2011 did Obama say that Assad should "step aside."

By then Syria was already tipping into civil war. The State Department's Syria experts recognized the peril: If Assad were not overthrown quickly, they warned in congressional testimony, the country could tip into a devastating sectarian war that would empower jihadists and spread to neighboring countries. But Obama rejected suggestions by several senators that he lead an intervention. Instead he committed a second major error, by adopting a policy of seeking to broker a Syrian solution through the United Nations. "The best thing we can do," he said last March, "is to unify the international community."

As countless observers correctly predicted, the subsequent U.N. mission of Kofi Annan was doomed from the beginning. When the White House could no longer deny that reality, it turned to an equally fantastical gambit: Vladi-mir Putin, it argued, could be persuaded to abandon his support of Assad and force him to step down. The nadir of this diplomacy may have been reached on June 30, when Clinton cheerfully predicted that the Kremlin had "decided to get on one horse, and it's the horse that would back a transition plan" removing Assad.

Needless to say, Putin did no such thing. The war went on; thousands more died. For the past three months, Obama's policy has become a negative: He is simply opposed to any use of U.S. power. Fixed on his campaign slogan that "the tide of war is receding" in the Middle East, Obama claims that intervention would only make the conflict worse — and then watches as it spreads to NATO ally Turkey and draws in hundreds of al-Qaeda fighters.

No doubt it's easier for Romney and the Republicans to talk about the death of an ambassador in a terrorist attack than to ask war-weary Americans to think about this. But it is Syria that is Obama's greatest failure; it will haunt whomever occupies the Oval Office next year.

Netanyahu Again Offers The Golan Heights To Syria?

Monday, October 15, 2012

National Review

By Daniel Pipes

Shimon Shiffer reports in Yedioth Ahronoth that in secret talks in 2010 with U.S. government mediator Frederic C. Hof, Israel's prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu agreed in principle to a full withdrawal from the Golan Heights to the June 4, 1967, lines in return for the "expectation" of Bashar al-Assad cutting ties with Iran, and that the nearly-completed negotiations ended because of the anti-Assad uprising that began in January 2011.

How plausible is this claim?

Here is a summary of the report published by Yedioth Ahronoth:

According to American sources, Netanyahu and Barak agreed to withdraw to the 1967 lines in exchange for a comprehensive peace deal that would include an Israeli "expectation" for the severing of ties between Syria and Iran. However, the sources said, the burgeoning deal did not include an explicit commitment by Assad to sever ties with the Islamic Republic.

The report said the sides did not agree on a timeline for the Israeli withdrawal: Syria wanted the agreement to be implemented within one and a half to two years, while Israel asked for more time before pulling out of the region.

Yedioth quoted a senior American official as saying that the negotiations were serious and far-reaching and would have likely ended with an agreement had they not been interrupted by the uprising against Assad. The official estimated that Netanyahu resumed the talks with Assad to justify the stalemate in the negotiations with the Palestinians and because he viewed Syria as the weak link in the so called "axis of evil," which also includes Iran, Lebanon and Hezbollah.

According to the documents written by Hof, the discussions were held at the prime minister's official residence in Jerusalem. Netanyahu and Barak kept the talks a secret, but in early 2011 a Kuwaiti newspaper reported that special US envoy Dennis Ross met Syrian Foreign Minister Walid Moallem and said that Damascus was willing to resume talks with Israel and that the Jewish state was willing to return the Golan Heights. The Prime Minister's Office denied the report.

Yedioth said US President Barack Obama and Vice President Joe Biden were aware of the negotiations, as were Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, National Security Adviser Tom Donilon, Ambassador to Israel Dan Shapiro and Dennis Ross. Syria's representative to the talks was FM Moallem, but Hof also met with Assad, the report said.

Netanyahu's office replied to the Yedioth Ahronoth report that "This was one of many initiatives proposed to Israel over the years. Israel has never accepted that proposal. It is an old and irrelevant proposal." In contrast, the State Department partially endorsed the report: "Prior to the eruption of all of the violence in Syria, there were efforts to try to support contacts between Israel and Syrian officials. This was part of the mandate of George Mitchell."

My comments: (1) As the author of the exposé of Netanyahu's 1998 agreement to hand over the Golan Heights, "The Road to Damascus: What Netanyahu Almost Gave Away," I find this report very plausible. If the first-time prime minister was ready for a deal, why not the second-time prime minister? (2) Ariel Sharon stopped this mistaken policy the first time and the Syrian people did it the second time. (3) Let's hope that the upheavals of the past two years close down these misguided ideas of reaching Arab-Israeli treaties before real reform has come to the Arabic-speaking countries.

US Cancels Scholarship Program For Gaza Students Amid Battle Involving Israel And Hamas

Monday, October 15, 2012

Associated Press

JERUSALEM — Amal Ashour, 18, loves Shakespeare and American pop music. One of the brightest students in the Gaza Strip, she studied her senior year of high school in Minnesota through a U.S.-government funded program.

She had planned to study English literature this fall at a university in the West Bank through another U.S.-sponsored program, but just a month before school started, she was informed the scholarship was no longer available.

"When you live in Gaza, you're a pawn in a greater political game," she said in a telephone interview. "There's nothing we can do about it." She is now enrolled at Islamic University, a stronghold of Gaza's ruling Islamic militant Hamas.

Under Israeli pressure, U.S. officials have quietly canceled a two-year-old scholarship program for

students in the Gaza Strip, undercutting one of the few American outreach programs to people in the Hamas-ruled territory. The program now faces an uncertain future, just two years after being launched with great fanfare by U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton during a visit to the region.

The program offers about 30 scholarships to promising but financially challenged Palestinian high school seniors from Gaza and the West Bank to study in local Palestinian universities.

It is a rare opportunity for gifted students in Gaza, which has been constrained by an Israeli blockade since Hamas seized power five years ago. The blockade has made it harder for Palestinians to travel abroad. Both Israel and the U.S. consider Hamas a terrorist group because of its hundreds of attacks against Israelis, including suicide bombings, and frequent rocket attacks from Gaza.

After allowing the scholarship program to proceed in 2010, Israel this year refused to give permits for the Gaza students to travel to the West Bank. Hamas' rival, the Western-backed Palestinian Authority, governs the West Bank.

Citing security reasons, Israel bans most Gazans from traveling to Israel or the West Bank. Exceptions are made for about 5,000 humanitarian cases each month.

Education is not considered a humanitarian concern. Israeli officials claim that West Bank universities are breeding grounds for militant groups like Hamas. Last month, Israel's Supreme Court upheld this travel ban on students.

Israeli military spokesman Guy Inbar said the policy is part of Israel's struggle against Hamas, an Iranian-backed group committed to Israel's destruction.

"Hamas makes great efforts to establish new affiliates of the terrorist infrastructure from Gaza to the West Bank, and to transfer knowledge to strengthen the existing infrastructure in the West Bank today," Inbar said. He noted that nearly 300 Gaza students have been able to leave the region to study abroad since 2010.

The Palestinians seek to turn Gaza and the West Bank, located on opposite sides of Israel, into an independent state. But since the Hamas takeover, the Palestinians have been torn between rival governments, and Israel has treated them separately. Israel maintains relations with the Western-backed Palestinian Authority in the West Bank, while branding Hamas-run Gaza a hostile

territory. Repeated attempts by the Palestinian rivals to reconcile have failed.

In a statement, the American consulate in Jerusalem said it decided not to grant the scholarships over the summer after Israel said it would not permit the students to travel. "Because of the timing and risk of losing funding, available scholarships were awarded to other applicants," it said. "We hope to include Gazan students in future programs."

The scholarship program, administered by the nonprofit group Amideast, is one of the few contacts between the U.S. and Hamas-ruled Gaza.

Sari Bashi, director of Gisha, an Israeli advocacy group dedicated to increasing the free movement of Palestinians, said the case reflected U.S. unwillingness to confront a strong ally.

"It's unfortunate and telling that the U.S. government cannot convince its closest ally in the region to allow its scholarship holders to travel from Gaza to Palestinian universities in the West Bank, for fear of clashing or making a diplomatic issue," she said.

Hamas, meanwhile, has also jumped in. Last year, it barred seven high school students from traveling to the United States for a year of study under a U.S. program, citing worries over their supervision.

Ashour said students like her are caught in the political battle and stand to lose the most.

"When I studied in America, I loved how you could travel from state to state without any borders. You live your life," she said. "I can't leave Gaza. Everyone — Hamas, Israel, everyone — is controlling us. We are just students. We don't have anything to do with politics."

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Talk Of Military Intervention In N. Mali Grows Monday, October 15, 2012

Associated Press

By Krista Larson

MOPTI, Mali — Before Islamists seized the northern half of Mali, Mamadou Sekere sold masks and jewelry in Timbuktu to European tourists who rode camels and slept in the desert under the stars.

Now, Sekere is in Mopti where one of his wives gathers leaves to feed the family. His other wife, who stayed behind when he fled Timbuktu, calls

several times a day. He's got 10 children with one and eight with the other, but can only shake his head when asked where they all are now.

Sekere waits for the day when the Islamists leave Timbuktu, where they recently carried out a public execution in front of 600 people and have banned items ranging from perfume to Nokia ringtones. Sekere's handicrafts are hidden inside the walls of his home until he, and the tourists, can return

"Here I am getting by only on the generosity of my friends," Sekere told a reporter from the upper level of a mud home in this central Malian town, now home to thousands of displaced northerners. "There at least I have a plot of land that I can work."

Sekere is one of nearly 500,000 people who fled northern Mali since the crisis began earlier this year. Many, like Sekere, who came to the south have found life difficult because unemployment is high. Here the civilian government is trying to exert authority over the military, whose junior officers launched a coup in March right before elections were to have been held. The soldiers still call a lot of the shots, even though they made a show of returning power to the civilians in April.

Ordinary Malians and international experts alike are not sure what will reunite and bring back political stability to a country that until recently had a reputation as one of West Africa's most steady democracies.

"This is not only a humanitarian crisis; it is a powder keg that the international community cannot afford to ignore," U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton said recently.

The Obama administration, France and neighboring African countries are all weighing what will be the most effective policies to halt the rapid success of Islamic extremists in Mali. The 15-nation West African regional bloc, the Economic Community of West African States, or ECOWAS, has discussed sending 3,000 troops to help oust the Islamist militants from the north.

Many, though, question how Mali's weak military could take the lead on such an intervention.

"All the military force in the world cannot put Mali back together and sustain it unless there is a legitimate political process that the majority of Malians will accept," said J. Peter Pham, director of the Africa program at the Washington-based Atlantic Council.

Analysts believe ECOWAS would need to send more soldiers to take and hold the France-sized area of desert now controlled by the militants.

"There's been a serious mismatch between the type of mission that is talked about and the type of resources that anyone is willing to cough up in support of that mission," noted Pham.

The U.N. Security Council on Friday unanimously approved a plan to back an African-led military force to help the Malian army oust Islamic militants. But the plan still faces delays: The French-backed resolution gives Mali, the West Africans and the African Union 45 days to develop plans to recover the occupied territory.

Representatives of the United Nations, the African Union and ECOWAS are to consider the situation on Oct. 19 in a meeting in Mali's capital, Bamako. The head of the Germany-based U.S. Africa Command, Gen. Carter Ham, said recently that "a military component" would be a part of an overall solution in northern Mali, but he ruled out an overt U.S. military presence.

While diplomats from other countries discuss options, no action on the ground to retake the north appears imminent.

"We're in this period of stagnation, effectively a stalemate in the north," said Gregory Mann, a history professor at Columbia University who specializes in Mali. "Some form of outside intervention is probably both undesirable, inevitable and necessary."

Mali's transitional government has accepted in theory the prospect of the regional military intervention, though those involved in the discussions suggest there is a reluctance to allow foreign troops in Mali's capital in the south.

There has been nominal progress toward restoring democracy after the military coup but there is no clear path for holding fresh elections. The possibility of national elections being held within six months is "extremely slim," according to the International Crisis Group.

"All scenarios are still possible, including another military coup and social unrest in the capital, which risk undermining the transitional institutions and creating an even more explosive situation," said Gilles Yabi, West Africa project director for the International Crisis Group.

Calls for an ECOWAS regional intervention have prompted protests in Mali's capital in recent weeks, though others have marched in favor of an ECOWAS mission.

Korotoumou Diakite, a 22-year-old student who took part in the pro-intervention march in Bamako this week, said: "I have faith that ECOWAS and the international community so that Mali remains one and indivisible."

Associated Press writer Baba Ahmed in Bamako, Mali contributed to this report.

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Clinton: Don't Stop Aid To New Democracies Monday, October 15, 2012

Hispanic Business

It would be a "strategic mistake" to trim support for emerging democracies following the deaths of Americans in Libya, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said.

The United States supports countries transitioning to democracy not out of idealism, but of necessity, she said, Voice of America reported Saturday.

"We will not return to the false choice between freedom and stability. And we will not pull back our support for emerging democracies when the going gets rough. That would be a costly strategic mistake that would, I believe, undermine both our interests and our values," Clinton said in remarks at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington.

While many Americans may have questioned of the status of democracy in countries such as Libya since the death of U.S. Ambassador Christopher Stevens and three other Americans in Benghazi, Clinton said the acts of a small group of people should not outweigh the "broader aspirations and actions" of people in the region.

"They want more freedom, more justice, more opportunity — not more violence. And they want better relations with the United States and the world, not worse," she said.

Clinton added that "reservoirs of radicalism" could not be eliminated in the short period since the beginning of the Arab Spring.

"Secretary Of Explaining Stuff" Bill Clinton In Sioux City

Monday, October 15, 2012

Radio Iowa

By Woody Gottburg , Radio Iowa Contributor

Former President Bill Clinton made a campaign stop in Sioux City Friday night for Christie Vilsack,

the Democrat who's challenging Republican Congressman Steve King.

"Her opponent said what he wanted to do is take this country to the right. What Christie wants to do is take us forward," Clinton said, getting a burst of applause from the crowd. "And, last I checked, if you veered right, you couldn't go forward."

Clinton spoke for about a half an hour on a chilly evening to about a thousand people gathered outdoors. Clinton accused King, along with Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney and his running mate Paul Ryan, of being ideologues.

"Every body should have a philosophy. You ought to be a little bit conservative, a little bit liberal. Most of you are a little conservative on some things, a little liberal on others," Clinton said. "But if you have an ideology, you've got to answer before you look at the evidence and when that happens you are in trouble before you begin and that's why there are so many Republicans supporting Christie Vilsack for congress, because she is a practical problem solver."

The former president spent a lot of time going into detail — on Medicare, on the debt, on the partisan battles in Washington. While he was in Sioux City to bolster Vilsack's campaign, the former president spent plenty of time trying to boost President Obama's reelection effort.

"I decided in this election I wasn't going to give a lot of whoop-de-do speeches. I'm trying to explain things to people. I got offered the job of 'secretary of explaining stuff' — you may have seen that," Clinton said, getting whoops from the crowd for that reference to the reaction to his speech at the Democratic National Convention.

In addition to the public event in Sioux City for Vilsack, Clinton did a private fundraiser in Des Moines for Democratic Congressman Leonard Boswell.

Bill Clinton Takes On High-profile Role

Monday, October 15, 2012

Associated Press

By Andrew Miga

WASHINGTON — Bill Clinton is back in the game big time, serving as President Barack Obama's surrogate-in-chief and relying on his oratorical skill and folksy style to help Democratic candidates across the U.S.

His high-profile role also gives him the chance to enhance his legacy as Democratic elder statesman

and global humanitarian. He can build up political goodwill should his wife, Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, decide to run again for president down the road.

Out of office since 2001, Clinton is proving that he retains a strong appeal with voters, especially in conservative states where Democratic candidates aren't eager to appear with Obama. The ex-president is a leading expert in the art of the political comeback — a skill the struggling Obama could use now.

Also, there's this uncomfortable truth: Obama needs Clinton to generate support with white, working-class and independent voters who were drawn to Clinton and Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney, but who haven't warmed to Obama.

In Indianapolis on Friday to boost Senate Democratic hopeful Joe Donnelly, Clinton said he hadn't expected to be so involved in the 2012 campaign.

The bruising 2008 Democratic primary between Obama and Hillary Clinton damaged relations between the families. Obama's appointment of Hillary Clinton as secretary of state, and her successes in the job, healed the relationship enough for Clinton to step in to help with Obama's re-election.

If Obama has Bill Clinton to thank for a second term, one way to pay back the debt could be support for a Hillary Clinton campaign of the future.

Among voters generally, Bill Clinton is more appealing than Obama. A CBS News/New York Times poll in September found 66 percent of registered voters with a favorable view of Clinton, compared with 45 percent for Obama.

"He's got a way of communicating complex ideas in plain ways that no one else has," said Greg Haas, who ran Clinton's 1992 campaign in Ohio and who is Democratic chairman in Franklin County, which includes Columbus. "No one in my lifetime. He's in a class by himself."

Clinton symbolizes good economic times for many voters, including a federal budget that was balanced under his leadership. His convention speech rebutted Romney's attacks on Obama and accused Romney of pushing an economic plan that is doomed to fail. Clinton lends Obama credibility on the issue that voters consistently name as their top concern: the economy.

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STATE DEPARTMENT

Embassy Row: Just What He Wanted

Monday, October 15, 2012

Washington Times

By James Morrison

Japanese Ambassador Ichiro Fujisaki has been in Washington for more than four years and has no plans to return to Tokyo until after the U.S. presidential elections.

He can't wait to see whether President Obama will get four more years or whether Republican nominee Mitt Romney sends him packing from the White House after the Nov. 6 vote.

Mr. Fujisaki told the Brookings Institution last week that he frequently is asked about Japan's preference in the election.

"I'm always encountered with a question: 'Which candidate does your country like?'" he said.

Like any good diplomat, he evades the question and says he supports the one who wins.

"It's like a Christmas gift," he said. "You don't say anything until the day you open the box, and then say, 'This just what I wanted.'"

"The only difference is that you can't get the receipt and go and exchange it."

Out of retirement

Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton coaxed a retired diplomat to take on the dangerous duty of serving as the U.S. envoy in Libya to replace Ambassador J. Christopher Stevens, who was killed in a terrorist attack on the 9/11 anniversary last month.

Laurence Everett Pope II, who left the State Department in 2000 after 31 years in the Foreign Service, arrived in Tripoli last week to take up his position as charge d'affaires at the U.S. Embassy in the Libyan capital. It is not clear how long he will serve or whether President Obama will nominate him to serve as ambassador.

His appointment "emphasizes the commitment of the United States to the relationship between our two countries and to the people of Libya as they move forward in their transition to a democratic government," State Department spokeswoman Victoria Nuland said.

"We will continue to assist as Libya builds democratic institutions and broad respect for the rule of law — the goals that Ambassador Stevens worked hard to achieve."

Mr. Pope, who speaks Arabic and French, served as ambassador to the Central African nation of Chad from 1993 to 1996, and was a political adviser to Marine Gen. Charles Zinni, from 1997 until 2000, when Gen. Zinni was chief of the U.S. Central Command.

Mr. Pope is the son of the late Marine Maj. Everett P. Pope, who received the Medal of Honor for service in the South Pacific in World War II.

Terrorists believed to be associated with al Qaeda killed Mr. Stevens and three other Americans in a coordinated attack at the U.S. Consulate in Benghazi, Libya's second-largest city and the flashpoint of the revolution last year that overthrew dictator Moammar Gadhafi.

In another diplomatic development, the new U.S. ambassador to Iraq arrived in Baghdad last week.

Ambassador Stephen Beecroft presented his diplomatic credentials to President Jalal Talabani and Foreign Minister Hoshyar Zebari on Thursday.

Mr. Beecroft was President Obama's second choice to fill the position, after his initial nominee, Brett McGurk, withdrew his name after the revelation of racy emails he sent to former Wall Street Journal reporter Gina Chon when both were serving in Iraq on earlier assignments. They now are married.

Diplomatic traffic

Foreign visitors in Washington this week include:

Thursday

- Foreign Minister Janos Martonyi of Hungary, who delivers the keynote speech at the U.S. Institute of Peace on the 56th anniversary of the pro-democracy uprising in Hungary in 1956. On Friday, he addresses the Council on Foreign Relations.
- Efraim Halevy, former director of the Israeli secret service Mossad, and of the Israeli National Security Council. He addresses the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars.
- Call Embassy Row at 202/636-3297 or email jmorrison@washingtontimes.com. The column is published on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays.

LIBYA

Two Sides Trade Criticism In Rancor Over Libya Attack

Monday, October 15, 2012

New York Times

By Brian Knowlton

WASHINGTON — Caught in the uneasy nexus between politics and foreign policy, the debate over the violence in Benghazi, Libya, that claimed four American lives turned angry on Sunday as Republicans said it reflected a dangerous failure by the Obama administration to protect Americans across the region. Democrats, meanwhile, accused the Republican presidential nominee, Mitt Romney, of "cravenly" trying to exploit the episode in a political "witch hunt."

A Romney supporter, Senator Lindsey Graham of South Carolina, said the attack on the American consulate in Benghazi called into question a fundamental claim of the Obama administration: that with the death of Osama bin Laden, Al Qaeda has been gravely weakened and Americans are safer.

"The truth is we're not safer — Al Qaeda is alive and counterattacking," Mr. Graham said on the CBS program "Face the Nation." "This whole region is about to explode. Al Qaeda is on the march."

David Axelrod, a senior adviser to the Obama campaign, pushed back at the criticism from those supporting Mr. Romney. "From the beginning of this issue, before any facts were known, he was cravenly trying to exploit it," Mr. Axelrod said of Mr. Romney on "Fox News Sunday."

The dispute seems certain to surface on Tuesday when Mr. Romney faces President Obama for their second televised debate. Mr. Romney has steadily sharpened his criticism of the president's handling of the Benghazi episode, framing it as a question of leadership, competence and transparency.

Mr. Graham was particularly hard on the administration because of its shifting explanations for the attack, in which Ambassador J. Christopher Stevens and three other Americans died, and because the State Department had rejected the embassy's requests to extend the security arrangements at the time.

Mr. Graham said administration officials had either misled the American people or were "incredibly incompetent," and he suggested that they had knowingly played down the involvement of terrorists to avoid scaring voters.

Representative Darrell Issa, a California Republican who led a House oversight committee hearing into the case on Wednesday, said on "Face the Nation" on Sunday that if security professionals had requested reinforcements for Libya "and that's not being heard, then it isn't just Ambassador Stevens who is now dead — it's everybody who works throughout the Middle East is at risk."

Mr. Axelrod, however, suggested that Mr. Romney had been waiting for a chance to assail Mr. Obama's foreign policy, so much so that his initial remarks on Benghazi — made even before it was known that Americans had died — consisted of "half-information in a way that was denounced by both Republicans and Democrats."

While Mr. Axelrod said that "the president of the United States is responsible for everything that happens on his watch," he also said that the initial decision on security for Benghazi came from the State Department and that the original explanation blaming a riot outside the mission, not a terrorist attack, flowed from intelligence reports. "Sometimes, intelligence has to catch up with what's happening on the ground," Mr. Axelrod said.

The administration did receive some backing on Sunday. The highest-ranking Democrat on Mr. Issa's committee, Representative Elijah E. Cummings of Maryland, echoed Mr. Axelrod's point, saying that Benghazi had become a "political football" and that Republicans were "trying to give Romney some talking points" without awaiting the results of investigations.

"I think it's turning into a witch hunt," he said, "and we can do better."

Politicians Trade Accusations Over Libya Attack

Monday, October 15, 2012

Washington Post

By Sean Sullivan

Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney has made a concerted effort to exploit the Sept. 11 attack on a U.S. diplomatic post in Libya for political gain, David Axelrod charged Sunday.

There "is no doubt he is working hard to exploit this issue," Axelrod, a senior campaign adviser to President Obama, said of Romney in an interview on "Fox News Sunday."

The attack last month in Benghazi claimed the lives of four Americans, including Ambassador J. Christopher Stevens. The administration initially

said it appeared to be a spontaneous attack but later declared the assault an act of terrorism, prompting an outcry from Republicans about the inconsistent assessment.

Sen. Lindsey O. Graham (R-S.C.), who sits on the Senate Armed Services committee, suggested Sunday that the Obama administration deliberately misled the public about the nature of the attack in Benghazi.

"I think they've been misleading us, but it finally caught up with them," Graham said on CBS's "Face The Nation."

Graham argued that in the immediate aftermath of the attack, there was clear evidence — including a communication from the intelligence community on the ground in Libya to officials in Washington — to suggest the incident was an act of terrorism, not a spontaneous assault.

"Either they're misleading the American people or incredibly incompetent," Graham said. "There was no way with anybody looking at all that you could believe five days after the attack it was based on a riot that never occurred. There was no riot at all, so to say that you're either very incompetent or you're misleading."

The State Department acknowledged last week that it rejected appeals for more security in Libya in the months preceding the attack. Vice President Biden said during a Thursday debate with Republican vice-presidential candidate Rep. Paul Ryan (Wis.) that "we weren't told they wanted more security there." Axelrod on Sunday said that "we" referred to Biden and Obama.

"I think what he was talking about was what he and the president knew, because these matters were being handled at the State Department," Axelrod said.

"I guess we will accept that explanation," senior Romney adviser Ed Gillespie said on the same program. "'We' generally means our administration. What we are seeing here is an effort by Obama and Biden saying, 'No, it was the State Department.'"

U.S. efforts to investigate the Benghazi attack have been hampered by the political situation in Libya, where key ministries have been on autopilot as politicians have struggled to form the country's first democratically elected government since the death nearly a year ago of longtime dictator Moammar Gaddafi.

On Sunday, the General National Congress elected Ali Zidan, a human rights lawyer, as the new

prime minister. His selection followed the dismissal last week of another prime minister, Mustafa Abushagur, who was unable to form a cabinet.

Questions On Benghazi

Sunday, October 14, 2012

Washington Post

By Jennifer Rubin

Where is CIA Director Gen. David Petraeus? He seems to be the missing man in the unfolding Benghazi debacle. It is his agency, among others, which is being fingered by the White House for getting the Libya attack wrong. However, we know that within a very short time after the murder of our ambassador (an extraordinary occurrence) and others, our intelligence community did have the story straight: This was an organized al-Qaeda attack. Is he to preside over a witchhunt? Or is he, who to date has been one of the most respected national security officials, going to be instrumental in shining light on the Libya fiasco and thereby truly serving the national interest and the memory of those killed?

That's one of the many pending questions bubbling over in the Libya scandal. But we finally be getting some answers. On Friday Sens. Joe Lieberman (I-Conn.) and Susan Collins (R-Maine) announced that the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee will hold hearings on the Benghazi debacle. Those hearings can't come a moment too soon. The questions are multiplying:

1. When, if ever, did Secretary of State Hillary Clinton become aware that there was a request for more security in Benghazi before 9-11-2012?
2. Who participated in briefing Ambassador Susan Rice before she went on the Sunday talk shows on Sept. 16?
3. Was the White House aware of the August Library of Congress report documenting the deteriorating security situation in Libya?
4. Was the Libya security situation included in any presidential briefings?
5. Did the CIA within a day or so determine there had been a planned terrorist attack? What did it do with this information? Why did President Obama continue to insist the attack was a spontaneous reaction to the anti-Muslim movie?
6. When did the president learn there was no mob in Benghazi protesting the film?

7. Who reviewed the president's U.N. speech delivered on Sept. 25, wherein he continued to connect the attack and the anti-Muslim film?

8. When was the State Department's Charlene Lamb, who followed the attack in real time, questioned about what she knew? Who did that, and what happened to that information?

9. Why didn't National Security Adviser Tom Donilon ensure that the president and other senior officials had up to-date information on the attack?

10. And, as we started, why has Petraeus not stepped forward to defend his agency, make clear we knew promptly that this was an organized terrorist attack and correct the misrepresentations by political leaders?

Candidates' Aides Spar Over Libya Attack

Monday, October 15, 2012

USA Today

By David Jackson And Gregory Korte, Usa Today

washington — Mitt Romney and his allies dogged President Obama over the death of the U.S. ambassador in Libya a month ago, saying the president is directly responsible for mishandling the crisis before and after the attack on the U.S. Consulate. "You have to get honest answers and accurate answers in response to the questions," said Romney senior adviser Ed Gillespie on Fox News Sunday. "And what we have seen is a constantly shifting story from this administration, from various parts of the administration." "Let's figure out what happened," said Obama adviser Robert Gibbs on CNN's State of the Union. "But, you know what, we don't need wing-tipped cowboys, OK? We don't need shoot-from-the-hip diplomacy and when Mitt Romney first responded to what was going on in Libya, his own party called him out for insensitivity." The subject dominated Sunday morning television three weeks before Election Day and after a week of debate that spanned from Capitol Hill to Danville, Ky. On Wednesday, a House oversight committee held hearings into the security lapses at the consulate in Benghazi before and during the attack Sept. 11, which took the life of Ambassador Christopher Stevens and three other Americans. Then during the vice presidential debate Thursday in Kentucky, Vice President Biden said, "We weren't told they wanted more security" in Benghazi — even after State Department officials testified they made requests to department superiors. On Friday, Romney told a rally in Virginia that Biden was "doubling down on denial." Senior Obama campaign adviser David Axelrod, also appearing Sunday on Fox, said Biden was "talking about

what the White House knew" regarding security requests, saying the requests are handled by the State Department. Axelrod accused Romney of "working hard to exploit" the ambassador's death for political advantage. He cited comments by Stevens' father, Jan Stevens, who told Bloomberg News that "it would really be abhorrent to make this into a campaign issue." "We don't pretend to be experts in security. It has to be objectively examined," the elder Stevens said. "That's where it belongs. It does not belong in the campaign arena." Said Axelrod, "We ought to follow the lead of the ambassador's family." For Republicans, the Libya attack reveals a bigger issue: an Obama foreign policy that has failed to recognize al-Qaeda as a continuing threat. "The truth is, we're not safer," said Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., on CBS' Face the Nation. "Bin Laden may be dead, al-Qaeda is alive, and they're counterattacking throughout the entire region. And the truth is that the foreign policy choices of President Obama is allowing the region to come unraveled." Graham accused Obama of trying to "spike the ball" after the killing of Osama bin Laden, creating a false sense of security. Rep. Darrell Issa, R-Calif., chairman of the House committee investigating security lapses in Benghazi, compared Obama's stance to his predecessor's famous declaration on an aircraft carrier. "We're going through a 'mission accomplished' moment, 11 years after 9/11," Issa told CBS. Issa said he would call Susan Rice, the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, to testify to Congress, hold classified briefings, and lead a congressional delegation to Libya after the election. Issa's Democratic counterpart, Rep. Elijah Cummings, D-Md., said the committee's investigation was "turning into a witch hunt ... based on a campaign schedule, trying to give Romney some talking points." The candidates were mostly quiet Sunday. Romney prepared for Tuesday town-hall debate at his home near Boston. Obama took a break from his practice, visiting a campaign office in Virginia, and making a few voter calls.

**GOP Senator Alleges Cover-up On Libya
Monday, October 15, 2012**

Associated Press

By Anne Flaherty

WASHINGTON (AP) — A senior Republican senator on Sunday accused President Barack Obama's aides of deliberately covering up the details of the Sept. 11 attack in Libya that killed a U.S. ambassador so that voters wouldn't question Obama's handling of the war on terror.

Sen. Lindsey Graham of South Carolina, a long-time point man for the GOP on national security issues, said he believes the administration knew within 24 hours of the assault that it was a coordinated militia attack and was not tied to other anti-U.S. protests across the Middle East. According to Graham, the administration suggested otherwise so voters wouldn't think al-Qaeda remained a threat.

"They're trying to sell a narrative, quite frankly, that (the) wars are receding and that al-Qaeda has been dismantled," said Graham, a member of the Senate Armed Services emerging threats and capabilities subcommittee, in an interview on CBS' "Face the Nation."

"And to admit that our embassy was attacked by al-Qaeda operatives ... I think undercuts that narrative," he added.

It was an exceptionally pointed allegation on what has become a major campaign issue. The attack on a U.S. Consulate in Benghazi, which killed four Americans including Ambassador Chris Stevens, has raised questions about whether the State Department denied its embassy staff adequate security to save money and why the White House was slow to label the assault a "terrorist attack."

Democrats shrugged off the allegations.

"This conspiracy stuff is kind of ridiculous to be honest with you, and I've been kind of surprised that they've gone to these lengths. But you know that's what they do," said Rep. Elijah Cummings of Maryland, the top Democrat on the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee, which is investigating the incident.

The White House declined Sunday to comment on Graham's allegations. It has said previously that the investigation continues and that officials have relied on information about the attack as it became available.

Five days after the attack, Susan Rice, the U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, described the violence as spontaneous and said the administration believed extremists had "hijacked" an anti-U.S. protest over an American-made video ridiculing Islam. Obama and Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton also had given credence to the notion that the attack was related to protests.

A CIA memo obtained by The Associated Press cited initial intelligence that supported the assertion. But during last week's congressional hearing on the matter, the State Department said it had never concluded that the consulate attack stemmed from protests, prompting lawmakers to

question why the administration used the explanation for more than a week.

Graham said Sunday that he had been told by intelligence officials in Libya that "within 24 hours they communicated up to Washington that this was a terrorist attack." Graham did not specify whether that message was relayed to the White House or the State Department, or if that information was kept within the intelligence community.

"Either they're misleading the American people or incredibly incompetent," Graham said of the Obama administration. "There was no way with anybody looking at all that you could believe five days after the attack it was based on a riot that never occurred."

Obama's senior campaign adviser, David Axelrod, on Sunday refuted allegations that Rice or any other administration deliberately tried to mislead the American public.

"Anyone would have said what she said, because that's the intelligence we were receiving," Axelrod said.

The Benghazi attack also has raised questions about whether the State Department had provided adequate security to embassy staff. Democrats blame Republicans for cutting more than \$300 million in diplomatic security funds worldwide. Republicans say the State Department could have relied on other discretionary spending accounts to cover costs.

Lawmakers on both sides said Sunday that a supplemental spending measure is being considered. Rep. Darrell Issa, R-Calif., chairman of the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee, said he is planning to lead a congressional delegation to various hotspots around the world to ask U.S. diplomatic staff what security concerns they have.

Bloomberg News reported Sunday that Ambassador Stevens' father said he believes his son's death is being investigated adequately and that it would be "abhorrent to make this into a campaign issue."

Graham, Cummings and Issa spoke on CBS "Face the Nation." Axelrod spoke on "Fox News Sunday." Associated Press

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Obama Team Hits Romney Over Libya Claims

Monday, October 15, 2012

AFP

By Andrew Gully

Top Democrats have accused Republican White House hopeful Mitt Romney of "cravenly" politicising the deadly attack on the US consulate in Benghazi to further his presidential ambitions.

The fallout from the attack has developed into a toxic political issue as Romney and Democratic President Barack Obama wage an all-out battle in a tight race 23 days out from the November 6 election.

Ambassador Chris Stevens and three other US diplomatic staff were killed when militants armed with rocket-propelled grenades launched an assault on the compound in the eastern Libyan city on September 11.

Legitimate questions about inadequate security, the Obama administration's muddled response, the future of the Arab Spring, even al-Qaeda's rise in northern Africa, have become conflated with bitter partisan politicking in a growing pre-election row.

Vice President Joe Biden muddied the waters in a debate with Romney's running mate Paul Ryan on Thursday night when he replied "we weren't told" when asked about unheeded requests for greater security prior to the attack.

Romney railed at Biden the following day for "doubling down on denial", accusing him of contradicting sworn testimony from US officials who said the State Department had refused requests prior to the Benghazi assault.

The White House later clarified that Biden was speaking only for himself and the president, not the administration, explaining that routine security requests for diplomatic missions don't go that high up the command chain.

Obama aides took to the Sunday television news talk shows to accuse Romney of playing politics with tragedy, against the explicit wishes of Stevens's father.

They reminded viewers that Romney had been roundly condemned, even by some Republicans, for criticising the Obama administration for "sympathising" with extremists even as the events in Benghazi were still unfolding.

"We don't need shoot-from-the-hip diplomacy, and when Mitt Romney first responded to what was going on in Libya, his own party called him out for insensitivity," senior Obama campaign

adviser Robert Gibbs said on CNN's State of the Union program.

Speaking on Fox News Sunday, fellow top strategist David Axelrod agreed that "from the beginning of the issue, before any facts were known, he was cravenly trying to exploit it".

Regardless of their protestations, the administration's evolving narrative on Benghazi has opened it up to sinister accusations.

Five days after the attack, US ambassador to the United Nations Susan Rice said preliminary information indicated it had sprung from a spontaneous "copycat" protest against the anti-Muslim video that had inspired similar demonstrations earlier that night in Cairo.

Twelve days after Rice spoke, the Office of the Director of National Intelligence confirmed it was a "deliberate and organised terrorist attack" and said incorrect intelligence assessments were to blame for the administration's misleading accounts.

On October 9, the story changed again.

The State Department, briefing journalists on the eve of a congressional grilling, said the streets around the consulate had been calm before the attack, contradicting previous accounts of a protest.

"There wasn't a soul around the compound. And the co-ordinated attack lasted for hours with al-Qaeda-associated militia," leading Republican senator Lindsey Graham told CBS's Face the Nation.

"My belief is that that was known by the administration within 24 hours. And, quite frankly, Susan Rice, on your show on September 16, the president on the 18th, and the 25th, kept talking about an attack inspired by a video."

Graham claimed the Obama administration hid the truth because it didn't want its wider narrative about a diminished al-Qaeda to be shown as so transparently false.

"They never believed the media would investigate," he said. "I think they have been misleading us, but it finally caught up with them."

Three separate probes are now investigating what happened in Benghazi.

An FBI probe is looking into the deaths of the four Americans, a panel selected by Secretary of State Hillary Clinton is examining wider security issues, while congressional hearings are considering both.

"We're learning stuff each and every day about what happened, that's what an investigation is supposed to do," Gibbs told CNN. Benghazi will loom large over the final, foreign policy-themed debate between Obama and Romney on October 22. Both candidates were hunkered down this weekend preparing for Tuesday's second debate clash in New York.

Father Of Slain Libyan Ambassador: 'It Does Not Belong In The Campaign Arena'

Monday, October 15, 2012

Raw Story

By Eric W. Dolan

Jan Stevens, the 77-year-old father of Christopher Stevens, said Sunday that his son's death should not be a political talking point.

"It would really be abhorrent to make this into a campaign issue," he told Bloomberg.

The U.S. consulate in Benghazi was attacked on September 11 by heavily-armed militants, killing Ambassador J. Christopher Stevens and three other Americans.

Republicans, including Mitt Romney, have claimed the U.S. Department of State contributed to the disaster by failing to provide the consulate with adequate security on the anniversary of the September 11 terrorist attacks. At the vice presidential debate, Rep. Paul Ryan (R-WI) said the Benghazi attack highlighted Obama's failed foreign policy.

"The security matters are being adequately investigated," Stevens said. "We don't pretend to be experts in security. It has to be objectively examined. That's where it belongs. It does not belong in the campaign arena."

The U.S. State Department is investigating the incident, which is believed to have been carried out by al-Qaeda-linked militants.

Chris, who had worked for both Republican and Democratic presidents, felt very strongly about Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. Chris believed she was "an extremely able person," according to his father.

Romney has suggested that Obama is trying to cover-up the attack. The White House initially said the attack occurred during a spontaneous protest against an anti-Islam movie. Later, the White House admitted its initial public statements were incorrect, and that no protest had occurred.

Romney said in late September that the Obama administration "want to do their very best to keep

the people of American from understanding exactly what happened.”

Fresh Scapegoats

White House Libya blame game

Monday, October 15, 2012

New York Post

By Michael A. Walsh

How is the Obama White House going to fit the entire State Department and the intelligence community under the bus?

Last month's Benghazi fiasco saw four Americans — including our ambassador to Libya — murdered by elements of al Qaeda in a military-style assault timed to coincide with the 11th anniversary of 9/11.

The weeks afterward saw the administration blaming a video that, even the White House now admits, had nothing to do with it. And the months before the attack saw Washington adamantly reducing security in Benghazi — despite pleas for reinforcements from the folks on the ground.

Yet President Obama's top spokesman — and Vice President Joe Biden, in last week's debate — have been busy pointing fingers of blame at State and the IC.

It won't work. Neither Foggy Bottom nor the intel community's legion of spooks, analysts and secret-keepers is likely to go quietly.

Indeed, State has already started the pushback. It has pointedly released the transcript of an Oct. 9 media briefing in which Brad Klapper of the Associated Press asks what “led officials to believe for the first several days that this was prompted by protests against the video?”

Someone described only as “Senior State Department Official Two” answers, “That is a question you would have to ask others. That was not our conclusion.”

Of course, Biden and Obama spokesmen like Jay Carney have been claiming that “the intelligence” the White House received at first had blamed the attack on the video.

This part of the blame game will fail because it just doesn't make any sense. The American IC is not infallible, but what part of it — the CIA? The National Security Agency? State's own Bureau of Intelligence and Research? — would have leaped to such a ridiculous conclusion?

Mere hours after the attack, the nation's spooks knew this was terrorism, not amateur movie criticism. There had been ample warning —

including an assault on the British ambassador as well as earlier attacks on our consulate — that something was coming.

And yet the White House — which as recently as Oct. 8 was still insisting that a resurgent al Qaeda is “on its heels” — has chosen to stick to another exonerative fairy story: that it was unaware that Ambassador Chris Stevens had begged for more security at the beleaguered Benghazi compound.

The reasons for this denial may be best known to campaign guru David Axelrod. After all, the administration's only indisputable foreign-policy triumph — the killing of Osama bin Laden — would be in serious jeopardy were Obama and Biden to publicly admit that the Libyan attacks were in part retaliation for bin Laden's death and the ongoing US drone strikes in Yemen and elsewhere.

But it's simply untrue that the government was unaware of the deteriorating security conditions in Benghazi. In last week's congressional hearing, security officials testified that Washington repeatedly turned a deaf ear to their urgent requests for beefed-up forces at the Benghazi compound and CIA “safe house.”

Indeed, two separate security teams had recently been withdrawn from Libya after their temporary assignments had expired. And last week's testimony made it plain that this was according to policy — a policy set by just what higher-ups, we still don't know.

There's more bad news to come. It now appears that the CIA “safe house” in Benghazi — which was tasked with tracking down the lethal weapons looted from the collapsed Khadafy regime — was also stripped of valuable information in the Sept. 11 attack.

That intelligence likely included the names of Libyans and others who'd been cooperating with the Americans, as well as possible double agents within Ansar al-Sharia (the al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula branch behind the Benghazi attack) and al Qaeda itself. This may explain why, on Thursday, masked gunmen shot and killed a local security officer in Yemen who'd been working with the US Embassy.

So the Benghazi attacks may well prove to be an intelligence disaster of the highest order, seriously compromising scarce US assets in the region.

Yet the White House response seems to be utterly political — a concerted effort to shift blame, even if it means risking a break with Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, and payback from husband Bill. (Not to mention the chance of

embarrassing blowback from the spooks who keep the secrets).

Maybe Team Obama can manage to dodge all the way to Nov. 6 — but they're going to need a bigger bus.

No Shame

Monday, October 15, 2012

New York Times

There are many unanswered questions about the vicious assault in Benghazi last month that killed four Americans, including Ambassador J. Christopher Stevens. And Congress has a responsibility to raise them. But Republican lawmakers leading the charge on Capitol Hill seem more interested in attacking President Obama than in formulating an effective response.

It doesn't take a partisan to draw that conclusion. The ugly truth is that the same people who are accusing the administration of not providing sufficient security for the American consulate in Benghazi have voted to cut the State Department budget, which includes financing for diplomatic security. The most self-righteous critics don't seem to get the hypocrisy, or maybe they do and figure that if they hurl enough doubts and complaints at the administration, they will deflect attention from their own poor judgments on the State Department's needs.

At a hearing of the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform last Wednesday, Representative Darrell Issa, Republican of California and the committee's chairman, talked of "examining security failures that led to the Benghazi tragedy." He said lawmakers had an obligation to protect federal workers overseas. On Sunday, he said more should be spent on diplomatic security.

But as part of the Republican majority that has controlled the House the last two years, Mr. Issa joined in cutting nearly a half-billion dollars from the State Department's two main security accounts. One covers things like security staffing, including local guards, armored vehicles and security technology; the other, embassy construction and upgrades. In 2011 and 2012, President Obama sought a total of \$5 billion, and the House approved \$4.5 billion. In 2009, Mr. Issa voted for an amendment that would have cut nearly 300 diplomatic security positions. And the draconian budgets proposed by Mitt Romney's running mate, Representative Paul Ryan, would cut foreign affairs spending by 10 percent in 2013 and even more in 2016.

Since 9/11, the United States has spent millions of dollars building new embassies and consulates around the world and fortifying existing ones. But despite the investment, there is still a lot of work to do to bring all facilities into compliance with safety standards that were set in 1985 after the bombing of the American embassy in Beirut in 1983 and then updated after the attacks on the embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in 1998. Maybe now Congress will see fit to provide more money to do it.

Clearly, there is much we don't know about what happened in Benghazi or what changes could have saved the four Americans. The former security chief at the embassy in Tripoli has been critical of the administration and said he had requested more security from State Department officials. However, he also said that a higher wall or a half-dozen more security guards would not have been enough to respond to the attack. (In the last debate, Vice President Joseph Biden Jr. said of the consulate in Benghazi, "we did not know they wanted more security.")

Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton has appointed a panel of outside experts to investigate. More spending on security improvements will certainly help, but there will still be threats and risks. America's diplomats must be protected, but they cannot do their jobs and interact with the world if they operate only behind fortress walls. There will always have to be a balance. Ambassador Stevens knew that.

Justice After Benghazi

Monday, October 15, 2012

Washington Post

THE INVESTIGATION of the terrorist attack on the U.S. Consulate in Benghazi, Libya, is beginning to look disturbingly familiar. After President Obama promised "justice" for the killing of Ambassador J. Christopher Stevens and three other Americans, FBI agents were dispatched to the country. But it was three weeks before they made their first visit to the site — which had been left unsecured. Libyan authorities have arrested several people, but it is not clear whether they had any role in the assault. Meanwhile, Libyan officials appear to be resisting direct U.S. involvement in the investigation.

It's hard not to see parallels with the diplomatic and judicial mess that followed al-Qaeda's bombing of the USS Cole in Yemen in October 2000. An FBI team sent to that country was mostly stymied and spent much of its time feuding with the U.S. Embassy. The Yemeni government

allowed a couple of the organizers of the attack to slip out of the country. Others were arrested and tried but then were released, or escaped.

In the end, two of the Cole suspects reportedly ended their lives as suicide bombers in Iraq. At least three have been killed by CIA drone strikes in Yemen, including two this year. Two were arrested outside Yemen and now are in the Guantanamo prison — including Abd al Rahim al-Nashiri, whose military commission trial has yet to get underway. One, Jamal al Badawi, is at large. None has been tried in a U.S. civilian criminal court.

This grim history has lessons for the Libya case, in which the administration already is being faulted for slowness in recognizing the role played by a group linked to al-Qaeda. As in Yemen, a weak Libyan government lacks the resources or the authority to corral Islamist militia leaders who may have been involved, much less stage a fair trial. But drone strikes should be a last resort. They could destabilize Libya's halting attempts to set up a democratic political system and reverse the relatively high esteem for the United States among Libyans, who are grateful for American help in deposing dictator Moammar Gadhafi. If the Libyan government agreed to such action — as Yemeni authorities have — that would lower but not eliminate the political cost.

That leaves trials in U.S. courts as the best option — provided the perpetrators of the attack can be identified, apprehended and extradited. Though there is no extradition treaty between the United States and Libya, Libyan leaders could find it easier to hand over suspects than to attempt their own trials. The Obama administration, which came to office promising to close Guantanamo, would no doubt prefer that any prosecutions be handled by U.S. federal courts. But the administration should not shrink from transporting suspects to Guantanamo for detention and trial under the regime approved by Congress last year. Justice administered by that system would be far preferable to that delivered by a drone.

Libya Congress Elects Rights Lawyer Prime Minister

Monday, October 15, 2012

Associated Press

By Esam Mohamed, Associated Press

TRIPOLI, Libya (AP) — Libya's Congress elected a human rights lawyer as interim prime minister on Sunday, a week after his predecessor was sacked for failing to present a Cabinet line-up that political factions could agree on.

Ali Zidan, also a former independent congressman, won 93 votes, securing a majority of those who voted in a poll to determine the country's leader for a transitional period of around 20 months.

Zidan's top priority will be to name a new government that congress approves. The Cabinet will be faced with the daunting task of disarming thousands of young men who fought in last year's eight-month civil war that led to the capture and killing of longtime dictator Moammar Gadhafi.

The ministers will also be pressed to provide basic services, restore security by creating a military and police force capable of asserting authority over disparate militias left over from the war, and unifying the country's tribes and towns.

One such militia, a radical Islamist group that now claims to have dissolved, has been linked to the attack last month on the U.S. Consulate in the eastern city of Benghazi that killed the American ambassador and three others.

Feuds between cities and towns also flare up frequently. Militias are currently deployed on the outskirts of the mountain town of Bani Walid, one of the few remaining strongholds of Gadhafi loyalists. The possibility of an outbreak of violence there highlights the highly polarized atmosphere.

Any prime minister who wants to impose his authority on the militias will need broad national support for his government — but such support is hard to obtain.

The 200-member congress selected Zidan following last week's dismissal of Mustafa Abushagur after just 25 days in the post for failing to present a Cabinet list that satisfied legislators.

Some parliamentarians argued that Abushagur's Cabinet choices were not diverse enough, involved too many unknown individuals for key posts, and also had too many names from the previous interim government, which was seen by some Libyans as weak and corrupt.

Zidan was a diplomat under Gadhafi before defecting in the 1980s and joining Libya's oldest opposition movement, National Front for the Salvation of Libya, from Geneva where he lived.

On Sunday, he edged out Minister for Local Government Mohammed Al-Harari by just eight votes to win. Harari appeared to be the Islamists' choice for prime minister.

Zidan, born in 1950, holds a master's degree in international relations. He had previously run as a candidate for Libya's interim presidency, but lost

to former opposition leader Mohammed el-Megarif by 28 votes in Congress.

The two biggest blocs in parliament, the Alliance of National Forces led by liberal wartime Prime Minister Mahmoud Jibril and the Muslim Brotherhood's political arm, The Justice and Construction Party, held meetings over the past week to try and agree on a candidate after Abushagur's dismissal.

Zidan had been Jibril's preferred candidate against el-Megarif for the post of president when he lost.

Saleh Gawdet, an independent congressman, said that the elected body had been searching for "a nationalist who does not belong to any party, but who served the country during the revolution."

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Dems Defend Admin's Libya Response, Accuse Romney Of Exploiting Issue
Monday, October 15, 2012
FOX News

Democrats on Sunday defended the administration's response to the fatal attack on a U.S. Consulate in Libya, while shrugging off a Republican accusation about a possible cover-up and accusing Mitt Romney of trying to "exploit" the issue.

Senior Obama campaign adviser David Axelrod said on "Fox News Sunday" that U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Susan Rice, several days after the attack, and Vice President Joe Biden last week gave information based on what they knew at the time.

Biden said during a vice presidential debate Tuesday that "we weren't told" about a request for more security in Libya.

"Sometimes the intelligence has to catch up with what's on the ground," said David Axelrod, senior Obama campaign adviser.

Axelrod said Biden "was talking about what the White House knew," not about the Defense Department and the rest of the administration.

Rice said five days after the Sept. 11 attack in which U.S. Ambassador J. Christopher Stevens and three other Americans were killed at the U.S. Consulate in Benghazi that the strike was "spontaneous" and a response to an anti-Islamic video.

The administration later acknowledged the strike was pre-planned and a terror attack.

"Anybody would have said the same thing," Axelrod told Fox News. "That was the intelligence we were receiving."

He also said that before any facts were known Romney was "cravenly trying to exploit" the incident.

Later in the day, Republican Sen. Lindsey Graham said he believed the administration is trying to keep voters from questioning Obama's handling of the war on terror.

"Either they are misleading the American people or they are incredibly incompetent, he said on CBS' "Face the Nation."

The South Carolina senator also said he thinks the administration knew within 24 hours that the Benghazi attack was a coordinated assault but wanted people to think the president had dismantled al Qaeda.

The White House declined to comment on the charge. But Maryland Rep. Elijah Cummings, the ranking Democrat on the House committee investigating the attack, dismissing Graham's suggestion as "conspiracy stuff."

Cummings also said the country "can do better" protecting its diplomatic corps but suggested the questioning is "turning into a witch hunt."

Axelrod said the president, as commander in chief, takes "personally" the tragedy and future efforts to protect Americans across the world.

"There is nobody on this planet more concerned about getting to the bottom of this than the president," he said.

The remark echoed what Secretary of State Hillary Clinton has said in the aftermath of the attack.

Axelrod said the Benghazi attack is "not a matter of blaming anyone" and that "sometimes the intelligence has to catch up with what's on the ground."

He also said Obama met with the security team on the day after the attack before going to a campaign fundraiser to Las Vegas.

"I assure you that the president was in contact with all those who had information and responsibility in the national security chain," Axelrod said.

The October Surprise May Be Libya
Monday, October 15, 2012

National Review

By John Fund

What if we've already had an October surprise in this campaign, in September, and the mainstream media are failing to follow up? An issue becomes a real issue only if enough people give it the attention it's due.

Many people in the diplomatic and intelligence communities say that the Obama administration, behind the scenes, is in complete disarray in the aftermath of al-Qaeda's attack on the U.S. consulate in Libya that killed Ambassador Chris Stevens and three other Americans. That tension burst into the open during last Thursday's debate, when Vice President Joe Biden said the administration "did not know" that U.S. personnel in Libya had made repeated requests for more security before the September 11 attack. "We did not know they wanted more security there," Biden claimed.

Advertisement That directly contradicted sworn testimony given by several officials just the day before, during a House Oversight Committee hearing. Lt. Colonel Andrew Wood, who led a 16-member security team in Libya for six months, testified: "We felt great frustration that those requests were ignored or just never met." Wood's team was ordered by the State Department to leave Libya in August, about a month before the terrorist assault.

After the debate, Obama-administration officials knew that Biden's statement was untenable, so they explained that by "we" — the "we" who were in the dark about security concerns — Biden meant only two people: himself and President Obama. It's a parsing of words worthy of Bill Clinton's famous "it all depends on what the meaning of 'is' is."

It's not the first time that the intelligence community has been thrown under the bus by an administration trying to paper over a foreign-policy failure, but Biden's move was breathtaking in its brazenness. In front of tens of millions, he squarely blamed the intelligence officials for the administration's pathetic, erroneous claim that an anti-Islam video had sparked spontaneous protests that later turned violent at the Libyan consulate.

"The intelligence community told us that," Biden said during the debate. "As they learned more facts about exactly what happened, they changed their assessment."

But a former senior intelligence official scoffed at that assertion. "The administration designated Benghazi as a terrorist attack within 24 hours while at the same time declaring the attack was a 'spontaneous protest' that 'spun out of control,'" he told me. "They can't get their story straight, so the cover-up is deepening." Even some Democratic senators have been pressing for immediate hearings on Libya, but Majority Leader Harry Reid has blocked them, the official added. Is the need to discover problems with U.S. security taking a back seat to electoral politics?

On CBS's Face the Nation on Sunday, Republican senator Lindsay Graham of South Carolina said he knows for a fact that the administration was told within 24 hours of the incident that it was al-Qaeda operatives who carried it out. "They're trying to sell a narrative, quite frankly, that the Mideast, the wars are receding, and al-Qaeda's been dismantled," Graham said. "And to admit that our embassy was attacked by al-Qaeda operatives and [that] Libya 'leading from behind' didn't work, I think undercuts that narrative. They never believed the media would investigate. Congress was out of session, and this caught up with them."

John Batchelor, a syndicated radio talk-show host who often features intelligence analysts on his program, reported only two days after the attack that Ambassador Stevens was probably lured by al-Qaeda to Benghazi, where he was then assassinated. This massive security failure has prompted the administration to order a rather inartful cover-up, Batchelor contends. "These are the responses of marketers, not policymakers, the reactions of electioneering and not national security," he told me. "The White House appears to be in disarray in running its permanent-campaign model. All decisions are being made on the run and without strategic planning. It may now be unraveling."

Obama officials may have made a key mistake when, in their panic, they attempted to lay blame for the Libyan fiasco solely on others. White House spokesman Jay Carney told reporters that responsibility for Libya lay with the State Department, not the White House. Ed Klein, a former New York Times editor who has authored recent biographies of both Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama, says his sources tell him that Bill Clinton is already pulling together an informal legal team to create a defense in case Obama officials continue to point the finger in Hillary's direction.

"If she is left with this stain on her reputation, it could seriously damage her chances for election" as president in 2016, Klein told the Daily Caller.

Michael Baker, a former covert CIA officer who now runs a division of the Diligence intelligence company, says that most career agency professionals will keep their mouths shut between now and Election Day. "But you can bet some of the more political people in the administration will tell their side of the story," he told me. "We could soon learn a lot more."

So if the Libyan attack turns into a full-fledged scandal, will it become an issue in the campaign, or will it be even noticed?

This all recalls the last month of the 1996 presidential campaign, when the Clinton administration was trying to run out the clock on the John Huang fundraising scandal. A former Commerce Department official, Huang was a top fundraiser who scooped up suspect foreign cash for Team Clinton. Throughout October 1996, Huang dodged subpoenas and reporters. The dimensions of the scandal became clear only after the election, when reporters uncovered ties between Huang associates and the Communist regime in Beijing.

Even so, the Huang scandal had an impact on the election; it may have helped Bob Dole tighten up the race at the last minute (he wound up losing by only eight points). In her book on the campaign, journalist Elizabeth Drew quoted Bill Clinton as saying that negative coverage of the Huang fundraising scandal allowed Republicans to keep the House in the 1996 election.

It's no surprise that everyone in and around the Obama administration is trying to keep the lid on the Libyan scandal. It's also not surprising that the media — so far — haven't been asking nearly enough questions about the administration's conduct in the scandal. Up until now the White House has been touting the Middle East as a singular success. Many reporters seem willing to go along with that storyline. But there is still time for the media to redeem themselves.

— John Fund is national-affairs columnist for NRO.

LEADING INTERNATIONAL AND GLOBAL ISSUES

Rebel Arms Flow Is Said To Benefit Jihadists In Syria

Monday, October 15, 2012

New York Times

By David E. Sanger

WASHINGTON — Most of the arms shipped at the behest of Saudi Arabia and Qatar to supply Syrian rebel groups fighting the government of Bashar al-Assad are going to hard-line Islamic jihadists, and not the more secular opposition groups that the West wants to bolster, according to American officials and Middle Eastern diplomats.

That conclusion, of which President Obama and other senior officials are aware from classified assessments of the Syrian conflict that has now claimed more than 25,000 lives, casts into doubt whether the White House's strategy of minimal and indirect intervention in the Syrian conflict is accomplishing its intended purpose of helping a democratic-minded opposition topple an oppressive government, or is instead sowing the seeds of future insurgencies hostile to the United States.

"The opposition groups that are receiving the most of the lethal aid are exactly the ones we don't want to have it," said one American official familiar with the outlines of those findings, commenting on an operation that in American eyes has increasingly gone awry.

The United States is not sending arms directly to the Syrian opposition. Instead, it is providing intelligence and other support for shipments of secondhand light weapons like rifles and grenades into Syria, mainly orchestrated from Saudi Arabia and Qatar. The reports indicate that the shipments organized from Qatar, in particular, are largely going to hard-line Islamists.

The assessment of the arms flows comes at a crucial time for Mr. Obama, in the closing weeks of the election campaign with two debates looming that will focus on his foreign policy record. But it also calls into question the Syria strategy laid out by Mitt Romney, his Republican challenger.

In a speech at the Virginia Military Institute last Monday, Mr. Romney said he would ensure that rebel groups "who share our values" would "obtain the arms they need to defeat Assad's tanks, helicopters and fighter jets." That suggests he would approve the transfer of weapons like antiaircraft and antitank systems that are much more potent than any the United States has been willing to put into rebel hands so far, precisely because American officials cannot be certain who will ultimately be using them.

But Mr. Romney stopped short of saying that he would have the United States provide those arms directly, and his aides said he would instead rely

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on Arab allies to do it. That would leave him, like Mr. Obama, with little direct control over the distribution of the arms.

American officials have been trying to understand why hard-line Islamists have received the lion's share of the arms shipped to the Syrian opposition through the shadowy pipeline with roots in Qatar, and, to a lesser degree, Saudi Arabia. The officials, voicing frustration, say there is no central clearinghouse for the shipments, and no effective way of vetting the groups that ultimately receive them.

Those problems were central concerns for the director of the Central Intelligence Agency, David H. Petraeus, when he traveled secretly to Turkey last month, officials said.

The C.I.A. has not commented on Mr. Petraeus's trip, made to a region he knows well from his days as the Army general in charge of Central Command, which is responsible for all American military operations in the Middle East. Officials of countries in the region say that Mr. Petraeus has been deeply involved in trying to steer the supply effort, though American officials dispute that assertion.

One Middle Eastern diplomat who has dealt extensively with the C.I.A. on the issue said that Mr. Petraeus's goal was to oversee the process of "vetting, and then shaping, an opposition that the U.S. thinks it can work with." According to American and Arab officials, the C.I.A. has sent officers to Turkey to help direct the aid, but the agency has been hampered by a lack of good intelligence about many rebel figures and factions.

Another Middle Eastern diplomat whose government has supported the Syrian rebels said his country's political leadership was discouraged by the lack of organization and the ineffectiveness of the disjointed Syrian opposition movement, and had raised its concerns with American officials. The diplomat, who spoke on the condition of anonymity because he was discussing delicate intelligence issues, said the various rebel groups had failed to assemble a clear military plan, lacked a coherent blueprint for governing Syria afterward if the Assad government fell, and quarreled too often among themselves, undercutting their military and political effectiveness.

"We haven't seen anyone step up to take a leadership role for what happens after Assad," the diplomat said. "There's not much of anything that's encouraging. We should have lowered our expectations."

The disorganization is strengthening the hand of Islamic extremist groups in Syria, some with ties or affiliations with Al Qaeda, he said: "The longer this goes on, the more likely those groups will gain strength."

American officials worry that, should Mr. Assad be ousted, Syria could erupt afterward into a new conflict over control of the country, in which the more hard-line Islamic groups would be the best armed. That depends on what happens in the arms bazaar that has been feeding the rebel groups. In several towns along the Turkey-Syria border, rebel commanders can be found seeking weapons and meeting with shadowy intermediaries, in a chaotic atmosphere where the true identities and affiliations of any party can be extremely difficult to ascertain.

Late last month in the Turkish border town of Antakya, at least two men who had recently been in Syria said they had seen Islamist rebels buying weapons in large quantities and then burying them in caches, to be used after the collapse of the Assad government. But it was impossible to verify these accounts, and other rebels derided the reports as wildly implausible.

Moreover, the rebels often adapt their language and appearance in ways they hope will appeal to those distributing weapons. For instance, many rebels have grown the long, scraggly beards favored by hard-line Salafi Muslims after hearing that Qatar was more inclined to give weapons to Islamists.

The Saudis and Qataris are themselves relying on intermediaries — some of them Lebanese — who have struggled to make sense of the complex affiliations of the rebels they deal with.

"We're trying to improve the process," said one Arab official involved in the effort to provide small arms to the rebels. "It is a very complex situation in Syria, but we are learning."

Robert F. Worth and Eric Schmitt contributed reporting from Washington.

Syria Accused Of Cluster Bomb Use In Civil War

Monday, October 15, 2012

Associated Press

By Karin Laub, Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — The Syrian regime was accused Sunday of dropping cluster bombs — indiscriminate scattershot munitions banned by most nations — in a new sign of desperation and disregard for its own people.

The international group Human Rights Watch cited amateur video and testimony from the front lines in making the allegation against the government of President Bashar Assad.

Syria and Turkey, meanwhile, declared their skies off-limits to each other amid mounting cross-border tensions in Syria's 19-month-old conflict, now a civil war. Turkey is an outspoken backer of rebels trying to oust Assad.

The weekend's mutual ban on overflights is part of Turkey's increasingly assertive stance toward Syria that has stirred concerns about a regional conflagration. In the past two weeks, Turkey has retaliated for stray Syrian shells and mortar rounds, intercepted a Syrian passenger plane on suspicion it carried military equipment, and — according to a Turkish newspaper Sunday — sent more warships to naval bases north of the Syrian coastline.

Inside Syria, rebel fighters and regime forces have been locked in a bloody stalemate for weeks, with rebels holding large rural stretches in the heavily populated western area, but unable to dislodge Assad's troops from urban centers. During the summer, the regime escalated shelling and airstrikes on rebel-held neighborhoods.

Human Rights Watch said new amateur videos and interviews with residents suggests the Syrian air force has dropped cluster bombs in the past week, mainly along a main north-south highway in western Syria that runs through Maaret al-Numan, a town captured by rebels after fierce fighting.

Cluster bombs open in flight, scattering smaller bomblets over a wide area. Many of the bomblets don't explode immediately, posing a threat to civilians long afterward.

Steve Goose, an arms expert for the New York-based human rights group, said most nations have already banned cluster bombs and that many of those who haven't, including the United States, said they would do so soon.

"These are weapons that are really beyond the pale," Goose said in a phone interview. "This is a weapon of desperation (for Syria) at this point in time. Only those governments and political leaders who are willing to thumb their nose at international opinion will use these weapons."

The Syrian government had no immediate comment.

First word of cluster bombs being dropped by the regime emerged in July, but the recent reports indicated a more widespread use, said Nadim

Houry, a Lebanon-based researcher for Human Rights Watch.

Sunday's report said activists posted at least 18 videos in the past week showing remnants of the bombs in or near the central city of Homs, the northern cities of Idlib and Aleppo, rural areas near the town of Latakia and the eastern Ghouta district close to the capital of Damascus. The group also spoke to residents in the towns of Taftanaz and Tamane who said cluster bombs were dropped in their areas on Tuesday.

There was no immediate report of casualties from the recent cluster bombs, the report said, adding that the munitions shown in the videos were made in the Soviet Union, a major arms supplier to Syria before its collapse in 1991.

Amateur videos cannot be confirmed independently because Syria restricts access to foreign journalists and the government keeps a tight lid on news related to the conflict, which it blames on a foreign conspiracy.

Cluster bombs have also been used in other recent conflicts in the region, including by forces loyal to Libyan leader Moammar Gadhafi, who was toppled in a bloody uprising last year, and by Israel in its 2006 war with the Lebanese Hezbollah militia. U.N. demining experts have said hundreds of thousands of bomblets dropped over Lebanon failed to explode.

The death toll in Syria's civil war crossed the threshold of 33,000, according to the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, which gathers reports from a network of activists.

The group said it counted 33,204 dead as of Friday, including 23,752 civilians or civilians-turned-rebel gunmen, 1,241 army defectors fighting with the rebels and 8,211 regime soldiers.

In Turkey, the leader of Syria's main opposition group complained that the international community is doing little more than managing the conflict. The rebels' foreign backers, including Turkey, have shied away from direct military intervention, fearing to get dragged into a quagmire without an exit strategy.

Abdelbaset Sieda, who heads the Syrian National Council, told reporters in Istanbul that the international community must establish safe havens in Syria and enforce no-fly zones to help the rebels counter the regime's airstrikes.

This would also cut down on the number of Syrians seeking refuge abroad and "resolve the humanitarian crisis, especially with winter

approaching," Sieda said. International aid officials estimate the number of refugees could double by the end of the year, to more than 700,000.

Earlier this year, Turkey floated the idea of safe zones, but has since backed off.

Turkey has taken a notably harsher stance toward Syria since the start of the month and warned of retaliation if Syrian artillery hits Turkish soil again. The daily newspaper Hurriyet said in an unattributed report that Turkey has reinforced four naval bases along its Mediterranean coast north of Syria. The newspaper said Turkey sent frigates with cannons, as well as anti-ship and anti-aircraft missiles.

Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu said Sunday that Turkey is barring Syrian civilian flights from Turkey's airspace, a day after Syria issued a similar ban for Turkish commercial aircraft.

"As of yesterday, our airspace which was closed to Syrian military flights, has also been closed to civilian flights by Syria," Davutoglu said. He alleged that Syria is "abusing" civilian flights by using them to transport military equipment

Turkish planes, including some that flew Hajj pilgrims to Saudi Arabia, have been taking alternate routes since Wednesday, the day Turkey intercepted the Syrian passenger plane. At the time, Turkey said Syrian airspace was no longer safe and barred Turkish planes from taking that route. Turkish planes carrying pilgrims are now flying over northern Cyprus and Jordan, according to Turkey's Radikal newspaper

Associated Press writers Jamal Halaby in Amman, Jordan, Frank Jordans in Istanbul, Turkey, and Suzan Fraser in Ankara, Turkey, contributed to this report.

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As Tension Escalates, Turkey Issues A Ban On All Syrian Aircraft

Monday, October 15, 2012

New York Times

By Sebnem Arsu And Michael Schwartz

ISTANBUL — Turkey's foreign minister announced on Sunday a ban on all Syrian aircraft entering his country's airspace, days after the authorities discovered what they said were Russian military

munitions on board a passenger plane bound for Damascus.

The announcement followed Syria's ban on Turkish aircraft a day earlier and became the latest volley in an increasingly aggressive dispute between the two neighbors over Syria's devastating civil war.

In televised remarks, the foreign minister, Ahmet Davutoglu, accused Syria of using civilian flights as a cover for transporting military equipment. Turkey had already banned military aircraft from entering its territory.

Last week, Turkish fighter jets forced a Syrian passenger plane to land in the Turkish capital, Ankara, on suspicion that it was carrying weapons. Turkish officials later said the plane, which was en route from Moscow, had been carrying Russian munitions, an assertion that both Syria and Russia have vehemently denied.

Turkey and Syria share a 500-mile border that is quickly becoming a fault line in what many fear could be an expansion of the civil war into a regional conflict.

Turkey has been a strong supporter of efforts by insurgents to topple Syria's president, Bashar al-Assad. It has harbored anti-Assad fighters on its territory and has hinted that it may take military action against Syrian forces. On Sunday, Mr. Davutoglu said Turkey would not be open for talks with Mr. Assad's government unless violence against civilians ceased.

Syria has responded to perceived Turkish incursions aggressively. In June, Syria shot down a Turkish fighter plane that it said had entered its airspace, killing two crew members. And last week, a mortar shell fired from Syria fell across the border in a Turkish village, killing five civilians.

On Sunday, government forces pounded rebel strongholds with artillery, and rebel fighters continued a series of strikes in the heart of Damascus.

A suicide bomber rammed a car bomb into a coffee shop in the upper-class neighborhood of Mezzeh in Damascus, Syria's state news agency reported. The huge explosion caused no injuries or deaths, but was likely to further undermine the sense of security in the capital, where such attacks have become increasingly common.

Video taken in the aftermath of the blast showed twisted chairs and tables scattered in front of the mangled facade of the coffee shop. Hours later, an explosion ripped through the car of a Syrian

journalist, also in Mezzeh, wounding him severely, The Associated Press reported.

The London-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said in a statement that the journalist, Ayman Youssef Wannous, might have been attacked for his pro-Assad sympathies.

Witnesses said a third bombing in the city injured a pro-Assad lawyer.

Heavily armed security forces flooded the city, erecting checkpoints and conducting searches of anyone carrying bags.

As many as 200 people have been killed in violence over the weekend, the Syrian Observatory said in a statement. In Aleppo on Sunday, where at least 22 died in fighting on Saturday, Syrian forces continued to bombard neighborhoods, killing fighters as well as civilians, the statement said.

The Syrian Observatory also reported that Syrian authorities had for the first time conducted a prisoner swap with rebel fighters, releasing two detainees for the son of a prominent official. The details of the swap could not be verified, nor could reports of fighting because of restrictions on reporting in Syria.

Sebnem Arsu reported from Istanbul, and Michael Schwartz from New York.

Turkey Bars Syrian Civilian Flights **Monday, October 15, 2012**

Associated Press

ANKARA, Turkey (AP) — Turkey's foreign minister says the country has barred its air space to Syrian civilian flights.

Ahmet Davutoglu said Sunday that Turkey had made the decision because the Syrian regime, which is battling an insurgency, was "abusing" civilian flights by transporting military equipment.

He says Syria's government was notified of the decision on Saturday.

Last week, Turkey forced a Syrian plane to land and confiscated what it said was military equipment on board. Russia said the plane was carrying spare radar parts, while Syria accused Turkey of piracy.

Syria announced Saturday that it was closing its air space to Turkish flights. But Davutoglu said Sunday: "the Syrian announcement has no value for us."

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Tension Escalates Along Turkey-Syria Border **Many fear the region could become the starting point of a regional war that no one seems to want but that appears to be closer than ever.**

Monday, October 15, 2012

Los Angeles Times

By Patrick J. McDonnell

HACIPASA, Turkey — The turrets of Turkish armored vehicles rise from the cotton fields outside this border village, guns trained toward Syria.

Infantry units flank the banks of the Orontes River as Syrians escaping the fighting in their homeland maneuver across its muddy waters in rowboats. Overhead, Turkish fighter jets periodically buzz the skies.

The two nations' more-than-500-mile border has become a tinderbox that many fear could become the spark for a regional war that no one seems to want but that appears to be closer than ever.

Turkey has found itself — often uncomfortably — on the forefront of international efforts to confront Syrian President Bashar Assad's regime. A series of incidents between the two nations has threatened to export Syria's civil conflict beyond its borders and pull other powerful players into the struggle.

Last week, the escalating tension took a new turn and drew in superpower Russia after Turkish F-16 fighters intercepted a Syrian passenger jet out of Moscow that, Turkish officials alleged, was ferrying munitions to Damascus. The episode angered Russia, a major trading partner that Ankara had been wooing after decades of Cold War hostility, while Washington backed the actions of Turkey, eastern bulwark of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

The airliner incident came after almost a week of cross-border shelling and followed Turkish lawmakers' decision to grant war powers authority allowing Ankara to deploy forces outside Turkey's boundaries. Bellicose rhetoric from the Turkish side has ratcheted up as Turkish tanks, troops, artillery emplacements and anti-aircraft batteries have been rushed to the border.

"We are here, and we are standing tall," Turkish Chief of Staff Gen. Necdet Ozel told reporters last week during a visit to the border town of Akcakale, site of an Oct. 3 mortar strike —

apparently an errant Syrian shell — that killed a Turkish woman, three of her daughters and their aunt.

Syria's geopolitical significance in the heart of the combustible Middle East has inevitably drawn in a host of powerful players with competing interests.

For some time, Syria's raging conflict has been a proxy war pitting Assad's government and its allies, Russia and Iran, against an anti-Assad coalition including Turkey, the United States, the European Union and Persian Gulf states.

Turkey took an early stand against its former ally, calculating that Assad, like other strongmen challenged by the rebellions of the "Arab Spring," would fall relatively quickly. That didn't happen, and Turkish territory emerged as the key staging ground and logistics hub for Syria's armed opposition. For Turkey, though, there is no going back.

"Turkey has become the spearhead of the international community in terms of opposition to Assad," said Soner Cagaptay with the Washington Institute for Near East Policy. "If there is one country that cannot, and will not, live with Assad, it is Turkey."

Assad has received valuable support from Moscow and Tehran. Russia has used its position on the United Nations Security Council to limit international intervention against Assad's government. Iran, determined to hold on to its major Arab ally, is widely believed to have provided economic and military assistance to the faltering Assad administration.

Despite belligerent oratory from Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan, there is deep disquiet in Turkey about the prospects of a wider conflict. Polls have shown Turks adamantly opposed to a war with Syria.

Many voice fears that Ankara is mostly going it alone in Syria these days, a perilous undertaking in such an explosive region, even for a nation with NATO's second largest armed forces.

Turkish analysts have noted Washington's desire to stay clear of a battle that is drawing legions of Sunni Islamic militants eager to topple Assad, whose minority Alawite sect is viewed by some extremists as heretical. The Obama administration has resisted arming the rebels, in part out of fears that sophisticated weaponry may end up in the hands of Al Qaeda or other militant groups. Rebels complained that arms funded with Persian Gulf money are not sufficient to do the job.

Many Turkish citizens fear being caught up in a Syrian quagmire.

"Why should we play the ram head in taking down the minority regime in Syria when there is no strong appetite in the international community for facilitating the overthrow?" columnist Abdullah Bozkurt asked Sunday in the English-language version of the Zaman newspaper. "Turkey does not need to be a Don Quixote here. Let's face the facts. The U.S. has no desire to commit itself deeply to the Syrian conflict, as it must be abundantly clear to everybody by now."

Turkey has pushed for some kind of buffer zone in Syria to protect refugees — and provide some insulation for the Turkish border. But Washington has signaled that it is not willing to commit the military resources, such as warplanes, needed to protect such a safe haven.

Meantime, refugees continue to pour into Turkish territory, straining resources and creating social stress in border areas.

Antiwar protests have become commonplace in Turkey, including a rally Saturday in Antakya, near the Syrian border, which featured demonstrators carrying placards proclaiming, "We don't want Al Qaeda." The city and surrounding Hatay province are home to considerable numbers of Alawites, from the same sect as Assad. Many support the Syrian leader and denounce Turkey's backing of "terrorists" in neighboring Syria.

Within Turkey, experts say, there seems to be considerable public support for "proportionate" Turkish retaliation for perceived Syrian provocations, such as the mortar round that killed the five Turks this month. At the moment, war does not appear imminent. But another deadly incident like the strike in Akcakale, causing additional Turkish casualties, could push Turkey down a path of ever-escalating responses, with unknown consequences.

For a decade, Turkey has prospered in part because of its stability and distance from the turmoil roiling much of the region. Now some fear that period of progress and relative peace could be ending as Turkey is increasingly drawn into a conflict that has no clear end, and may get worse before it gets better.

"The danger is that Turkey could set up tripwires that lead to ever greater escalation," said Hugh Pope, project director for Turkey and Cyprus at the International Crisis Group. "The risk of an accident is great."

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Special correspondent Rima Marrouch contributed to this report.

Syria: Gunmen Kill 4 On Factory Bus In Homs Monday, October 15, 2012

Yahoo!

By Jamal Halaby, Associated Press

AMMAN, Jordan (AP) — A Syrian official says gunmen have fired on a bus transporting workers to a blanket factory, killing four and wounding eight others.

He says the attack happened at the entrance of the central city of Homs on Sunday. No other details were immediately available.

He spoke anonymously as he was not authorized to make press statements.

Meanwhile, Syria's state news agency says a suicide bomber crashed an explosives-laden sedan into a coffee shop at a Damascus residential neighborhood, causing damage but no fatalities.

SANA says the explosion took place at dawn on the capital's Masseh highway.

An Associated Press reporter at the site says the blast destroyed a balcony and ripped off a building facade.

Syria's uprising, which started nearly 19 months ago, has become an all-out civil war.

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Syrian Army 'Launches Counter-strike In North'

Monday, October 15, 2012

AFP

The Syrian army launched a counter-strike against rebels in the north on Sunday, in a bid to wrest back control of positions lost in recent days, a monitoring group said.

In the northwestern province of Idlib, much of which is now in rebel hands, the army used fighter jets to bombard Maaret al-Numan, captured by the Free Syrian Army earlier this week, said the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights.

To the east of Maaret al-Numan, troops tried to block a new rebel assault on the Wadi Deif army base — the largest in Idlib province — where large quantities of fuel and tanks are stored.

Battles broke out in Maarshurin and Hish, near the base, while fighter jets bombarded the area, the Britain-based Observatory said.

The counter-strike came as rebels captured three army officers in Idlib, said the Observatory which relies on a network of activists, lawyers and medics on the ground inside Syria for its information

Last week rebels reportedly captured 256 soldiers in fighting near the Turkish border.

The rebel FSA has been building for months its presence in Idlib and neighbouring Aleppo, where fighting has raged since mid-July.

The ill-equipped rebel fighters have destroyed in recent week several military positions in the Idlib province and seized weapons.

"The importance of these operations lie in the weapons which the fighters seize during the attacks," the head of the Observatory, Rami Abdel Rahman, said.

The army has been hitting back from the air but analysts now say that the regime's aerial supremacy is no longer a decisive factor in the fighting, as the opening of multiple fronts countrywide stretches its capabilities thin.

Also on Sunday troops withdrew from a military checkpoint near the rebel-held town of Saraqeb, which is now fully in rebel hands.

At least four rebel fighters were killed in violence in Idlib, according to the Observatory.

In the Aleppo countryside, three rebel fighters were killed in clashes with troops near the so-called Base 46, scene of battles since late September.

Syria's state news agency SANA reported, meanwhile, that troops killed and captured "dozens of terrorists and destroyed anti-tank rockets" in Aleppo.

Elsewhere, two explosions hit the upscale district of Mazzeh in the capital Damascus in the early hours of Sunday, the Observatory said, adding that one of them targeted the car of a pro-regime lawyer who was critically injured.

SANA said the other blast was a "suicide attack" that caused no casualties.

In Damascus province, regime forces took back control of a military base in Atibah, a day after rebels had seized it.

At least 18 people were killed nationwide on Sunday, the Observatory said, in addition to more than 33,000 who have died since the revolt against the regime erupted in March last year.

**Global Finance Chiefs At Odds
Officials Disagree at IMF Meeting Over How Best to
Resolve Economic Crisis**
Monday, October 15, 2012

Wall Street Journal

By Sudeep Reddy, Brian Blackstone And Bob Davis

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

AF/PAK

**Thousands Of UK Troops To Exit Afghanistan
In 2013**

Monday, October 15, 2012

Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Britain's defense secretary says thousands of troops will leave Afghanistan next year, a major reduction in U.K. forces there.

Britain has said 500 of its 9,500 troops in Afghanistan will be withdrawn this year, and all will be brought home by the end of 2014, when international troops are due to hand security over to Afghan forces.

But it has not announced exactly how many will come home in 2013.

Defense Secretary Philip Hammond said Sunday that he planned "a significant reduction in force numbers by the end of next year."

He told the BBC that "thousands, not hundreds" of troops would be withdrawn late in 2013, "but I would not expect it to be the majority of our forces."

Since 2001, 433 British troops have died in Afghanistan.

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**5 UK Marines Charged With Murder In Afghan
Death**

Monday, October 15, 2012

Associated Press

By Jill Lawless, Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Five Royal Marines have been charged with murder over a death in Afghanistan last year, Britain's Ministry of Defense said Sunday. They are the first British troops to be charged with murder in the country since deployments began in 2001.

The five are among nine marines arrested — seven on Thursday and two in the last 48 hours. Four have been released without charge.

Officials have said the incident involved an "engagement with an insurgent" in Helmand province, where the majority of Britain's 9,500 troops in Afghanistan are deployed. They say no civilians were involved.

The BBC and other outlets reported that the arrests stemmed from video footage found on the laptop of a British serviceman who had been arrested in Britain on an unrelated charge.

The Ministry of Defense said the cases had been referred to the Service Prosecuting Authority, which oversees military trials. The ministry said the suspects, who have not been named, were in custody.

Even though the incident does not involve a civilian, the case could cause a backlash from Afghans and further erode efforts to provide political stability to Afghanistan.

The brigade believed to be involved in the incident, 3 Commando, was in the thick of the fighting with Taliban insurgents during its deployment last year to Helmand, which lies in Afghanistan's south. Seven members of the brigade were killed during the tour of duty between April and October 2011.

British troops operate under rules of engagement, largely derived from the Geneva Convention, that dictate under what circumstances they are allowed to open fire.

"Everybody serving in theatre knows the rules of engagement," Defense Secretary Philip Hammond said Sunday, vowing that "any abuse will be dealt with."

Experts say the military has been strict about enforcing the rules after a disastrous period in Iraq, where there were multiple allegations of torture and abuse by British troops.

The most notorious case involved a hotel receptionist, Baha Mousa, who died while in custody at a British base after being detained in a raid in Basra in September 2003. Britain's defense authorities later apologized for the mistreatment of Mousa and nine other Iraqis and paid a \$4.8 million (3 million pound) settlement. Six soldiers were cleared of wrongdoing at a court martial, while another pleaded guilty and served a year in jail.

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**Afghan Vote Plan Raises Tensions
Government Decides to Issue Electronic ID Cards for
Crucial 2014 Presidential Election, a Strategy the West
Has Criticized**

Monday, October 15, 2012

Wall Street Journal

By Maria Abi-habib And Nathan Hodge

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

EU Withholds Some Aid, Citing Lack Of Reform

Monday, October 15, 2012 ;

Wall Street Journal

By Yaroslav Trofimov And Nathan Hodge

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

Mining Contract Details Disclosed In Afghanistan

Monday, October 15, 2012

New York Times

By Graham Bowley And Matthew Rosenberg

KABUL, Afghanistan — Enmeshed in a bruising political battle over new mining rules seen as vital to Afghanistan's economic future, the country's mining minister on Sunday disclosed about 200 previous mining contracts for the first time, portraying the move as an attempt to bring transparency to a process vulnerable to corruption.

In the process, he appeared to take a swipe at a brother of President Hamid Karzai, citing as flawed the award of a contract in 2006 for a cement company in which he was a partner.

The action, by Mining Minister Wahidullah Shahrani, was likely to please his supporters in the West, including the United States, who made greater openness in the Afghan government's financial dealings a condition of billions of dollars in development assistance and aid money pledged earlier this year.

But the move also comes at a precarious time for Mr. Shahrani. He is embattled politically and a target of critics for his shepherding of a proposed new mining law, vital to attracting foreign investment, which was blocked by the Afghan cabinet in July with President Karzai's support. Mr.

Shahrani is to resubmit the law in the coming weeks.

Developing Afghanistan's potentially rich deposits of iron, oil, gold, copper, lithium and other natural resources is regarded as crucial to the country's economic prospects, transforming it into a state that can begin to pay its own way and allowing the international community to cut back its financial and, ultimately, military support. But there are persistent concerns that any resource boom could be jeopardized by corruption, worsening security and political instability.

"From now on every contract will be made public," Mr. Shahrani said at a news conference here. "No contract will be kept secret."

However, Mr. Shahrani did not release the contract for one of the country's biggest and most lucrative mining concessions, the 2007 agreement for the Aynak copper deposit in Logar Province near Kabul struck with a Chinese state-owned conglomerate, China Metallurgical Group Corporation. Accusations of bribery and a sweetheart deal for the mining concern have swirled for years, but without proof.

Mr. Shahrani said this agreement was made under a previous minister when nonpublication was subject to a legal deal with the Chinese. He said he had written to the Chinese with a request to make the contract public. Almost all of the other contracts published on the ministry Web site, struck as far back as 2002, covered an array of much smaller marble, coal and other mines, and until the details of the Aynak contract are released, analysts questioned whether the new initiative had full force.

"This is a start," said Yama Torabi, director of Integrity Watch Afghanistan, an anticorruption watchdog based in Kabul.

Mr. Shahrani said the ministry had discovered "financial, legal and technical flaws" in some of the contracts, and held up as an example at the news conference the operating rights for the country's only cement factory, which was awarded at the time to a partnership of investors, among them Mahmoud Karzai, one of President Karzai's brothers.

Mahmoud Karzai has been accused of using his brother's position for financial gain, and the cement factory had been controversial, not least among local provincial leaders who said the investors had cut jobs and paid low salaries. The contract was only four pages long, for an agreement that under proper international

standards would normally be far longer, Mr. Shahrani said.

"Look at the contract of Ghorī Cement," he said. "Nobody remembers a 30-year contract being signed in four pages." He said the shortcomings reflected lack of capacity and experience among officials in the ministry when the agreement was put together, and that the flawed contracts would be revised.

Neither President Karzai's office nor Mahmoud Karzai returned messages seeking comment.

Afghan and Western officials in Kabul, along with technical experts who advise the government, have said that the initial rejection of the new mining and oil drilling law in part reflected the minister's political weakness. Mr. Shahrani, who took over in 2010, had expected the new law to breeze past the cabinet, yet instead found himself pitted almost alone against a range of more experienced and better-connected politicians — from those seen as pro-Western reformers to former communists and the religiously conservative who, among other things, objected to the proposals as being too generous to foreign mining interests eager to exploit Afghanistan's natural resources.

President Karzai publicly sided with those lined up against the new law, sending it back for revisions over Mr. Shahrani's objections.

Some Western officials fear the maneuvering reflects attempts by political rivals to snatch control of the Mining Ministry, a coveted post that oversees millions of dollars in contracts.

"A lot of groups, a lot of people in the government, want to be part of the mining now that it is seen as a way to generate large sums of revenue," said one senior European diplomat in Kabul who follows the mining deliberations.

The diplomat, speaking on condition of anonymity, said that Sunday's announcement could be seen as an attempt by Mr. Shahrani to address his political vulnerability by boosting his standing among Afghans and the international community.

The Mes Aynak mine has been delayed by deterioration in security and the discovery of Buddhist ruins and artifacts. But Mr. Shahrani said that archaeologists preparing the site now had a deadline of the end of this year to finish their survey, and that he was confident that the Chinese could begin mining extraction in 2014.

Since he took over the ministry two years ago, Mr. Shahrani has been collecting details of

agreements struck on natural resource deals going back over the past 10 years.

Earlier this year, fulfilling concerns raised by Western governments at the Tokyo Conference, where for the first time donors made it a condition that the Afghan government reduce corruption before receiving all of the money, President Karzai issued a decree calling for full details of natural resource contracts to be published, giving further impetus to his efforts.

Afghan Government Burns 24 Tons Of Illegal Drugs

Monday, October 15, 2012

Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP) — Afghan counternarcotics police poured gasoline on more than 24 tons of narcotics and other illegal substances, then set the pile ablaze on the outskirts of Kabul on Sunday, officials said.

Afghan authorities said the drugs, drug-making chemicals and alcohol were seized in and around the capital during the past nine months.

Baz Mohammad Ahmadi, deputy minister of counternarcotics at the Interior Ministry, said the destroyed drugs included 1,772 kilograms (3,900 pounds) of heroin; 2,764 kilograms (6,070 pounds) of opium; and 140 kilograms (308 pounds) of hashish. More than 12,100 liters (3,200 gallons) of alcohol as well as raisins used to make alcohol also were destroyed.

"It is a considerable amount of narcotics," Ahmadi told reporters at the site as a cloud of black smoke spiraled over the burning drugs. "Compared with (a similar burn from a comparable period) last year, it's a 35 to 45 percent increase."

He said 907 suspects had been arrested in connection with the seizure of the drugs and other materials.

The police put the illegal substances into a large pile, mixed in some logs, doused it with gas and then lighted the material as police stood by applauding.

Stephen McFarland, coordinating director for rule of law and law enforcement at the U.S. Embassy in Kabul, and other foreign officials attended the burn in support of the Afghan government's drug interdiction work.

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Pakistan Sends Girl Shot By Taliban To UK For Care

Monday, October 15, 2012

Associated Press

By Riaz Khan And Sebastian Abbot, Associated Press

ISLAMABAD (AP) — Pakistan airlifted a 14-year-old activist who was shot and seriously wounded by the Taliban to the United Kingdom for treatment Monday, a move that will give her access to the specialized medical care she needs to recover and also protect her from follow-up attacks threatened by the militants.

The attack on Malala Yousufzai as she was returning home from school in Pakistan's northwest a week ago has horrified people both inside the country and abroad. It has also sparked hope the government would respond by intensifying its fight against the Taliban and their allies.

Over 100 Taliban militants attacked a police station near the main northwest city of Peshawar late Sunday night, sparking a gunbattle that lasted several hours, police said. Six policemen were killed during the clash, including two who were beheaded.

Malala was targeted by the Taliban for promoting girls' education and criticizing the militant group. Two of Malala's classmates were also wounded in the attack and are receiving treatment in Pakistan.

The Taliban said they attacked Malala because she was promoting "Western thinking" and have threatened to target her again until she is killed.

Malala was flown out of Pakistan on Monday morning in a specially equipped air ambulance provided by the United Arab Emirates, said the Pakistani military, which has been treating the young girl at one of its hospitals. It's unclear whether her family members, who could also be vulnerable to attack, accompanied her.

Video footage handed out by the military showed Malala being wheeled out of the hospital on a stretcher, covered in a white sheet and surrounded by uniformed army officers. She was placed in the back of an ambulance and driven to the airport, where she was put on a plane.

A panel of doctors recommended that Malala be shifted to a center in the United Kingdom that has the ability to provide "integrated" care to children who have sustained severe injuries, said a military statement.

"It was agreed by the panel of Pakistani doctors and international experts that Malala will require

prolonged care to fully recover from the physical and psychological effects of trauma that she has received," the military said.

The British Foreign Office said Malala would be treated at a public hospital in the UK, but details are not being released for reasons of patient confidentiality.

"The UK stands shoulder to shoulder with Pakistan in its fight against terrorism," said British Foreign Secretary William Hague in a statement sent to reporters. "Malala's bravery in standing up for the right of all young girls in Pakistan to an education is an example to us all."

Pakistani doctors at a military hospital earlier removed a bullet from Malala's body that entered her head and headed toward her spine. The military has described her recovery as satisfactory and said she was able to move her legs and hands several days ago when her sedatives were reduced. They have not said whether she suffered any brain damage or other permanent damage.

On Monday, the military said damaged bones in Malala's skull will need to be repaired or replaced, and she will need "intensive neuro rehabilitation." The decision to send the girl abroad was taken in consultation with her family, and the Pakistani government will pay for her treatment.

Pakistanis have held rallies for Malala throughout the country, but most have only numbered a few hundred people. The largest show of support by far occurred Sunday when tens of thousands of people held a demonstration in the southern party city of Karachi organized by the most powerful political party in the city, the Muttahida Quami Movement.

Malala earned the enmity of the Pakistani Taliban for publicizing their behavior when they took over the northwestern Swat Valley, where she lived, and for speaking about the importance of education for girls.

The group first started to exert its influence in Swat in 2007 and quickly extended its reach to much of the valley by the next year. They set about imposing their will on residents by forcing men to grow beards, preventing women from going to the market and blowing up many schools — the majority for girls.

Malala wrote about these practices in a journal for the BBC under a pseudonym when she was just 11. After the Taliban were pushed out of the Swat Valley in 2009 by the Pakistani military, she became even more outspoken in advocating for girls' education. She appeared frequently in the

media and was given one of the country's highest honors for civilians for her bravery.

The military carried out its offensive in Swat after a video surfaced of a militant flogging a woman who had allegedly committed adultery, which helped mobilize public support against the Taliban.

Many hope the shooting of Malala will help push the military to undertake a long-awaited offensive in the Pakistani Taliban's last main sanctuary in the country in the North Waziristan tribal area.

The police station attacked by the Taliban on Sunday night was located in the small town of Matni, some 20 kilometers (12 miles) south of Peshawar, said police officer Ishrat Yar. The militants were armed with heavy machine guns, rocket-propelled grenades, hand grenades and assault rifles.

One of the policemen who was beheaded was a senior official who commanded several police stations in the area and was leading reinforcements against the attack, said Yar. Another 12 policemen received gunshot wounds.

The militants burned the police station and four police vehicles before they escaped, said Yar.

A Pakistani Taliban spokesman, Mohammad Afridi, claimed responsibility for the attack, saying the police were targeted because they had killed several militants.

The Taliban have carried out hundreds of attacks throughout Pakistan but the attacks rarely include such a high number of militants as in the assault on the police station in Matni.

Khan reported from Peshawar, Pakistan. Associated Press writers Asif Shahzad in Islamabad and Ishtiaq Mahsud in Dera Ismail Khan, Pakistan, contributed to this report.

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Thousands Rally For Pakistani Girl Shot By Taliban

Monday, October 15, 2012

Associated Press

By Adil Jawad And Sebastian Abbot, Associated Press

KARACHI, Pakistan (AP) — Tens of thousands rallied in Pakistan's largest city Sunday in the biggest show of support yet for a 14-year-old girl who was shot and seriously wounded by the

Taliban for promoting girls' education and criticizing the militant group.

The Oct. 9 attack on Malala Yousufzai as she was returning home from school in Pakistan's northwest horrified people inside and outside the country. At the same time, it gave hope to some that the government would respond by intensifying its fight against the Taliban and their allies.

But protests against the shooting have been relatively small until now, usually attracting no more than a few hundred people. That response pales in comparison to the tens of thousands of people who held violent protests in Pakistan last month against a film produced in the United States that denigrated Islam's Prophet Muhammad.

Demonstrations in support of Malala — and against rampant militant violence in the country in general — have also been fairly small compared with those focused on issues such as U.S. drone attacks and the NATO supply route to Afghanistan that runs through Pakistan.

Right-wing Islamic parties and organizations in Pakistan that regularly pull thousands of supporters into the streets to protest against the U.S. have less of an incentive to speak out against the Taliban. The two share a desire to impose Islamic law in the country — even if they may disagree over the Taliban's violent tactics.

Pakistan's mainstream political parties are also often more willing to harangue the U.S. than direct their people power against Islamist militants shedding blood across the country — partly out of fear and partly because they rely on Islamist parties for electoral support.

One of the exceptions is the political party that organized Sunday's rally in the southern port city of Karachi, the Muttahida Quami Movement. The party's chief, Altaf Hussain, criticized both Islamic and other mainstream political parties for failing to organize rallies to protest the attack on Malala.

He called the Taliban gunmen who shot the girl "beasts" and said it was an attack on "the ideology of Pakistan."

"Malala Yousufzai is a beacon of knowledge. She is the daughter of the nation," Hussain told the audience by telephone from London, where he is in self-imposed exile because of legal cases pending against him in Pakistan. His party is strongest in Karachi.

Many of the demonstrators carried the young girl's picture and banners praising her bravery and expressing solidarity.

The leaders of Pakistan's main Islamic parties have criticized the shooting, but have also tried to redirect the conversation away from Taliban violence and toward civilian casualties from U.S. drone attacks.

Cyril Almeida, a columnist for Pakistan's Dawn newspaper, said this type of "obfuscation" prevents Pakistanis from seeing "there is a continuum from the religious right to violent Islamism."

"The religious right creates an enabling environment for violent Islamism to recruit and prosper. And violent Islamism makes state and society cower and in doing so enhances the space for the religious right," Almeida wrote in a column Sunday.

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Many hope the shooting of Malala will help push the military to undertake a long-awaited offensive in the Pakistani Taliban's last main sanctuary in the country in the North Waziristan tribal area.

The Pakistani Taliban said they carried out the shooting because Malala was promoting "Western thinking." Police have arrested at least three suspects in connection with the attack, but the

two gunmen who carried out the shooting remain at large.

The young girl was shot in the neck, and the bullet headed toward her spine. Two of her classmates were also wounded in the attack.

Doctors at a military hospital operated on Malala to remove the bullet from her neck, and she was put on a ventilator. Her condition improved somewhat on Saturday when she was able to move her legs and hands after her sedatives were reduced.

On Sunday, she was successfully taken off the ventilator for a short period and later reconnected to avoid fatigue, the military said. Doctors are satisfied she is making slow and steady progress and will decide whether to send her abroad for treatment. They have not said whether she suffered any brain damage or other type of permanent damage.

The United Arab Emirates plans to send a specialized aircraft to serve as an ambulance for the girl in case doctors decide to send her abroad, the Pakistani ambassador to the country, Jamil Ahmed Khan, said Sunday.

Visas are being finalized for the air ambulance crew and six doctors who will accompany the flight, Khan told Pakistan's Geo TV. Arrangements have been made to treat the girl at three hospitals in Dubai and Abu Dhabi, he said.

The UAE Embassy in Islamabad could not immediately be reached for comment.

No decision has yet been taken to send the girl abroad, but the air ambulance is part of the contingency plan, the Pakistani military said.

Afghan President Hamid Karzai has written letters to top political and religious leaders in Pakistan denouncing the attack on Yousufzai and asking them to help battle extremism in both countries, the president's office said in a statement issued late Saturday. Karzai wrote that he views the shooting as an attack on Afghanistan's girls as well.

Abbot reported from Islamabad. Associated Press writers Asif Shahzad, Zazar Khan and Munir Ahmed in Islamabad and Deb Riechmann in Kabul, Afghanistan, contributed to this report.

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NATIONAL NEWS

U.S. Transportation Secretary LaHood Coming To Detroit To Discuss Woodward Light Rail

Monday, October 15, 2012

Detroit Free Press

By Matt Helms, Detroit Free Press Staff Writer

U.S. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood will be in Detroit Monday to discuss progress on bringing a light-rail line to Woodward Avenue between downtown and the New Center area, but key officials close to the talks weren't saying much Sunday.

Mayor Dave Bing's office confirmed LaHood will be in Detroit, "but we have no details about any announcement he might make," spokesman Anthony Neely said Sunday.

M-1 Rail, the group of private corporate, philanthropic and civic leaders supporting the plan, has been working out details about paying to build the streetcar line and lining up funding for its long-term operation to convince the feds to award the project a crucial \$25 million grant.

Representatives from LaHood's office couldn't be reached for comment Sunday. Other top officials involved with the project didn't return phone calls.

The project has broad support from downtown business leaders including Dan Gilbert of Quicken Loans and Roger Penske of Penske Corp., as well as the Detroit Medical Center, major automakers and Wayne State University. Supporters envision it as part of a regional network of rail and rapid-transit buses meant to boost transit service in a region now poorly served.

Megan Owens, executive director of the Detroit-based transit advocacy group Transportation Riders United, said Sunday that she had been "hearing positive sentiments toward the M-1 Rail project" but was not aware of the aims of LaHood's visit.

Contact Matt Helms: 313-222-1450 or mhelms@freepress.com

Anatomy Of A Deferred-Action Dream How Undocumented Youth Brought Their Cause to the Country

Monday, October 15, 2012

Wall Street Journal

By Miriam Jordan

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

EPA Looks Into Lead Risks

Monday, October 15, 2012

USA Today

By Alison Young

The Environmental Protection Agency is re-examining more than 460 former lead factory sites across the USA for health hazards left by their toxic fallout onto soil in nearby neighborhoods.

The massive effort, a result of a USA TODAY investigation, involves locations in dozens of states and has already identified several sites needing further investigation and some so dangerous that cleanups are being scheduled, according to records and interviews with state regulators.

- In Portland, Ore., one home's yard is so contaminated with lead and arsenic that 20 tons of soil will need to be removed.

- State regulators in New York have identified at least six sites in New York City and one in Syracuse that are "of particular concern," plus at least six others that need further investigation, a report says.

- In Detroit, the EPA has found enough potential hazards at an old factory property lined by homes that the agency has reversed a state determination five years ago that no further action was needed.

- In Illinois, two Chicago sites are now slated for cleanups and eight others have been flagged for more study.

- In Cleveland, three sites are being looked at for possible cleanups and "several" more have risks needing deeper investigation.

- Regulators are also testing soil in neighborhoods in Maryland, Georgia and New Jersey.

These actions are in addition to those previously reported, including a \$1.26 million EPA cleanup of several yards in Edison, N.J.; a cleanup recommendation at a Newark condo complex; and actions taken to address lead in the athletic fields at a New York City park built atop a smelter site.

"I'm glad that the federal government has taken seriously the reports from USA TODAY and my request to investigate the residual contamination," said U.S. Sen. Sherrod Brown, D-Ohio. In May, Brown and five other U.S. senators called on the EPA to examine the smelter sites. "Thousands of Ohioans, including infants and small children, may

have been unknowingly exposed to dangerously high levels of lead.”

EPA officials have not responded to interview requests about their national smelter initiative since Sept.28. USA TODAY obtained the agency's smelter strategy memo under the Freedom of Information Act.

In April, USA TODAY's "Ghost Factories" investigation revealed that the EPA was given a list in 2001 of forgotten lead factories that primarily operated during the 1930s through the 1960s, before the era of environmental regulation. The EPA was warned that many of the long-closed factories had likely contaminated the soil in surrounding properties.

USA TODAY found regulators had done little to investigate or warn those in harm's way. The series is at ghostfactories.usatoday.com.

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Report: Jackson Allegedly Improperly Used Campaign Money To Decorate Home
Monday, October 15, 2012

Chicago Sun-Times

By Natasha Korecki, Political Reporter Twitter: @natashakorecki

U.S. Rep. Jesse Jackson Jr.'s campaign finances are the subject of a federal probe after the congressman allegedly improperly used campaign money to decorate his home, according to a new report.

The Wall Street Journal reported Sunday night that a federal probe into the congressman centers on whether Jackson improperly used campaign money to decorate his home.

The Chicago Sun-Times on Friday first reported that Jackson was under federal investigation, a probe that began before he took a leave from Congress in June to seek medical help. Ultimately, the Jacksons said he suffered from bipolar depression.

The Sun-Times reported that the investigation was being handled out of Washington D.C. and was an entirely new area of scrutiny and did not involve the sale of the U.S. Senate seat — a case involving Rod Blagojevich where Jackson's name repeatedly came up. Spokespeople representing Jackson were not talking on Sunday.

The Jacksons put their Washington, D.C., home on the market last month at a price of \$2.5 million. The listing was public and included the property's address as well as multiple photos of the inside of the home. A campaign spokesman said at the time that home was put on the market to pay for mounting medical bills.

Though Jackson represents a congressional district in Chicago and his wife, Sandi, is a Chicago alderman — both primarily live in D.C. and send their children to a private school there. They also have a residence in Chicago.

A day after the D.C. listing was made public, the couple subsequently took it back off the market, citing a security issue.

The revelation that Jackson is under federal scrutiny comes as questions have increasingly swirled around the congressman's absence from his official duties in Washington and the campaign trail.

Citing exhaustion, Jackson stopped working, according to his staff, on June 10. His staff did not make that known until two weeks later, however.

He went to a clinic in Arizona then to the Mayo Clinic, which released a statement saying he was treated for bipolar depression. Jackson is up for reelection Nov. 6 but has not campaigned since he won the spring primary.

The Retreat Of Globalization

Banks are retrenching, trade is slowing. What if the world is becoming more fragmented as policy makers focus on short-term urgencies?

Monday, October 15, 2012

Wall Street Journal

By Kevin Warsh And Scott Davis

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

Column: Want To See Big Changes In Congress?

Monday, October 15, 2012

USA Today

By Ross K. Baker

So you're a farmer upset about the unwillingness of the House to pass an agriculture bill. Or, you're an employee of the U.S. Postal Service who is disappointed with the lack of congressional action on reform. Or you're an IT person concerned about the failure to pass a cybersecurity bill.

Well, don't get too hopeful that this November's election is going to produce a dramatically different crop of legislators. Chances are that the changes will be modest.

If you're really looking for more radical change, just wait until 2014. If history is any guide, midterm elections — not the years holding presidential races — are when big turnovers in the makeup of Congress occur.

Look back no further than 2010, two years after President Obama took office. During that midterm congressional election, Republicans gained 63 seats in the House to retake the majority and six seats in the Senate.

In fact, the majorities that Obama drew upon to enact the Affordable Care Act and other parts of his program came with the Democratic congressional victories in 2006 when he was not on the ballot — and not in 2008 when he was.

Presidential coattails

On rare occasions have presidential nominees provided long coattails for their party's congressional candidates. The last really large change happened in 1948. That's when Harry Truman won a full term in the White House, after taking over after the death of President Franklin Roosevelt in April 1945. Truman provided coattails for 75 new Democratic House members and nine Democratic senators.

Since then, the only notable turnovers have been in 1964, with Lyndon Johnson's landslide victory leading to a gain of 36 seats in the House and a nearly two-third's majority, and in 1980, when Ronald Reagan's sweep cost the Democrats 12 senators and delivered control of the Senate to the Republican Party.

So what's at work here? Don't Americans want to give their newly elected or re-elected presidents a team of their fellow partisans to enable them to get things done?

The best answer is that Americans apparently feel safer with divided government. Or after the first two years of a new or incumbent president's term, they are unhappy with the direction he is taking the country and want to give the other party a chance to do better.

Sometimes, presidential elections suck the oxygen out of anything else going on in politics. Voters focus on the top of the ticket and pay less attention to lower offices.

Notable FDR lesson

Other times, presidential candidates contribute to this oxygen deficiency by not asking voters to give them a team to help them fulfill their campaign promises. Perhaps they are reminded of the hard lesson FDR learned in the 1938 election. FDR went gunning for senators who opposed his New Deal, only to be rebuffed by the voters.

Another factor is that in the U.S. system of government, there is no parliamentary vote of confidence. If Congress could regularly do what the British Parliament does by withdrawing support from the prime minister by a vote in the House of Commons, perhaps the midterm swings in American elections wouldn't be so dramatic.

Congressional candidates have also proved themselves adept at distancing themselves from presidential candidates who do not play well in their states and congressional districts, and presidential candidates won't embrace members of their party who don't want to be embraced.

It is only when voters, in the midterms, without the distraction of a presidential race, can focus on the candidates for Congress that the tectonic plates really move.

So sit tight for a couple of years and get ready to witness the earthquake.

Ross K. Baker is a political science professor at Rutgers University and a member of USA TODAY's Board of Contributors.

In addition to its own editorials, USA TODAY publishes diverse opinions from outside writers, including our Board of Contributors.

**Want To Ruin Teaching? Give Ratings
Monday, October 15, 2012
New York Times
By Deborah Kenny**

AS the founder of a charter school network in Harlem, I've seen firsthand the nuances inherent in teacher evaluation. A few years ago, for instance, we decided not to renew the contract of one of our teachers despite the fact that his students performed exceptionally well on the state exam.

We kept hearing directly from students and parents that he was mean and derided the children who needed the most help. The teacher

also regularly complained about problems during faculty meetings without offering solutions. Three of our strongest teachers confided to the principal that they were reluctantly considering leaving because his negativity was making everyone miserable.

There has been much discussion of the question of how to evaluate teachers; it was one of the biggest sticking points in the recent teachers' strike in Chicago. For more than a decade I've been a strong proponent of teacher accountability. I've advocated for ending tenure and other rules that get in the way of holding educators responsible for the achievement of their students. Indeed, the teachers in my schools — Harlem Village Academies — all work with employment-at-will contracts because we believe accountability is an underlying prerequisite to running an effective school. The problem is that, unlike charters, most schools are prohibited by law from holding teachers accountable at all.

But the solution being considered by many states — having the government evaluate individual teachers — is a terrible idea that undermines principals and is demeaning to teachers. If our schools had been required to use a state-run teacher evaluation system, the teacher we let go would have been rated at the top of the scale.

Education and political leaders across the country are currently trying to decide how to evaluate teachers. Some states are pushing for legislation to sort teachers into categories using unreliable mathematical calculations based on student test scores. Others have hired external evaluators who pop into classrooms with checklists to monitor and rate teachers. In all these scenarios, principals have only partial authority, with their judgments factored into a formula.

This type of system shows a profound lack of understanding of leadership. Principals need to create a culture of trust, teamwork and candid feedback that is essential to running an excellent school. Leadership is about hiring great people and empowering them, and requires a delicate balance of evaluation and encouragement. At Harlem Village Academies we give teachers an enormous amount of freedom and respect. As one of our seventh-grade reading teachers told me: "It's exhilarating to be trusted. It makes me feel like I can be the kind of teacher I had always dreamed about becoming: funny, interesting, effective and energetic."

Some of the new government proposals for evaluating teachers, with their checklists, rankings

and ratings, have been described as businesslike, but that is just not true. Successful companies do not publicly rate thousands of employees from a central office database; they don't use systems to take the place of human judgment. They trust their managers to nurture and build great teams, then hold the managers accountable for results.

In the same way, we should hold principals strictly accountable for school performance and allow them to make all personnel decisions. That can't be done by adhering to rigid formulas. There is no formula for quantifying compassion, creativity, intellectual curiosity or any number of other traits that make a group of teachers motivate one another and inspire greatness in their students. Principals must be empowered to use everything they know about their faculty — including student achievement data — to determine which teachers they will retain, promote or, when necessary, let go. This is how every successful enterprise functions.

A government-run teacher evaluation bureaucracy will make it impossible to attract great teachers and will diminish the motivation of the ones we have. It will make teaching so scripted and controlled that we won't be able to attract smart, passionate people. Everyone says we should treat teachers as professionals, but then they promote top-down policies that are insulting to serious educators.

If we don't change course in the coming years, these bureaucratic systems that treat teachers like low-level workers will become self-fulfilling. As the great educational thinker Theodore R.Sizer put it, "Eventually, hierarchical bureaucracy will be totally self-validating: virtually all teachers will be semi-competent."

The direction of education reform in the next few years will shape public education for generations to come. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan has repeatedly said that in the next decade, "over 1.6 million teachers will retire," and our country will be hiring 1.6 million new teachers. We will blow that opportunity if we create bureaucratic systems that discourage the smartest, most talented people from entering the profession.

Deborah Kenny is the chief executive and founding principal of Harlem Village Academies and the author of "Born to Rise: A Story of Children and Teachers Reaching Their Highest Potential."

Too Big To Maintain?
Saturday, October 13, 2012
[Washington Post](#)

By George F. Will

If in four weeks a president-elect Mitt Romney is seeking a Treasury secretary, he should look here, to Richard Fisher, president of the Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas. Candidate Romney can enhance his chance of having this choice to make by embracing a simple proposition from Fisher: Systemically important financial institutions (SIFIs), meaning too-big-to-fail (TBTF) banks, are "too dangerous to permit."

Romney almost did this in the first debate when he said the Dodd-Frank Act makes TBTF banks "effectively guaranteed by the federal government" and constitutes "the biggest kiss that's been given to — to New York banks I've ever seen." Fisher, who has a flair for rhetorical pungency, is more crisp:

There are 6,000 American banks, but "half of the entire banking industry's assets" are concentrated in five institutions whose combined assets amount to almost 60 percent of the gross domestic product. And "the top 10 banks now account for 61 percent of commercial banking assets, substantially more than the 26 percent of only 20 years ago." The problems posed by "supersized and hypercomplex banks" may, Fisher says, require anti-obesity policies equivalent to "irreversible lap-band or gastric bypass surgery." The land of TBTFs is "a perverse financial Lake Wobegon" where all crises are "exceptional," justifying "unique" solutions that are the same — meaning bailouts. This incurs "the wrath of ordinary citizens and smaller entities that resent this favorable treatment, and we plant the seeds of social unrest."

Fisher cites Andrew Haldane of the Bank of England who calculates this: The assumption that certain banks have implicit TBTF status gives them preferential access to investment capital. In 2009, these silent subsidies enjoyed by TBTFs worldwide approached \$2.3 trillion in value. Haldane notes a parallel between financial systems and epidemiological networks: Normal epidemiology involves "focusing preventive action on 'super-spreaders' within the network to limit the potential for systemwide spread."

Endorsing the axiom (attributed to Napoleon) that one should "never ascribe to malice that which is adequately explained by incompetence," Fisher says that TBTF banks "are sprawling and complex — so vast that their own management teams may not fully understand their own risk exposures, providing fertile ground for unintended 'incompetence.'"

Fisher's rejoinder to those who impute "economies of scale" to such banks is that there also are "diseconomies of scale." Fisher, among many others, believes the component parts of the biggest banks would be "worth more broken up than as a whole."

Furthermore, the economy suffers as indefensible preferences multiply. In an essay, "Choosing the Road to Prosperity: Why We Must End Too Big To Fail — Now," Harvey Rosenblum of the Dallas Fed's Research Department notes that "people disillusioned with capitalism aren't as eager to engage in productive activities." The desire to strive is inversely proportional to the suspicion that the game is rigged. Rosenblum adds:

"For all its bluster, Dodd-Frank leaves TBTF entrenched. . . . In fact, the financial crisis increased concentration because some TBTF institutions acquired the assets of other troubled TBTF institutions. The TBTF survivors of the financial crisis look a lot like they did in 2008. They maintain corporate cultures based on the short-term incentives of fees and bonuses derived from increased oligopoly power."

At bottom, the TBTF phenomenon raises questions not merely about the financial system but also about the nature of the American regime. These are Jacksonian questions, implicating issues Old Hickory raised in 1832 when vetoing the Second Bank of the United States: Should the government be complicit in protecting — and by doing so, enlarging — huge economic interests?

Capitalism — which is, as Milton Friedman tirelessly insisted, a profit and loss system — is subverted by TBTF, which socializes losses while leaving profits private. And which enhances the profits of those whose losses it socializes. TBTF is a double moral disaster: It creates moral hazard by encouraging risky behavior, and it delegitimizes capitalism by validating public cynicism about its risk-reward ratios.

It is inexplicable politics and regrettable policy that Romney has, so far, flinched from a forthright endorsement of breaking up the biggest banks. This stance would be credible because of his background and would be intelligible to voters because of its clarity. As the campaign reaches what should be a satisfying culmination, they would be astonished by, and grateful for, the infusion of a fresh thought into the deluge of painfully familiar boilerplate. Having tiptoed close to where Fisher stands, Romney still has time to remember Gen. Douglas MacArthur's axiom that,

in war, all disasters can be explained by two words: "Too late."

Schumer To Tax Reform: Drop Dead
A Senate Democratic leader lays down a partisan 2013 marker.

Monday, October 15, 2012

Wall Street Journal

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

Consumers Show Little Fear Of 'Fiscal Cliff'

Sunday, October 14, 2012

Wall Street Journal

By Ben Casselman

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

Column: Fiscal Cliff Can Be Avoided. Here's How.

Monday, October 15, 2012

USA Today

By Ram Charan

Why should 300 million Americans allow a handful of elected politicians — the president, Senate majority and minority leaders, speaker of the House, and a few committee chairs — to march us over the fiscal cliff as if it were inevitable?

By cementing their positions, warring factions in Washington have created the gridlock that is pushing us toward draconian tax increases and spending cuts that will set the economy back for years, and quite likely, put us in a recession. Along with a budget and trade deficit, America is suffering from a leadership deficit just at a time when we can least afford it.

Americans care deeply about reducing or at least containing the federal deficit, and growing jobs. The fiscal cliff helps with one, but at a high cost of the other. Last month, Moody's Investors Service said it will lower the U.S. credit rating if Washington doesn't act. Standard & Poor's has already done so, lowering its U.S. rating by one notch in 2011. As any over-their-head credit card holder knows, a lower credit rating raises borrowing costs and makes it even harder to pay down the debt. This is a real risk, despite any attempt by the Federal Reserve to influence interest rates.

The fiscal cliff might satisfy the rating agencies in the short term by reducing the deficit, but it would also cause a serious slowdown in GDP — in a

word, recession. Instead of more jobs, we would have fewer. Then it becomes a race to keep our GDP from sliding faster than reductions in the deficit. The ratings agencies will be watching for a negative move between those two metrics.

There's still hope

With so little time to legislate a solution, the double-edged sword of fiscal constraint and loss of jobs may seem all but inevitable. But it isn't. I propose the following congressional action that would allow legislators to break the gridlock that is about to take us over the fiscal cliff: Freeze all expenses by the federal government, including entitlements, at 2012 calendar year levels. And postpone the fiscal cliff legislation until Jan. 1, 2014.

This bold move will show the rating agencies positive movement in Washington while protecting us from a recession. And it should be palatable to legislators who refuse to yield on taxes or entitlements. It is not painless; all Americans will share some pain. Most important, it avoids the worst consequences of the fiscal cliff.

Wait for a fresh start

This move will allow the new Congress and president to attack the issues with a fresh approach. They will be more motivated to come up with workable solutions because they will have to live with the consequences of their actions.

Any pinch on entitlements will force everyone to become more productive and look for more creative ways to contain costs. Streamlining and eliminating waste help those who receive services, as well as those who bear the cost: the taxpayers.

This approach requires lobbyists and other special interests to back off their demands. They must realize that any substantive legislation that gets pushed through quickly could create unforeseen problems. It's against their own self-interest, because the wrong medicine will hurt everyone. The legislative cure must be created in a thoughtful, deliberate way.

There is little time left to legislate. But there is enough time to get this simple plan approved. The public should get behind this economy-saving bipartisan move and not allow our elected representatives to add a leadership deficit to our balance sheet.

Ram Charan is an adviser to CEOs, and co-author with Larry Bossidy of the best-selling book Execution.

In addition to its own editorials, USA TODAY publishes diverse opinions from outside writers, including our Board of Contributors.

The Speculators Win A Round

Monday, October 15, 2012

New York Times

The foes of Dodd-Frank financial reform scored a victory recently when a federal court overturned a new rule to limit speculative trading in derivatives.

If allowed to stand, the ruling will leave the economy exposed to continued distortions because derivatives are easily deployed as tools for vast speculation. When the bets pay off, the result is lush bank profits. When they crater, as they did during the financial crisis, the result is bailouts. Either way, Wall Street wins and everyone else loses.

The recent case, brought by trade groups for the banks, was filed against the Commodity Futures Trading Commission, which is charged with writing and enforcing many of the derivative reforms in the Dodd-Frank law. The groups took aim at the C.F.T.C.'s attempt to impose "position limits," or caps, on the number of derivative contracts a trader can hold on commodities like oil, food and metals. The Dodd-Frank law called for caps because without them, excess speculation drives up the prices of gas, food and other everyday products and services.

The industry groups did not dispute the rule on its merits; they said it was invalid because the agency had not followed proper procedures in issuing it. The C.F.T.C. countered that the law explicitly required it to establish position limits and imposed no special procedures. Judge Robert Wilkins of Federal District Court said the law "is ambiguous" on procedural issues and threw out the rule, saying the agency did not have a clear mandate to act.

The defeat is also disturbing because it will embolden banks to challenge other new rules. Commodity derivatives are a relatively small part of Wall Street's derivatives business. Rules to regulate financial derivatives, like credit default swaps, have yet to be completed.

In a welcome move last week, the C.F.T.C.'s general counsel recommended appealing the ruling, and the commission's chairman, Gary Gensler, agreed. But appealing is also risky, since the federal appeals court in Washington, D.C., that would hear the case is notorious for an antiregulatory bias.

For that reason, it also would make good strategic sense for the agency to proceed with reissuing the rules, following the procedures that the banks contend were violated. Though that adds another burden to an overworked agency, it would help to ensure that desperately needed rules will, one way or another, be put in place.

D.C.'s Drip, Drip, Drip In The Finance Office

Monday, October 15, 2012

Washington Post

JACK EVANS, Ward 2's representative on the D.C. Council, is one of Natwar M. Gandhi's most unabashed fans, so when he complains about the "drip, drip, drip" of management problems under the city's chief financial officer (CFO), there is reason to worry.

Mr. Gandhi testified for several hours Wednesday at a council oversight hearing into alleged problems in the city's tax office. A series of articles by The Post's Debbie Cenziper and Nikita Stewart — with which Mr. Gandhi has taken issue — raised questions about settlements that lowered the tax bills on hundreds of commercial properties; the background of the appraiser in charge; and whether proper controls are in place. Also testifying was William DiVello, the agency's former head of internal affairs, who produced an audit critical of assessment practices and who quit in dramatic protest over what he has characterized as pressure to hide problems from public view.

Mr. DiVello provided earnest testimony about frustrations over audits delayed or, in one case, gutted, by senior CFO managers. He said that his efforts to talk one on one with Mr. Gandhi were rebuffed. So it was jarring to see Mr. Gandhi try to shift the blame to Mr. DiVello for not following up on identified problems. The auditor's function is distinct from a manager's; as council member David A. Catania (I-At Large) pointed out, responsibilities outside his expertise were being ascribed to Mr. DiVello. To criticism about the lack of training for the office, Mr. Gandhi offered the lame excuse that the mayor had banned travel by city employees. His assurance about weekly meetings with his management team in which he goes around the table and asks about problems did not answer the question of why the person he put in charge of integrity and oversight couldn't get a private meeting with him.

It is clear that Mr. Gandhi values cooperation and collaboration in his agency, but one has to wonder if it comes at the expense of compliance. He said that auditors need to sit down with those being audited to fix problems; one wonders what would

have happened if an auditor had looked to Harriette Walters for ideas on how to tighten the system.

Practices in the tax office, thanks in part to Mr. Gandhi, have been strengthened since the 2007 discovery of Ms. Walters's record embezzlement of \$48 million. But more must be done. Mr. Gandhi's promise to post summaries of internal audits on the agency's Web site, while welcome, doesn't go far enough. There is no reason audits shouldn't routinely be provided to the council and a way found to make them public without revealing sensitive security issues. Mr. Catania's suggestion of a more independent internal affairs office, modeled after the federal system of inspectors general, also has merit.

A Prisoner's Incompetence, A Judge's Discretion

Monday, October 15, 2012

New York Times

At the Supreme Court last week, the justices considered the rights of an Ohio death row inmate, Sean Carter, who challenged his conviction in federal court, but who is mentally incompetent and cannot assist in his own legal defense. Mr. Carter had pleaded not guilty by reason of insanity to rape and murder, but was found competent to stand trial. He sought to overturn the conviction, alleging ineffective assistance of counsel.

A Federal District Court refused to act on his habeas petition because his mental illness kept him from communicating with or even identifying his counsel — and from assisting in making claims at the core of his case. It dismissed the proceedings and allowed Mr. Carter to refile his petition after being restored to competence.

The issue before the Supreme Court is whether a federal judge has discretion to order an indefinite delay in such circumstances or whether the justices should set a limit on the length of a delay, even if the petitioner cannot assist in his own defense. The court should impose no limit. As the American Psychiatric Association explained in a brief, a study shows that almost all defendants who were found incompetent to stand trial were restored to competency within nine months, with medication and other treatment. In the rare instance when a prisoner is so mentally ill that he is unlikely to recover, he is likely to be too ill to be executed under a 1986 Supreme Court ruling.

Justice Stephen Breyer said at oral argument in a related case the same day that federal judges

should be allowed to exercise their discretion in how long to put a habeas proceeding on hold: "Why can't we trust them to do their job?" A judge is allowed to order a delay only when a prisoner is found incompetent and could make a difference in his own defense, as when his memory of his lawyer's work at trial is needed to challenge the lawyer's adequacy. But on other issues, like claims of improper jury instructions, the habeas lawyer does not need the client's help.

Occasional delays because of a prisoner's incompetence will rarely result in those cases remaining unresolved indefinitely. There is no reason to impose an arbitrary limit on how long a judge can order a delay if proceeding with the habeas action would be unfair to the inmate's case.

Let Doctors Cure Health-Care Costs

The ailing fee-for-service model could be replaced by salaried-physician groups working within a fixed budget.

Monday, October 15, 2012

Wall Street Journal

By Mitchell T. Rabkin And John S. Cook

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

In Cancer Care, Cost Matters

Monday, October 15, 2012

New York Times

By Peter B. Bach, Leonard B. Saltz And Robert E. Wittes

AT Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center, we recently made a decision that should have been a no-brainer: we are not going to give a phenomenally expensive new cancer drug to our patients.

The reasons are simple: The drug, Zaltrap, has proved to be no better than a similar medicine we already have for advanced colorectal cancer, while its price — at \$11,063 on average for a month of treatment — is more than twice as high.

In most industries something that offers no advantage over its competitors and yet sells for twice the price would never even get on the market. But that is not how things work for drugs. The Food and Drug Administration approves drugs if they are shown to be "safe and effective." It does not consider what the relative costs might be once the new medicine is marketed.

By law, Medicare must cover every cancer drug the F.D.A. approves. (A 2003 law, moreover, mandates payment at the price the manufacturers charge, plus a 6 percent cushion.) In most states

private insurers are held to this same standard. Physician guideline-setting organizations likewise focus on whether or not a treatment is effective, and rarely factor in cost in their determinations.

Ignoring the cost of care, though, is no longer tenable. Soaring spending has presented the medical community with a new obligation. When choosing treatments for a patient, we have to consider the financial strains they may cause alongside the benefits they might deliver.

This is particularly the case with cancer, where the cost of drugs, and of care over all, has risen precipitously. The typical new cancer drug coming on the market a decade ago cost about \$4,500 per month (in 2012 dollars); since 2010 the median price has been around \$10,000. Two of the new cancer drugs cost more than \$35,000 each per month of treatment.

The burden of this cost is borne, increasingly, by patients themselves — and the effects can be devastating. In 2006, one-quarter of cancer patients reported that they had used up all or most of their savings paying for care; a study last year reported that 2 percent of cancer patients were driven into bankruptcy by their illness and its treatment. One in 10 cancer patients now reports spending more than \$18,000 out of pocket on care.

Which brings us back to our decision on Zaltrap. In patients with advancing, metastatic colorectal cancer, the new drug, approved by the F.D.A. in August and jointly marketed by Sanofi and Regeneron, offers the same survival benefit as Genentech's Avastin, which works through a similar molecular mechanism. When compared with the standard chemotherapy regimen alone, adding either medicine has been shown to prolong patient lives by a median of 1.4 months. Major clinical practice guidelines, like those from the National Comprehensive Cancer Network, agree that Zaltrap is no better than Avastin in this setting. (Full disclosure: Two of us, Dr. Bach and Dr. Saltz, have been paid consulting fees by Genentech.)

But Avastin costs roughly \$5,000 a month: very expensive in its own right, yet less than half of Zaltrap's price tag. And while the side effects in both drugs are roughly equal, doses of Avastin generally take less time to administer than those of Zaltrap, which makes Avastin more convenient for patients.

Consider that colorectal cancer is typically diagnosed in older individuals and the cost issue becomes starker still. Many patients are on

Medicare and living on fixed incomes. And because Medicare requires patients to co-pay for cancer drugs, 20 percent of the cost of drugs like Zaltrap and Avastin is passed on — absorbed either by supplemental insurance or by the patients themselves.

To put these percentages in perspective, an older colorectal cancer patient without extra insurance would have to pay more than \$2,200 out of pocket for a month's treatment with Zaltrap. That's greater than the monthly income for half of Medicare participants.

Once you take all this into account it may seem surprising that the decision to exclude Zaltrap from our hospital's formulary was a hard one to make. But because our medical culture equates "new" with "better" so unequivocally, a decision like this one can seem out of place at a leading cancer hospital

Political rhetoric today is similarly slanted. Our refusal to adopt this remarkably expensive therapy risks being labeled "rationing," not rational.

This political climate also helps explain why the Affordable Care Act precludes Medicare from changing its coverage or payment amounts based on cost comparisons like the one we have outlined, even when two drugs appear to work equally well. And it is probably why neither presidential candidate has addressed runaway cancer drug prices.

But if no one else will act, leading cancer centers and other research hospitals should. The future of our health care system, and of cancer care, depends on our using our limited resources wisely.

The current level of spending on health care, estimated to be \$2.8 trillion this year, is already too high. The growth rate in health spending is unsustainable.

Of course, we know our decision about Zaltrap will not meaningfully address these larger problems. Projected United States sales of Zaltrap in 2013 are less than \$150 million, or 0.005 percent of all dollars spent on health care. Our use would account for a very small percentage of even that number.

But it is a step in the right direction — one of many we need to take.

The writers are doctors at Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center. Peter B. Bach is the director of the Center for Health Policy and Outcomes, Leonard B. Saltz is chief of the

gastrointestinal oncology service and chairman of the pharmacy and therapeutics committee, and Robert E. Wittes is the physician in chief.

Obama's Slippery Foreign Oil Promise
Monday, October 15, 2012

Politico

By Darren Samuelsohn

It was one of President Barack Obama's boldest 2008 campaign promises: Getting the United States off oil from anti-U.S. hot spots within a decade.

That didn't happen. Persian Gulf oil imports are down only 5 percent, while the U.S. remains Venezuela's biggest oil-trading partner since Obama said changing that relationship was crucial "for the sake of our economy, our security and the future of our planet."

Obama's campaign now says what he really meant was that the president would cut U.S. oil imports by the same amount as what was coming at the time from the Middle Eastern countries and Venezuela combined, or 3.6 million barrels of oil per day.

But that's a new measuring stick.

Every president since Richard Nixon has promised energy independence. None has delivered. Now Obama's pressing the issue again, talking up energy independence in his convention speech, onstage at his first debate with Mitt Romney and in his stump speech — but he's dropped anything in the way of specifics about which countries will be U.S. oil suppliers.

Still, the reelection campaign believes that given the dramatic reductions in oil imports coming from other parts of the world and record oil- and natural-gas production levels at home, the president has a decent story to tell. And they say the president's latest pledge to cut oil imports in half by the end of the decade is actually bolder than what he offered in 2008 and more realistic, by taking into account existing trade contracts, an era of \$100 oil prices and the world's complex energy markets.

"We're not going to zero," Jay Hakes, a former Clinton-era director of the Energy Information Administration, said of cutting Middle Eastern and Venezuelan imports. The president's latest pledge "is more precisely stated," he added. "That's the way the market works. You can cut oil imports and the market is going to determine where you get those imports."

Pavel Molchanov, a Raymond James energy analyst, called Obama's latest energy independence goal "conservative" and predicted it could be achieved sooner than 2020 because of technological advances in domestic oil and natural gas drilling that have spawned record levels of production, especially in North Dakota and south Texas.

"This simply follows the reality of how the oil industry is developing," he said, adding that most U.S. oil imports over the next three years will be coming from the Western Hemisphere, including Mexico, Canada, Brazil and Venezuela.

Between 2008 and 2011, net U.S. imports fell by 2.6 million barrels of oil per day because of the oil and gas drilling boom and a dip in Americans' consumption levels from the recession and new fuel efficiency policies. Imports have fallen from major oil-producing countries like Angola, Algeria, Ecuador, Mexico, Nigeria and even Venezuela, while U.S. petroleum product exports exceeded imports for the first time in more than six decades.

U.S. Oil Boom Falls Short Of The Pump
Gas Prices Stay High Even as Production Surges, as Midwest Can't Dent Global Market; Some Refiners Profit
Sunday, October 14, 2012

Wall Street Journal

By Liam Plevin And Gregory Zuckerman

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

Obama's Great Alaska Shutout
Interior bans drilling on 11.5 million acres of 'petroleum reserve.'

Monday, October 15, 2012

Wall Street Journal

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

Fed Chief Rounds On Stimulus Critics
Sunday, October 14, 2012

Financial Times

By Claire Jones And Ben McLannahan In Tokyo

Full-text stories from the Financial Times are available to FT subscribers by clicking the link.

A Risky Lifeline For Seniors Is Costing Some
Their Homes

Sunday, October 14, 2012

New York Times

By Jessica Silver-greenberg

The very loans that are supposed to help seniors stay in their homes are in many cases pushing them out.

Reverse mortgages, which allow homeowners 62 and older to borrow money against the value of their homes and not pay it back until they move out or die, have long been fraught with problems. But federal and state regulators are documenting new instances of abuse as smaller mortgage brokers, including former subprime lenders, flood the market after the recent exit of big banks and as defaults on the loans hit record rates.

Some lenders are aggressively pitching loans to seniors who cannot afford the fees associated with them, not to mention the property taxes and maintenance. Others are wooing seniors with promises that the loans are free money that can be used to finance long-coveted cruises, without clearly explaining the risks. Some widows are facing eviction after they say they were pressured to keep their name off the deed without being told that they could be left facing foreclosure after their husbands died.

Now, as the vast baby boomer generation heads for retirement and more seniors grapple with dwindling savings, the newly minted Consumer Financial Protection Bureau is working on new rules that could mean better disclosure for consumers and stricter supervision of lenders. More than 775,000 of such loans are outstanding, according to the federal government.

Concerns about the multibillion-dollar reverse mortgage market echo those raised in the lead-up to the financial crisis when consumers were marketed loans — often carrying hidden risks — that they could not afford.

"There are many of the same red flags, including explosive growth and the fact that these loans are often peddled aggressively without regard to suitability," said Lori Swanson, the Minnesota attorney general, who is working on reforming the reverse mortgage market.

Joan Serieux-Forde, 72, thought that she couldn't feel more devastated after her husband, Christopher, died last year. Then, roughly a month after the funeral, she received a letter from Generation Mortgage, a reverse mortgage lender, informing her that unless she paid \$293,000, she would lose her home in San Bernardino, Calif. Ms. Forde said she was never informed that if she wasn't on the reverse mortgage deed, she would have virtually no right to stay in her home unless

she bought it outright. "It's a nightmare," she said. Generation Mortgage declined to comment.

Although the numbers of reverse mortgages have declined in recent years, the rate of default is at a record high — roughly 9.4 percent of loans, according to the consumer protection bureau, up from around 2 percent a decade earlier. And borrowers are putting their nest eggs at risk by increasingly taking out the loans at younger ages and in lump sums, federal data and a recent bureau report show.

Peter H. Bell, president and chief executive of the National Reverse Mortgage Lenders Association, a trade group, said that he met with officials from the Department of Housing and Urban Development to begin hashing out a way for lenders to adopt a uniform standard to determine whether seniors can afford to take on the loans.

Used correctly, reverse mortgages can be a valuable tool for seniors to stay in their homes and gain access to money needed for retirement. Seniors who have built up equity in their homes can borrow against a percentage of that and take out a lump sum or a line of credit. The loan doesn't have to be repaid until the homeowner moves out or dies, but borrowers still have to pay property taxes, maintenance and insurance.

Reverse mortgage lenders and brokers note that the loans are highly regulated and require potential borrowers to speak to a certified housing counselor about the potential pitfalls before taking out the loans. Mr. Bell adds that his trade group strictly monitors the advertising of its roughly 400 members to ensure that it is accurate.

Since the financial crisis, the reverse mortgage market has been in flux, dampened by a drop in property values, complaints about the loans and the recent departure of big lenders. Originations backed by the federal government peaked at about 115,00 in 2007 and totaled about 51,000 loans last year.

MetLife was the latest major player to exit the market, in April. That followed the departure last year of the two biggest reverse mortgage lenders, Bank of America and Wells Fargo, which cited falling housing prices and difficulty assessing borrowers' ability to repay the loans.

Into the void left by the big banks have moved smaller mortgage brokers and lenders. Some of them steer seniors into expensive, risky loans with deceptive sales pitches and high-pressure tactics, according to regulators, housing counselors and elder-care advocates.

Mark S. Diamond, a former subprime mortgage broker in Chicago, who has been sued for fraud by the Federal Trade Commission and the Illinois attorney general, faces a federal lawsuit filed in June by seniors who claim that he sold them reverse mortgages and either pocketed their loan amounts or promised to put the proceeds toward home repairs that never materialized. A lawyer for Mr. Diamond did not return calls for comment. Regulators worry that some of the same high-pressure tactics deployed during the subprime lending crisis are showing up again. Some solicitations reviewed by the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau present reverse mortgages as "free money" or mistakenly tell seniors that they could never lose their home. One Maryland reverse mortgage lender tells seniors that they can put the proceeds toward a vacation: "Just because you're retired doesn't mean you don't need a vacation every now and then." Last year, the Massachusetts Commissioner of Banks issued cease-and-desist orders to a handful of reverse mortgage firms for operating without a license. In its advertising, one of those mortgage brokers falsely promised seniors "you won't lose your home."

Officials at the bureau, which issued a report on the industry in June, said they heard from a number of seniors who claimed that lenders encouraged them to make their older spouses the sole borrower on the loan. The brokers earn more money when they make larger loans with the older spouse as the only borrower.

Some surviving spouses complained that brokers told them they could be added later, but they were not. The bureau says those seniors are at greater risk of losing their homes. The complaints, according to elder-care advocates and federal officials, have been rising during the past year, although there are no exact numbers.

Linda McMahon, a 65-year-old widow, watched helplessly as the locks were changed on her home in St. Croix Falls, Wis., last month. She said that in 2005, when her husband was 82 and she was 58, a mortgage broker from Wells Fargo promised her that she could add her name to the mortgage once she turned 62. That never happened because that year, in 2009, she didn't have time to deal with it as her husband's health quickly deteriorated and he died from a heart condition, she said. Soon, she was unable to pay any of the property taxes and insurance. "I am devastated," said Ms. McMahon, who is retired, living on Social Security income and now renting an apartment.

A spokeswoman for the bank declined to comment. Reverse mortgages also have troublesome incentive structures that might encourage brokers to steer seniors toward lump-sum loans, which carry a fixed interest rate, rather than a line of credit with a variable interest rate, the bureau found. In a lump sum arrangement, the interest charges are added each month, and over time the total debt owed can far surpass the original loan.

Brokers earn higher fees on these loans and even more money when they sell the loans into the secondary market, where they can get rates nearly double those for variable loans, according to rate sheets obtained by the consumer bureau.

Some 70 percent of reverse mortgages are taken in lump sums, up from 3 percent in 2008, according to the bureau. When seniors use the money to pay off other debts, especially right before retirement or early into it, that can leave them with scarce resources to pay their property taxes and insurance.

Ms. Forde, who lives in fear of losing her San Bernardino home, said she could not afford to save her house by paying the full \$293,000 debt. Now, she said, she spends much of her day standing guard by the window. Her home is already in foreclosure proceedings. With a wavering voice, she said: "I have nowhere to go."

Expect Small Social Security Benefit Increase For 2013

Monday, October 15, 2012

Washington Times

By Stephen Ohlemacher, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Social Security recipients shouldn't expect a big increase in monthly benefits come January.

Preliminary figures show the annual benefit boost will be between 1 percent and 2 percent, which would be among the lowest since automatic adjustments were adopted in 1975. Monthly benefits for retired workers now average \$1,237, meaning the typical retiree can expect a raise of between \$12 and \$24 a month.

The size of the increase will be made official Tuesday, when the government releases inflation figures for September. The announcement is unlikely to please a big bloc of voters — 56 million people get benefits — just three weeks before elections for president and Congress.

The cost-of-living adjustment, or COLA, is tied to a government measure of inflation adopted by

Congress in the 1970s. It shows that consumer prices have gone up by less than 2 percent in the past year.

"Basically, for the past 12 months, prices did not go up as rapidly as they did the year before," said Polina Vlasenko, an economist at the American Institute for Economic Research, based in Great Barrington, Mass.

This year, Social Security recipients received a 3.6 percent increase in benefits after getting no increase the previous two years.

Some of next year's raise could be wiped out by higher Medicare premiums, which are deducted from Social Security payments. The Medicare Part B premium, which covers doctor visits, is expected to rise by about \$7 per month for 2013, according to government projections.

The premium is currently \$99.90 a month for most seniors. Medicare is expected to announce the premium for 2013 in the coming weeks.

"The COLA continues to be very critical to people in keeping them from falling behind," said David Certner, AARP's legislative policy director. "We certainly heard in those couple of years when there was no COLA at all how important it was."

How important is the COLA? From 2001 to 2011, household incomes in the U.S. dropped for every age group except one: those 65 and older.

The median income for all U.S. households fell by 6.6 percent when inflation was taken into account, according to census data. But the median income for households headed by someone 65 or older rose by 13 percent.

"That's all because of Social Security," Mr. Certner said. "Social Security has the COLA, and that's what's keeping seniors above water, as opposed to everybody else who's struggling in this economy."

Seniors still, on average, have lower incomes than younger adults. Most older Americans rely on Social Security for a majority of their income, according to the Social Security Administration.

"It's useful to bear in mind that no other group in the economy gets an automatic cost-of-living increase in their income," said David Blau, an economist at the Ohio State University. "Seniors are the only group."

Still, many feel like the COLA doesn't cover their rising costs.

"You have utilities go up; your food costs go up. Think about how much groceries have gone up,"

said Janice Durlinger, a 76-year-old widow in Lincoln, Neb. "I would love to know how they figure that."

The COLA is based on the Consumer Price Index for Urban Wage Earners and Clerical Workers, or CPI-W, a broad measure of consumer prices generated by the Bureau of Labor Statistics. It measures price changes for food, housing, clothing, transportation, energy, medical care, recreation and education.

In the past year, food prices have risen 2 percent while home energy prices have dropped 3.8 percent, according to the CPI-W. Housing costs have climbed by 1.4 percent, and gasoline prices have increased by 1.8 percent.

Mr. Blau said it's common for seniors to feel like the COLA doesn't reflect their rising costs, in part because older people tend to spend more of their income on health care. Medical costs have risen 4.3 percent in the past year as measured by the CPI-W.

"Inflation affects everybody differently unless you happen to be that mythical average person who buys the average bundle of goods," Mr. Blau said.

By law, the Social Security Administration compares the price index for July, August and September with consumer prices in the same three months from the last year in which a COLA was awarded. A COLA was awarded a year ago, so the index from July, August and September of this year is being compared with the index from the same period in 2011.

If prices go up over the course of the year, benefits go up, starting with payments delivered in January. But if prices go down, benefits stay the same. That's what happened in 2010 and 2011, when there was no COLA.

This year, consumer prices for July and August indicate next year's COLA would be 1.4 percent. The price index for September — the final piece of the puzzle — will be released Tuesday. Several economists said they don't expect it to change the projected COLA by more than a few tenths of a percentage point, if at all.

Ms. Vlasenko estimates the COLA will be from 1.5 percent to 1.7 percent. AARP estimates it will be about 1.5 percent.

Since 1975, the annual COLA has averaged 4.2 percent. Only five times has it been below 2 percent, including the two times it was zero. Before 1975, it took an act of Congress to increase Social Security payments.

"Over the past year, consumer prices have only gone up a little bit," Mr. Blau said. "By historical standards, it's a very low rate of increase."

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Longtime GOP Senate Moderate Arlen Specter Dies

Sunday, October 14, 2012

Associated Press

By Peter Jackson

HARRISBURG, Pa. (AP) — For most of his 30 years as Pennsylvania's longest-serving U.S. senator and prominent moderate in Congress, Arlen Specter was a Republican, though often at odds with the GOP leadership.

He helped end the Supreme Court hopes of former federal appeals Judge Robert H. Bork, who was nominated by President Ronald Reagan. Decades later, he was one of only three Republicans in Congress to vote for President Barack Obama's economic stimulus.

His breaks with his party were hardly a surprise: He had begun his political career as a Democrat and ended it as one, too.

In between, he was at the heart of several major American political events. He rose to prominence in the 1960s as an assistant counsel to the Warren Commission, developing the single-bullet theory in President John F. Kennedy's assassination. He came to the Senate in the Reagan landslide of 1980 and was a key voice in the Supreme Court confirmation hearings of both Bork and Clarence Thomas.

Specter died Sunday at his home in Philadelphia from complications of non-Hodgkin lymphoma, said his son Shanin. He was 82. Over the years, Specter had fought two previous bouts with Hodgkin lymphoma, overcome a brain tumor and survived cardiac arrest following bypass surgery.

Intellectual and stubborn, Specter took the lead on a wide spectrum of issues and was no stranger to controversy.

In one of his last major political acts, Specter startled fellow senators in April 2009 when he announced he was joining the Democrats. He said he was "increasingly at odds with the Republican philosophy," though he said the Democrats could not count on him to be "an automatic 60th vote" that would give them a filibuster-proof majority.

He had also concluded that he was unlikely to win a sixth term as a Republican, and his frankness about why he returned to the Democratic Party was packaged in a powerful TV ad by his primary opponent, then-U.S. Rep. Joe Sestak, who hammered away at the incumbent as a political opportunist.

"My change in party will enable me to be re-elected," Specter says in TV news footage used in the ad.

The announcer ends the ad saying, "Arlen Specter changed parties to save one job — his, not yours."

Democrats picked Sestak, a retired Navy vice admiral, over Specter in the 2010 primary, ending his decades of service. Sestak lost Specter's seat to conservative Republican Rep. Pat Toomey in the general election by 2 percentage points.

Specter rose to prominence in the 1960s as an aggressive Philadelphia prosecutor and during his time on the Warren Commission.

In 1987, Specter helped thwart Bork's nomination to the Supreme Court, earning him conservative enemies who still bitterly refer to such denials as being "borked." But four years later, Specter was criticized by liberals for his tough questioning of Anita Hill at Thomas' Supreme Court nomination hearings and for accusing her of committing "flat-out perjury." The interrogation, televised nationally, incensed women's groups and nearly cost him his seat in 1992.

Specter took credit for helping to defeat President Bill Clinton's national health care plan — the complexities of which he highlighted in a gigantic chart that hung on his office wall for years afterward — and helped lead the investigation into Gulf War syndrome, the name given to a collection of symptoms experienced by veterans of the war that include fatigue, memory loss, pain and difficulty sleeping. And following the Iran-Contra scandal, Specter pushed legislation that created the inspectors general of the CIA, which later exposed Aldrich Ames as a Soviet spy.

But he was not afraid to buck his fellow Republicans.

As a senior member of the powerful Appropriations Committee, Specter pushed for increased funding for stem-cell research, breast cancer and Alzheimer's disease, and supported several labor-backed initiatives in a GOP-led Congress. He also doggedly sought federal funds for local projects in his home state.

In 1995, he launched a presidential bid, denouncing religious conservatives as the "fringe" that plays too large a role in setting the party's agenda. Specter, who was Jewish, bowed out before the first primary because of lackluster fundraising.

Specter's irascible independence caught up with him in 2004. He barely survived a GOP primary challenge from Toomey by 17,000 votes of more than 1.4 million cast. He went on to easily win the general election with the help of organized labor, a traditionally Democratic constituency.

Specter was diagnosed in 2005 with stage IV Hodgkin lymphoma, a cancer of the lymphatic system. Announcing the diagnosis with his trademark doggedness, Specter said: "I have beaten a brain tumor, bypass heart surgery and many tough political opponents and I'm going to beat this, too."

"Arlen Specter was always a fighter," Obama said in a statement Sunday. "From his days stamping out corruption as a prosecutor in Philadelphia to his three decades of service in the Senate, Arlen was fiercely independent — never putting party or ideology ahead of the people he was chosen to serve. He brought that same toughness and determination to his personal struggles."

Specter wrote of his illness in a 2008 book, "Never Give In: Battling Cancer in the Senate," saying he wanted to let others facing similar crises "ought to know they are not alone."

Cancer handed him "a stark look at mortality" and an "added sense of humility," Specter told The Associated Press.

Born in Wichita, Kan., on Feb. 12, 1930, Specter spent summers toiling in his father's junkyard in Russell, Kan., where he knew another future senator — Bob Dole. The junkyard thrived during World War II, allowing Specter's father to send his four children to college.

Specter left Kansas for college in 1947 because the University of Kansas, where his best friends were headed, did not have Jewish fraternities. He graduated from the University of Pennsylvania in 1951 and Yale law school in 1956. He served in the Air Force from 1951 to 1953.

Friends say his childhood circumstances made him determined, tough and independent-minded. Specter considered his father's triumphs the embodiment of the American dream, a fulfillment that friends say drove him to a career in public life.

He entered politics as a Democrat in Philadelphia in the early 1960s, when he was an assistant district attorney who sent six Teamsters officials to jail for union corruption.

Working on the Warren Commission in 1964, Specter was the chief author of the theory that a single bullet had hit both Kennedy and Texas Gov. John Connally, an assumption critical to the conclusion that presidential assassin Lee Harvey Oswald acted alone. The theory remains controversial and was the subject of ridicule in Oliver Stone's 1991 movie "JFK."

After working on the Warren Commission, he returned to Philadelphia and challenged his boss, James Crumlish, for district attorney in 1965. Specter ran as a Republican and was derided by Crumlish as "Benedict Arlen." But Crumlish lost to his protege by 36,000 votes.

Specter lost re-election as district attorney in 1973 and went into private practice. Among his most notorious clients as a private attorney was Ira Einhorn, a Philadelphia counterculture celebrity who killed his girlfriend in 1977.

Finally, in 1980, Specter won the Senate seat vacated by retiring Republican Richard Schweiker, defeating former Pittsburgh Mayor Pete Flaherty.

After leaving the Senate in January 2011, the University of Pennsylvania Law School said Specter would teach a course about Congress' relationship with the Supreme Court, and Maryland Public Television launched a political-affairs show hosted by the former senator.

He also occasionally performed standup comedy at clubs in Philadelphia and New York. He played squash nearly every day into his mid-70s and liked to unwind with a martini or two at night.

A funeral was scheduled for Tuesday in Penn Valley, Pa., and will be open to the public, followed by burial in Huntingdon Valley, Pa.

Specter is survived by his wife, Joan, and two sons, Shanin and Steve, and four granddaughters.

Associated Press writers Ron Todt in Philadelphia and Lara Jakes contributed to this report.

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**Christian Group Finds Gay Agenda In Anti-Bullying Day
Sunday, October 14, 2012**

New York Times
By Kim Severson

On Mix It Up at Lunch Day, schoolchildren around the country are encouraged to hang out with someone they normally might not speak to.

The program, started 11 years ago by the Southern Poverty Law Center and now in more than 2,500 schools, was intended as a way to break up cliques and prevent bullying.

But this year, the American Family Association, a conservative evangelical group, has called the project "a nationwide push to promote the homosexual lifestyle in public schools" and is urging parents to keep their children home from school on Oct. 30, the day most of the schools plan to participate this year.

The charges, raised in an e-mail to supporters earlier this month, have caused a handful of schools to cancel this year's event and has caught organizers off guard.

"I was surprised that they completely lied about what Mix It Up Day is," said Maureen Costello, the director of the center's Teaching Tolerance project, which organizes the program. "It was a cynical, fear-mongering tactic."

The swirl around Mix It Up at Lunch Day reflects a deeper battle between the Southern Poverty Law Center, a civil-rights group founded 41 years ago in Montgomery, Ala., and the American Family Association, a Bible-based cultural watchdog organization in Tupelo, Miss. The association says its mission is to fight what it calls the "increasing ungodliness" in America.

The law center recently added the group to its national list of active hate groups, which also includes neo-Nazis, black separatists and holocaust deniers.

Association leaders, in return, have gone on the offensive, calling the law center a hate group for oppressing Christian students and claiming its aim is to shut down groups that oppose homosexuality.

"The reality is we are not a hate group. We are a truth group," said Bryan Fischer, director of issue analysis for the association. "We tell the truth about homosexual behavior."

Although the suggested activities for Mix It Up at Lunch Day do not expressly address gay and lesbian students, the law center itself promotes equal treatment for gays and lesbians and that

philosophy then informs the school program, he said.

"Anti-bullying legislation is exactly the same," Mr. Fischer said. "It's just another thinly veiled attempt to promote the homosexual agenda. No one is in favor of anyone getting bullied for any reason, but these anti-bullying policies become a mechanism for punishing Christian students who believe that homosexual behavior is not something that should be normalized."

The program is not about sexual orientation but rather about breaking up social cliques, which are especially evident in a school cafeteria, Ms. Costello said.

In some schools, cliques are socio-economic. In others they are ethnic or religious or based on sexual orientation. By giving students a way to mix with other students, self-imposed social barriers can be broken down and bullying can be curbed, she said.

"Many of the targets of bullying are kids who are either gay or are perceived as gay," she said.

But the idea that the program is intended as homosexual indoctrination is simply wrong, she added.

"We've become used to the idea of lunatic fringe attacks," she said, "but this one was complete misrepresentation."

Parents who are on the American Family Association e-mail list were encouraged to keep their children home on that day and to call school administrators to tell them why.

By Friday, about 200 schools had canceled, Ms. Costello said. But exactly why was unclear. Of 20 schools that had canceled and were contacted by The New York Times, only one chose to comment.

The Chattahoochee County Education Center in Cusseta, Ga., canceled because teachers were too busy trying to meet basic state teaching requirements, said Tabatha Walton, the principal.

"The decision had nothing to do with taking a position on gay rights," she said. "We support diversity."

Although parents did complain to Kevin Brady, the head of the Avon Grove Charter School in rural Pennsylvania, the school is still planning to hold Mix it Up at Lunch Day for its 1,600 students.

Students will each be assigned a number and then paired up by school officials. The school has a large population of special needs students who

can feel isolated and thus benefit greatly from the program, Mr. Brady said.

The school started it a few years ago, inspired, in part, by the shootings at Columbine High School in Colorado and examples of bully-related violence that surfaced in schools around the country.

He said the e-mail sent by the association described a program that had "absolutely no resemblance to what we do." Once parents understood how the program worked, they decided not keep their children home that day, he said.

"I think they feel they have been taken for a bit of a ride," he said.

Robbie Brown contributed reporting from Atlanta.

Another View: Joblessness Data Just Don't Match Up

Monday, October 15, 2012

USA Today

By James Pethokoukis

You don't have to be a conspiracy theorist to raise an eyebrow — maybe both eyebrows — at the recent jobs report. Plenty of economists doubted whether 900,000 jobs were created in September, dropping the unemployment rate to 7.8% from 8.1%. "I don't believe in conspiracy theories, but I don't believe in the household survey either," said David Rosenberg of Gluskin Sheff. RDQ Economics called it "implausible" and a "statistical quirk." Dennis Jacobe of Gallup concluded the report "should be discounted."

OUR VIEW: Lower unemployment rate inspires cuckoos

A jobless rate decline of 0.3 percentage points or more has occurred nine times since 1990, including last month. Usually when it drops like that, it's for one of two reasons. Sometimes it's because the economy is growing rapidly and creating lots of jobs. That was the case in the 1990s, when GDP growth averaged close to 5% during those months. And job growth was strong, according to the Labor Department's survey of households as well as its survey of employers. (The latter is the one that showed just 114,000 jobs created last month.)

Sometimes, though, the rate drops sharply because job creation is slight and millions of discouraged unemployed stop looking for work. If you stop looking, Uncle Sam stops counting you as unemployed. That has been the case during this recovery. But what happened last month was an odd combo of weak growth, rising labor force

participation, and otherworldly job gains in at least one of the two Labor Department job surveys. The numbers just don't match up.

Future jobs reports will help explain exactly what happened last month. But here's what's not in dispute: The U.S. lost 9 million private-sector jobs during the Great Recession. Just 5 million have been recovered. Even worse, the level of private-sector jobs remains 13 million below the pre-crisis job growth trend. That's the true jobs gap, and it isn't closing.

The Great Recession is over, but the Long Recession for workers continues. The gap is a national emergency. That's no fanciful conspiracy. It's a heartbreaking reality. And Washington should start treating it like one.

James Pethokoukis is a columnist and blogger at the American Enterprise Institute, a think tank in Washington, D.C.

Editorial: Lower Unemployment Rate Inspires Cuckoos

Monday, October 15, 2012

USA Today

When the unemployment rate suddenly dropped from 8.1% to 7.8% two Fridays ago, it was a surprise, but those who've seen jobless numbers lurch up and down took it in stride. The initial jobs numbers behind the unemployment rate are like a rough draft. They eventually get revised twice, and the change can be hundreds of thousands of jobs. That view wasn't universal, though. Some people went — it's hard to think of a better way to put this — a little nuts. An angry Jack Welch, the former chief executive of General Electric, was sure he smelled a rat, and he fired off an incendiary tweet: "Unbelievable jobs numbers. ... These Chicago guys will do anything. ... Can't debate so change numbers."

Translation: President Obama's hometown is Chicago, and he had just turned in an inert performance in his first debate with GOP challenger Mitt Romney, so the White House had deliberately cooked the numbers to help the president.

Naturally enough, the conservative echo chamber picked up Welch's tweet and quickly turned the affair into a conspiracy. If there's a contest at the end of this campaign year for dumbest and most irresponsible things said by people who ought to know better, this will be a contender.

Under fire, Welch admitted he had no evidence that anyone was manipulating the jobs numbers,

or that the respected numbers crunchers at the Bureau of Labor Statistics and other agencies were engaged in a plot that would be cause for terminating their professional careers. He implausibly claimed he hadn't been talking about the White House. He resorted to the discredited old dodge that he was only "raising a question."

And, ironically, this would be the same Jack Welch who as CEO was known as "Neutron Jack" because of his knack for making jobs disappear.

If there was a positive side to this, it was that Welch's tweet-rage provoked conversation about the way statisticians measure joblessness, and how difficult it is to accurately count how many people have jobs every month. The government does it with two surveys of 60,000 or more households (Who has a job?) and about 140,000 public and private employers (How many people work for you?).

Sometimes the results don't match. About a decade ago, the numbers diverged by more than 2 million jobs for almost two years before coming back into sync as the economy was recovering from a recession. It's the household survey that yields the jobless rate, so if that one diverges from the employer survey, as it did two Fridays ago, things could look strange.

Veteran economists know we've been here before, and candidates have whined about it before.

Critics more thoughtful than Welch have long complained about flaws in the system. It underrepresents people who have quit looking for work and overrepresents those with tiny amounts of part-time work. Those are well-known problems. But whatever its flaws, they are constant. The data are compiled by professionals, not by political appointees. They are a non-partisan scorecard.

More important for now is what the longer-term trend in the number says: that the economy is recovering, but very slowly.

The sudden fall in the unemployment rate might have robbed Romney of one of his best lines — that joblessness hasn't dipped under 8% since Obama has been president. But things are still rough out there, and likely to improve slowly, no matter who is elected.

As for the conspiracy theorists, they'll be back four days before the election, when the next round of numbers comes out. It's just impossible to know which side will be spinning fables because the numbers could as easily go up as down.

POLITICAL NEWS

Obama Hunkers Down In Debate Prep Monday, October 15, 2012

Washington Post

By Amy Gardner

WILLIAMSBURG — President Obama hunkered down at a golf resort here for the weekend to prepare for the next debate, which his own campaign acknowledges is critically important to stopping the momentum of Republican Mitt Romney.

Obama continued a tradition begun in Nevada by making an unscheduled trip Sunday afternoon to a local campaign office, where he delivered pizzas and rallied his field workers and volunteers. The president made a similar stop in Henderson, Nev., two weeks ago, when he sequestered himself for three days of preparations before the first debate in Denver.

The preparations in Williamsburg have taken on an urgency in the aftermath of Obama's seemingly lethargic performance in that debate, which was widely panned and prompted a surge for Romney in numerous national and swing-state polls. Although Obama had previously been ahead in most polls and the candidates remain neck and neck in most battlegrounds now, Obama and his advisers acknowledge that he must deliver a strong performance Tuesday at Hofstra University to regain momentum.

"I think he is going to make some adjustments on Tuesday," campaign adviser David Axelrod said on "Fox News Sunday," adding that Obama will "be aggressive in making the case for his view of where we should go as a country."

And on CNN's "State of the Union" on Sunday, campaign adviser Robert Gibbs said: "Obviously, the president was disappointed in his own performance. He didn't meet his expectations."

Obama arrived at Kingsmill Resort on Saturday morning, and he will remain until Tuesday before flying to Long Island to appear in the second of three televised debates with Romney. Obama is spending time each day preparing with his team, both studying and practicing, according to the campaign. He was "excited" to get out of Washington, according to one campaign adviser speaking on condition of anonymity.

"This is a beautiful, quiet facility where he can still handle his governing responsibilities outside of the distractions of being at home," the official said, adding that the president is "calm, focused and

energized" and is spending time walking outside as well as preparing for the debate.

The team is largely the same as the one that helped him in Nevada: Axelrod, senior White House adviser David Plouffe, longtime adviser Anita Dunn, Sen. John Kerry (Mass.) and Washington lawyer and longtime Democratic debate coach Bob Barnett. National security adviser Ben Rhodes is helping with preparations because of the expected foreign-policy component at Tuesday's town-hall-style debate. Kerry is playing the role of Romney and Dunn is playing CNN's Candy Crowley, the debate's moderator.

"The President is his own harshest critic and he knows Mitt Romney had a better night at the first debate," campaign spokeswoman Jennifer Psaki said Sunday. "The American people should expect to see a much more energized President Obama making a passionate case for why he is a better choice for the middle class."

That foreign-policy component is likely to focus on the recent events in Benghazi, Libya, where four Americans including U.S. Ambassador J. Christopher Stevens were killed during a siege on Sept. 11. The administration is under renewed scrutiny amid questions of whether the U.S. consulate there was adequately protected and what the administration has known and said publicly about the origins of the attacks.

Vice President Biden, in his own debate Thursday with Rep. Paul Ryan, raised more questions by blaming intelligence reports on the administration's belief that the attacks were the result of protests rather than the work of terrorists — an apparent contradiction of the State Department's statement earlier in the week that officials there had received no reports of protests outside the U.S. compound in Benghazi before the attacks.

Romney has jumped on the story, and is sure to try to do so again Tuesday at Hofstra.

"There were more questions that came out last night because the vice president directly contradicted the testimony of State Department officials," Romney told supporters Friday at a campaign event in Richmond. "American citizens have a right to know just what's going on."

Obama's debate preparations are taking place in the main building at Kingsmill, a sprawling golf resort along the James River featuring guest rooms and suites in free-standing villas that dot the golf course. Kerry was spotted early Sunday with a massive binder filled with color-coded

spacers, and Axelrod was seen talking on his cell phone on the grounds.

Several other events are underway at the resort, including a medical conference and an event dubbed "Ferraris on the James." Early Saturday, 11 Ferraris were spotted on the resort grounds, with their owners standing near their cars and valet attendants peering underneath.

During his stop at the campaign office, Obama was asked by the reporters following him how debate preparations are going, and he replied: "It's going great!"

But the visit was more for the volunteers and field staff, whom he greeted with four boxes of pizza and a hearty "Hello everybody, hello!" on entering the office.

After greeting workers in the reception area, Obama went into a smaller room where 11 workers were making calls. He lowered his voice.

"Hello, everybody," he whispered. "If you're not on the phone, take a break." He kissed the women and shook hands with the men.

One man said he was from London. Obama offered: "London! I like that."

Then he sat between two women and picked up the phone to make some calls. "I'm gonna do my work. Everybody's so serious!" On a call, he said: "Is this Ellen? Ellen, this is Barack Obama! It is really, truly me."

Obama's Prep Session Goal: Don't Repeat Mistakes Of Last Debate

Monday, October 15, 2012

New York Times

By Helene Cooper

WILLIAMSBURG, Va. — To prepare for the second round of the presidential debates, President Obama retreated here this weekend — to the environs of this historic village where actors in 18th century garb wander about spouting off in colonial diction.

But as Mr. Obama huddled with close aides on the spectacular resort grounds of what was the Kingsmill Plantation in the 17th century, the history that dominated his presidential study sessions was of a far more recent kind: how not to repeat the mistakes he made at his first debate with Mitt Romney a week and a half ago, when he stood by passively as an aggressive Mr. Romney dominated him, abruptly curtailing Mr. Obama's momentum and turning the campaign upside down.

The president and his aides were clearly taking debate prep far more seriously this time around. Mr. Obama has scheduled more time, and his aides say that they will try to keep interruptions to a minimum. He is on a resort with not one, but three, golf courses, but he did not bring his clubs and had no plans to hit the links. There will not be any visits to historic sites (he was criticized for going to the Hoover Dam when he was supposed to be studying for the last debate, in Denver); his sole off-campus excursion on Sunday took only half an hour. It was to a campaign field office here where he made a few phone calls to volunteers, delivered pizza to staff members, and pronounced his debate prep as "going great" in answer to a shouted question from a reporter.

Incongruously, a Ferrari convention was taking place at the president's James River resort — called "Ferraris on the James." The cars, which glided to the river — in clear view of the main building where Mr. Obama was doing his prep sessions — were accompanied by the ubiquitous Ferrari-owner types who stood around languidly, hands in the pockets of their crisply ironed slacks, while valet attendants peered at various undercarriages. No word on whether the president found it distracting.

This time, instead of focusing on the nuts and bolts of debate facts — no one thinks the president needs to bone up on American troop withdrawals from Afghanistan's Korengal Valley, for instance — Mr. Obama is practicing how to challenge Mr. Romney, something he inexplicably shied away from in Denver on Oct. 3.

"This isn't a guy who needs be grilled on facts," one Obama aide said of the president. "What he needs to work on is stylistic." Translation: how to accuse Mr. Romney of twisting the facts without seeming rude.

Mr. Obama watched his running mate, Vice President Joseph R. Biden Jr., take on Representative Paul D. Ryan in the vice-presidential debate on Thursday night, and Mr. Biden is widely viewed as having done a far better job than his boss. Mr. Obama's aides were at Mr. Biden's prep sessions, so presumably they picked up pointers.

Mr. Obama watched the vice-presidential debate aboard Air Force One flying back to Washington from Miami, where he had appeared at a campaign rally. He huddled with six aides in the conference room aboard the plane to watch Mr. Biden interrupt Mr. Ryan, grin constantly to convey disbelief at Mr. Ryan's assertions, and

twice call the congressman's presentation of facts "malarkey."

"That was pretty good!" Mr. Obama said again and again at Mr. Biden's zingers, according to one aide in the room with the president. After landing at Joint Base Andrews in Maryland after the debate, Mr. Obama broke with tradition and approached reporters gathered under the wing of Air Force One to say he was proud of his running mate's performance.

He could not say that about his own performance the week before, though.

"He knew when he walked off that stage, and he also knew as he watched the tape of that debate, that he has to be more energetic," Robert Gibbs, an Obama adviser, said on CNN's "State of the Union." This time around, Mr. Gibbs said, "I think you'll see somebody who is very passionate about the choice that our country faces."

The president's aides say that Mr. Obama, who is fiercely competitive about everything from basketball to golf to Taboo games with his daughters, is now viewing Tuesday's debate at Hofstra University on Long Island as a chance for him, with his back against the wall, to come out swinging against Mr. Romney. But he must also try not to appear desperate and must take into account the different format of the next debate, which will be town-hall style, with questions coming from people in the audience. So during the debate sessions, Mr. Obama is working on how to answer questions posed by the audience in a respectful way, while still drawing contrasts.

Another major unknown is the degree to which the moderator, Candy Crowley, of CNN, asks follow-up questions. At the first presidential debate, Jim Lehrer of PBS did not ask many follow-up questions, while ABC's Martha Raddatz did during the vice-presidential debate.

During Mr. Obama's prep sessions here, aides have played the part of Hofstra audience members, asking questions that range from the investigation into the attack on the United States Mission in Benghazi, Libya, to Iran's nuclear program to the debate on how to rein in the deficit. Senator John Kerry, a k a Mr. Romney during prep sessions, has been spotted eating pizza and walking around the grounds of the resort with a thick binder filled with color-coded spacers.

The Obama adviser David Axelrod, cellphone permanently attached to his ear, is here, as are other advisers, including Ron Klain, Anita Dunn —

who is playing the part of Ms. Crowley, the moderator — and David Plouffe. To help on the foreign policy side, Ben Rhodes, a deputy on the National Security Council, and Marie Harf, a former Central Intelligence Agency spokeswoman turned campaign adviser, are on hand.

Unlike the last debate, where the focus was domestic policy, this debate will likely have a heavy foreign policy focus, and Mr. Romney is expected to go after Mr. Obama over the shifting White House story about the developments surrounding the attack in Benghazi, where four Americans, including Ambassador J. Christopher Stevens, were killed.

Obama Says Debate Prep 'Going Great'
Monday, October 15, 2012

Politico

By Reid J. Epstein

WILLIAMSBURG, Va. — President Obama is making no more jokes about how much he dislikes debate prep.

Asked by a reporter during a pop-in at a Williamsburg campaign office how his studying is going, the president responded with a quick: "It is going great!"

The difference is palpable compared to what he told supporters outside Las Vegas while studying for his calamitous Denver debate.

"Basically they're keeping me indoors all the time," Obama said then. "It's a drag. They're making me do my homework."

If Obama is interested in playing hooky from his debate practice — where aide Anita Dunn is playing the role of Candy Crowley and Sen. John Kerry is reprising his role as Mitt Romney — he doesn't have to go far. The president's hotel here, the posh Kingsmill Resort, is also hosting a Ferrari car show Sunday.

The day's message from Team Obama continues the campaign's vow of contrition from the first debate and vows to do better Tuesday night at Hofstra University on Long Island.

"The president is his own harshest critic and he knows Mitt Romney had a better night at the first debate," campaign spokeswoman Jen Psaki said. "The American people should expect to see a much more energized President Obama making a passionate case for why he is a better choice for the middle class."

Read more about: Barack Obama, Debate Prep, Going Great, Williamsburg

Romney And Obama Focus On Debate Preparations

Sunday, October 14, 2012

Associated Press

By Kasie Hunt, Associated Press

COLUMBUS, Ohio (AP) — Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney is preparing for his second debate with President Barack Obama but also taking time to tell voters in Ohio that enthusiasm for him is on the rise.

Obama was hunkering down Saturday in Virginia to go over the game plan for the town hall-style debate with Romney. But in his weekly radio and Internet address, he spoke of an industry that's critical to Ohio and to Romney's chance of victory.

"We refused to throw in the towel and do nothing. We refused to let Detroit go bankrupt," Obama said in the address. "GM is back. Ford and Chrysler are growing again. Together, our auto industry has created nearly a quarter of a million new jobs right here in America."

Romney opposed using government funds to help the auto industry go through bankruptcy. Many analysts believe the industry would not have survived if it had relied on private investment for rescue. It's an issue that has dogged Romney in Ohio, where numerous auto parts suppliers benefited from the survival of the Detroit Three automakers.

The Obama campaign also released a new TV ad narrated by actor Morgan Freeman noting the challenges Obama inherited and highlighting the president's successes, including saving jobs for American autoworkers and killing Osama bin Laden.

Romney is concluding a week of campaign rallies that saw him drawing larger, more excited crowds than he has through the fall campaign. More than 10,000 people turned out to several rallies, with the campaign saying that more people were signing up to attend events since Romney's strong debate performance last week in Denver.

"I've had the fun of going back and forth across Ohio, and this week I was also in Florida and Iowa, I was in North Carolina and Virginia. And you know what? There is a growing crescendo of enthusiasm," Romney told a crowd of thousands at a sunset rally Friday in Lancaster, south of Columbus, where he and running mate Paul Ryan appeared together. "There's more energy and passion. People are getting behind this campaign. We are taking back this country."

Saturday will be the fourth of the last five days Romney will spend campaigning in this industrial, Midwestern state — with 18 electoral votes, it's critical to his hopes of winning the White House. His campaign swing comes as he and Republicans criticize Obama for the handling of the terrorist attack on the U.S. Consulate in Benghazi, Libya.

Romney accused Vice President Joe Biden of "doubling down on denial" concerning security at the diplomatic post where the U.S. ambassador and three other Americans were killed. During the vice presidential debate Thursday, Biden said "we weren't told" about the Benghazi consulate's requests for additional security. Although a State Department official told Congress on Wednesday about the requests, the White House said Friday that Biden was speaking just for himself and for the president.

"The vice president directly contradicted the sworn testimony of State Department officials," said Romney, who was eager to stoke a controversy that has flared periodically since the attack. "American citizens have a right to know just what's going on. And we're going to find out."

Romney spent nearly four hours Saturday morning at a hotel outside Columbus preparing for Tuesday's debate showdown with Obama in Hempstead, N.Y. He returns to Massachusetts in the evening but first makes two campaign stops in Ohio.

After his widely panned performance in the first presidential debate, polls show Obama still holds a slim edge in Ohio. The state is crucial for Romney because his path to winning the 270 electoral college votes he needs is far narrower if he can't win Ohio. Losing here would mean he'd have to win almost all of the other up-for-grabs battleground states.

Obama was in Ohio this week, too, but he was spending the weekend in Williamsburg, Va., preparing for the debate. The president has acknowledged he needs to turn in a stronger performance when the two meet again.

Obama and top aides plan hours of practice sessions ahead of the town hall-style event, including some mock exchanges with Sen. John Kerry, D-Mass., who is playing the role of Romney.

Campaign officials sought to keep details of Obama's preparations secret. But they said the president was working on being more aggressive in responding to Romney and calling the

Republican out on issues as well as pointing out what they maintain are Romney's true positions.

While Obama has no public events planned in Virginia over the next three days, his mere presence in the state will drive some local news coverage. And he may make unscheduled visits in the Williamsburg area.

The president practiced for the first debate in Nevada, another battleground state.

Rock and Roll Hall of Famer Bruce Springsteen will join former President Bill Clinton at an Obama rally in Parma, Ohio, on Thursday, two days after the second presidential debate. Obama will not attend the rally. Springsteen also plans a second, separate campaign event that day.

Springsteen campaigned for Obama in 2008, but this is his first political appearance of the 2012 cycle. Clinton and Springsteen's joint appearance in Ohio underscores the importance of the key swing state. Polls show Obama with a slight lead there over Mitt Romney.

Obama address: www.whitehouse.gov

Associated Press writer Julie Pace in Washington contributed to this report.

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Blog: At Second Presidential Debate, Pressure Will Be On Obama
Sunday, October 14, 2012
Washington Post
By Chris Cillizza

When President Obama and former Massachusetts governor Mitt Romney take the stage at Hofstra University on Tuesday night for the second presidential debate, the pressure to perform will be squarely on the incumbent.

Thirteen days will have passed since Obama's not-a-disaster-but-close performance in the first presidential debate in Denver, a showing that he and his campaign initially tried to shrug off as a draw but came around to admitting looked more like a rout for Romney.

The two weeks since have been filled with second-guessing — and second thoughts — from the Democratic base. Although Vice President Biden's over-the-top performance in last week's vice-presidential debate helped re-energize many of

the party's activists, there is still considerable anticipation/trepidation about whether Obama will (or can) perform better in this second showdown.

Although Obama's ability to show some fight — or, at the very least, not look like he wants to get off the stage as quickly as possible — will be the dominant story line of Tuesday night, there are a few other interesting narrative strands to keep an eye on. We've plucked out three of those most interesting below.

•Obama the (more) aggressive: Obama is never going to give a debate performance like Biden turned in last week. (And that may be a good thing.) The president, for all of the time he has spent in politics, remains the college professor at heart — a cool and calculating clinician more than a heart-on-the-sleeve emoter when it comes to debating (and politics more generally). But, Obama and his team also know that another "does he even want to win" performance like he gave in Denver could cost him the race. And so, Obama is likely to use many of the attacks he didn't in the first debate: Romney's ties to Bain Capital, Romney's "47 percent" comments and Romney's unwillingness to put any meat on the bones of his tax plan. Remember, though, that Obama has never had to play the aggressor in a general election debate before. In the three debates with Sen. John McCain in 2008, it was clear that then-Sen. Obama of Illinois was playing it very safe, knowing that the Arizona Republican had to come out swinging in hopes of landing a blow that might change the trajectory of the contest. Although Obama remains a slight national favorite — and a slightly larger favorite in the electoral math — he will still feel pressure to play offense, a very unfamiliar position for him.

•Can Romney do it again?: It's hard to debate that Romney's performance in Denver turned the entire narrative of the presidential race around. But Romney's strong showing in Denver also changed the dynamic for this week's debate in New York — with the expectations of who will win reversed. (In the run-up to the first debate, polling suggested that large majorities expected Obama to win.) That means that Romney won't benefit from the "he's doing surprisingly well" story line. Nor will he probably get such a passive showing from Obama again. And while Romney's performance in the first debate has clearly given him real momentum in the race, he has simply pulled himself closer to Obama, not passed him. To make up the ground he needs to in critical swing states such as Ohio, Ohio (and, yes, we know we mentioned Ohio twice — it's that

important), Virginia and Colorado, Romney probably needs another win in Tuesday's debate — if not one as lopsided as he scored in Denver. Knowing that, and with Obama almost certain not to lie down as he did in the first debate, can Romney still shine?

•Town hall= tough(er) to attack: The setting for the second debate will be a town hall full of "average" Americans with CNN's terrific Candy Crowley moderating. The questions in the debate will be asked by people in the audience, with Crowley following up or holding the candidates accountable as she feels it's needed. That sort of format makes it tougher for the candidates to go harshly negative on each other than if it was simply the two of them standing behind podiums with Crowley seated at a table between them. The town hall backdrop puts a premium on trying to connect with the struggles, worries and hopes of the person asking the questions, not scoring points on scripted attack lines — although there likely probably be plenty of those, too. The bar to being seen as overly or unnecessarily negative is far lower in a town hall debate than in a more traditional setting, meaning that both candidates will need to walk a very fine line with their attacks.

With Romney In The Lead, Obama Needs To Step Up His Debate Game

Barack Obama and Mitt Romney are huddled with their debate coaches, prepping for Tuesday night. Coming off a lackluster performance in their first encounter, Obama needs to do better.

Sunday, October 14, 2012

Christian Science Monitor

By Brad Knickerbocker, Staff Writer

Like the New York Yankees without Derek Jeter, President Obama is going to have to step up his game in the presidential debate with the newly-ascendant Mitt Romney this week.

Everybody expects this, as campaign surrogates from both camps emphasized Sunday on the TV news shows.

"He knew when he walked off that stage [of the first debate], and he also knew as he watched the tape of that debate, that he has to be more energetic," Robert Gibbs, an Obama campaign adviser and former White House press secretary, said on CNN's "State of the Union."

On "Fox News Sunday," campaign adviser David Axelrod said Obama would be "aggressive in making the case for his view of where we should go as a country."

Republicans agree, adding their own negative twist.

"I think President Obama is going to come out swinging," Sen. Rob Portman, who's playing Obama in Romney's debate rehearsals, said on ABC's "This Week." "He's going to compensate for a poor first debate. And I think that will be consistent with what they've been doing this whole campaign, which is running a highly negative ad campaign."

"They've spent hundreds of millions around the country, including a lot in Ohio, mischaracterizing Gov. Romney's positions and misrepresenting him," Sen. Portman said. "I think you'll see that again on Tuesday night."

"The president can change his style. He can change his tactics. He can't change his record. He can't change his policies," Romney advisor Ed Gillespie said on CNN. "That's what this election is about."

Vice President Joe Biden set the scene in his debate last week with Rep. Paul Ryan, Romney's running mate.

Five times, Biden mentioned Romney's now-infamous comment about the "47 percent" of Americans "who are dependent upon government, who believe they are victims, who believe the government has a responsibility to care for them, who believe that they are entitled to health care, to food, to housing, to you name it."

Romney now acknowledges that his "47 percent" comment to a group of wealthy donors (who presumably felt the same way) was "just completely wrong," and he stresses that "when I become president it will be about helping the 100 percent," as he told Sean Hannity on Fox News.

But you can be sure that in their town hall-style debate Tuesday night, Obama will find ways to needle Romney on the "47 percent."

It's part of a pattern in the race as both sides try to embrace the middle class, especially those American families struggling in tough economic times.

Romney no longer tries to portray his early married life as a time of basement rental apartments and tuna casseroles, as he and Ann Romney did during the Republican National Convention. But he's now telling more personal stories about the families he's met along the campaign trail, working to demonstrate his understanding and compassion.

He may be a millionaire now – although not in the same class as quarter-billionaire Romney – but Obama does have his own middle class background (and that of his wife) to refer to. He's got Joe Biden's outspokenness and the Vice President's working class upbringing in Scranton, Penn., to illustrate the Democratic ticket's role as champion of working Americans.

And he's got Bruce Springsteen – rock-and-roll troubadour to a generation of fans (and voters) who idealize and celebrate the struggle of the underclass. Two nights after Tuesday's debate, Mr. Springsteen will perform at an Obama rally in the key state of Ohio.

Meanwhile, polls show a race tightening to near-toss up status.

The RealClearPolitics polling average had Romney ahead by a scant 1.3 percentage points Sunday afternoon. Battleground state polls show a mixed picture. Gravis Marketing, a non-partisan research firm, reported Sunday that Obama has regained his lead in Colorado – not as high as the 4.7-point margin he had before the last debate but 2.6 points today.

Crowley Up To Daunting Task Of Moderating Next Debate

Monday, October 15, 2012

USA Today

By Martha T. Moore

Washington — To celebrate her selection as a presidential debate moderator, CNN staff filled Candy Crowley's office with balloons and posed life-size cardboard cutouts of President Obama and former governor Mitt Romney facing her desk.

Two months later, the cardboard cutouts are still there, adorned with necklaces and scarves and pushed into a corner. The three-dimensional versions will face Crowley on Tuesday as she manages a town-hall-style debate, the loosest format among presidential debates and possibly the toughest task for the moderator.

Crowley will choose which questions get asked by the 80-member audience and ask follow-up questions herself, while watching three clocks to keep track of candidates' speaking time — all the while hoping nobody decides to ask a question about what pizza topping the candidates prefer. (A national pizza chain has offered a prize for doing so.)

A 30-year veteran of presidential politics, Crowley, 63, is moderating for the first time in an election season where moderators are under greater-than-

usual scrutiny. PBS' Jim Lehrer was excoriated for not intervening more often as Obama and Romney ran over their time limits. Conservative websites questioned vice presidential debate moderator Martha Raddatz's objectivity because then-law student Barack Obama attended her wedding in 1991. And Carole Simpson, the ABC journalist who moderated the first town-hall-style debate 20 years ago, says that choosing a woman for this format means Crowley's being marginalized.

No wonder Crowley is studying hard, rehearsing, and feeling "slightly nauseous every morning."

A town-hall-style debate, she says, is "impossible to prepare for and completely required that you overprepare. ... (It is) really different from anything you've ever done before."

A vegetarian who meditates twice a day, Crowley has even given up soft drinks (Diet Dr. Pepper). What's left is a lot of nervous joking. "I'm a non-drinker," she tells a visitor. "But I'm really thinking about it. I'm thinking that might be the way to go."

The guest list at her wedding more than 30 years ago, she says, consisted entirely of relatives, "and none of them pay the least bit of attention to politics." (She is no longer married.)

The audience at Hofstra University — 80 uncommitted voters from Long Island's Nassau County recruited by Gallup — will ask the questions, but Crowley will choose who asks them. She will know the questions in advance and call on the audience members. She, not the audience members, asks the follow-ups.

"This is about their questions, but you also want to use your knowledge to make (the candidates' responses) not the two-minute answers that they're practicing in their headquarters right now," she says.

She is "stuffing her head" with information on obvious subjects such as unemployment, taxes, Social Security and gas prices to come up with possible follow-up questions — "drill-down questions," she calls them — that she might ask. Not only is she soliciting questions of everyone she knows, she's getting reams of e-mail suggestions, including plenty of rants.

Many of the questions she receives, she says, are about state-level issues better suited to a governor's race. Many, while interesting, don't speak to larger issues that most people want to know about. Not all of them, she says, have to be about policy. "There are certain questions — and you know them when you see them — that can be

revealing. The thought-provoking question, not the policy-provoking question, can be instructive about how the (candidates) handle things in general, their mind-set about something or other."

At the same time, she will be keeping an eye on the clock. Obama and Romney each get two minutes to answer questions, a limit candidates are known to ignore.

It's a daunting task for everyone who faces it.

"It's the largest audience that you're going to play to, but there's also risk," says Tom Brokaw, who moderated the 2008 town-hall-style debate and came in for some criticism afterward. "Candy should get combat pay."

Simpson says she was a "nervous wreck" before her appearance in 1992. In an interview with Jim Lehrer posted on the CBS website, Bob Schieffer recalled "literally shaking" before he moderated his first debate in 2004, even though he had been doing television for years. (Schieffer will moderate the final presidential debate next week.)

"She has a pretty big role in terms of shaping the content of that debate, just as the other moderators will," says Alan Schroeder, a Northeastern University professor and expert in televised debates. "She's a very no-nonsense person. She projects this skepticism. She's sort of seen it all, heard it all, and she knows — what's a polite word for B.S.? She knows prevarication when she sees it."

Crowley was selected to moderate the same format as Simpson, the first woman selected by the Commission on Presidential Debates in 1992.

Women were chosen as debate moderators in 1976, when debates were sponsored by the League of Women Voters, including PBS' Judy Woodruff and ABC's Barbara Walters. They served primarily as traffic cops directing responses to questions posed by a panel of journalists (both male and female) rather than asking questions themselves.

For Simpson, the town-hall format was too much like being an emcee — the "lady with the microphone." She did not know what questions audience members planned to ask and she had little opportunity for follow-ups. Simpson is critical of Crowley being placed in that same role 20 years later.

"How much progress have we made?" she asks. "Yeah, the ladies can do the people in the audience, they're good at that, they're friendly and warm ... but the really hard stuff is going to

come from the men. ... For the first time to have a woman come along in 20 years, to put her in that position I just think is sexist. I really do."

Crowley says she's fine with being the go-between for candidates and voters in a town-hall setting.

"I don't feel shut up," she says. "Would I love to sit down with (the candidates)? I would. But do I also realize there is benefit to seeing these guys on the big stage interacting with voters? I do.

"Let's roll with it and see what happens."

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Gillespie: Obama 'Can Change His Style' But Not 'His Record'

Monday, October 15, 2012

Politico

By John Bresnahan

A top aide to Republican presidential challenger Mitt Romney said on Sunday the campaign was not worried about seeing a more aggressive President Barack Obama during the second debate Tuesday.

"The president can change his style, he can change his tactics, he can't change his record, he can't change his policies," Romney senior adviser Ed Gillespie said on CNN's "State of the Union."

Obama and his own supporters acknowledge Romney handily won the first debate, including looking more energetic and determined than Obama. And that victory has reenergized Romney's campaign.

Obama has promised to be more forceful the second face-off, yet the Romney camp says it's not worried.

"[Romney] is running on the same platform he's run on through the Republican Party primary," Gillespie said. "The country is a center-right country."

Gillespie also denied that Romney has moderated his tone and positions in order to attract undecided voters, a charge the Obama campaign and Democrats have been pushing.

Read more about: Ed Gillespie, Colorado Presidential Debate 2012

Most Crucial Time For Candidates May Be After The Debate

Sunday, October 14, 2012

New York Times

By Michael D. Shear

The most important time for the presidential candidates this week may be after Tuesday night's debate.

True, the 90 minutes that they spend in the town-hall-style debate on Long Island on Tuesday night could be a game changer if one candidate performs terribly, as President Obama was perceived to have done two weeks ago.

But if the debate is seen to be more of a draw, then the winner will be decided in the hours and days after — with perceptions shaped by whichever campaign manages the post-debate time more effectively.

Here are five aspects both campaigns must consider:

TWITTER In the old days (meaning four years ago), campaigns would send e-mails to reporters during the debate, hoping to shape their coverage afterward. Years earlier, runners would drop printed news releases at each desk in the cavernous filing center where reporters covering a debate were working.

Now, both campaigns have armies of supporters posting on Twitter as soon as the debate begins. They are armed with hashtags and snarky observations as they seek to guide the early reaction to the debate.

Last Thursday, Republicans quickly seized on Vice President Joseph R. Biden Jr.'s grin. The week earlier, they were posting about Mr. Obama's listlessness, even before the debate ended.

On Tuesday, Democrats will be ready to post about what they hope will be a re-energized president. And the team of Mr. Obama's Republican rival, Mitt Romney, will be standing by to do the opposite. Neither side can control Twitter and its millions of users. But they can try to influence it.

THE SPIN ROOM But Twitter does not mean that the campaigns can forget about the journalists. The old-fashioned spin room — which used to be in a separate room from the reporters — is now just a designated area where campaign officials

and surrogates eagerly make themselves available to reporters.

After Mr. Obama's performance two weeks ago, Mr. Romney's spinners were out in force, grinning from ear to ear. Mr. Obama's advisers slinked out late, hardly able to contain their gloom.

The goal on Tuesday will be for Democrats to argue that Mr. Obama was more forceful, without veering into what some saw as the overly aggressive territory Mr. Biden staked out during the vice-presidential debate. The goal? Shape the newspaper stories and the early-morning conversations, which can help to set the tone for the rest of the day.

THE CANDIDATES The best way to slow down a negative narrative — or enhance a helpful one — is to use the candidate quickly after a debate.

Two weeks ago, after Mr. Obama's performance rattled his supporters, the Democratic campaign followed through with two huge, preplanned rallies. Despite the damage he had done to his campaign the night before, Mr. Obama was feisty and aggressive. That helped dampen the criticism a bit.

Likewise, Mr. Romney added a brief campaign stop in Colorado that morning, showing off his energy and enthusiasm coming off a good night.

But there are risks. During the nominating campaign, Mr. Romney often stepped on his own success by making a gaffe the morning after a good debate or a primary night victory. Both candidates will need to avoid making any news that might take away from a victory.

THE ADS Most of the voters in key battleground states are not likely to attend a rally this week. However, they will see the ads produced by the candidates.

Mr. Obama produced an attack ad just hours after his debate with Mr. Romney, and another — an ad featuring Big Bird — a few days later. Mr. Romney went up quickly with ads promoting his five-point economic plan, to reinforce the idea that he has provided specifics to voters.

Bet on more ads — quickly — after Tuesday night's contest.

MORE DEBATE PREP One big challenge for the campaigns will be the short amount of time between Tuesday's debate and the final one, which will take place next Monday. The campaigns will need to try to shape perceptions from the first, even as they prepare for the next.

Both campaigns have shown a willingness to sequester their candidate for large chunks of time as they prepare. Mr. Obama spent the weekend in Williamsburg, Va., getting ready. Mr. Romney has continued to spend parts of each day in prep sessions.

No matter how much the candidates and their staff members try to respond to the aftermath of Tuesday's debate this week, they cannot forget the reality: Another is right around the corner.

TV Debates That Sell More Than Just Drama Sunday, October 14, 2012

New York Times

By David Carr

In 1960, John F. Kennedy was trailing Richard Nixon as they stepped into the crucible of the first nationally televised debate. While Kennedy soared, Nixon stumbled and never recovered.

Network television played a definitive role, but those were very different times. There were three networks, not 500 channels, and the consumer Internet was still very much on the drawing board of the future.

Half a century later, televised debates remain relevant, but the ritual is up against an always-on informational stream that surges with political messages. Television is packed full of political ads from the \$2.5 billion being spent on the presidential election, coverage is up-to-the-second on cable news, and social media followings on Facebook, Twitter and YouTube have surged tenfold since 2008. Against this backdrop, a traditional debate would seem far less consequential. By this point, voters have already been targeted, persuaded and tallied.

Except for this: 67.2 million viewers tuned into the first debate, according to Nielsen, making it second only to the Super Bowl so far this year. That's a mind-blowing level of tune-in. More to the point, Mitt Romney clobbered President Obama and in the sort of shift that political operatives dream about, moved four to six points in the polls.

Ratings sometimes go up in the second and third rounds of the debate cycle, and given the kind of Frazier-Ali hype surrounding this matchup, there is no telling how many people will watch Round 2 at Hofstra University on Tuesday night.

How is it that a ritual as old as Lincoln-Douglas — or Socrates versus Gorgias if you want to go all the way back to the Greeks — was able to move the needle at a time when audiences are so fragmented?

Credit live event television, the last remaining civic common in an atomized world. While ratings for almost everything on television have sunk, big spectacles that hold some promise of spontaneity — N.F.L. games, the Olympics and various singing competitions — continue to thrive. The first debate drew more than 70 million viewers when you count all platforms, including Web streaming, breaking a 32-year-old record in viewership for presidential debates and reminding all of us that television can tilt the rink like no other medium. (Viewership for the first debate surpassed the same event in 2008 by 28 percent, suggesting that even though we've been told everyone has already made up their minds, many chose to see for themselves.)

"Television is about drama, whether it is the Olympics, the Super Bowl, or 'Homeland,' and these debates have provided incredibly great drama," said Jeff Zucker, former chief executive of NBC Universal, including Thursday's vice-presidential debate in his assessment. "It just proves the adage that if you put on a good show, and both of these debates have been very good television, the audiences are going to be there."

Modern political campaigns seek to control every aspect of the process, but there is not much operatives can do once their candidate is on stage. Audiences watch to see who wins, which is about as primal as the news media get.

"Televised debates still provide something no other medium can, which is a head-to-head comparison that allows for back-and-forth," said Matthew J. Dickinson, a professor of political science at Middlebury College who has a blog on elections called Presidential Power. Mr. Dickinson said that analysis after the Obama-Romney debate indicated that the audience was equally divided between Republicans and Democrats, which suggests the debate was a rare instance in which the body politic was all looking at the same thing.

Mr. Obama was thought to have done poorly not because of what he did or didn't say, but partly because of how he appeared when he wasn't talking — bored, regal and miffed. (While Mr. Obama was seen as a sullen class nerd, his running mate opted for more of a class clown affect in his reaction shots on Thursday night.) Only television, with its split-screen perspective, can create this kind of X-ray into a candidate's inner workings, which is partly why people tune in.

"His demeanor was a total rookie mistake given that we now have 50 years of experience with the

television debate format," said Alan Schroeder, a professor of journalism at Northeastern University and author of "Presidential Debates: Fifty Years of High-Risk TV."

Mr. Schroeder said the way people interacted with politics was altered forever on Sept. 26, 1960, the day of the debate between Nixon and Kennedy.

"There are rare moments when you have this very specific catalyst for change and a lot of things changed in a fundamental way on that night," he said. "The visual overtook the words."

"Media coverage of campaigns has gotten so much more intense and pervasive, that the power of the debate, the nugget at the center of it all, gets underestimated."

And the use of social media, far from pulling away audiences, tends to create a magnetism around big event television. Even those with only a marginal interest in the matter find themselves pulled in by the conversational water cooler that springs up on Facebook and Twitter. But for all the hype about social media and politics — and I've dished up my share — the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press found that more than 8 out of 10 viewers of the presidential candidates' debate simply plopped down in front of their televisions and watched.

Theatrically and in terms of ratings, the debates have been a huge success. The practical political effects aren't my department, but keep in mind that Lincoln's debate bounce was, um, slow in coming. He lost the 1858 election to Douglas for the Illinois Senate seat they were orating about, and it wasn't until he put his arguments into the form of a much-read book that his rhetoric on the stump propelled him to the presidency in 1860. In the current election, there are not only two more debates, but a complicated domestic and foreign policy landscape that may yet yield game-changing events.

Still, the ability of a televised debate to land with such significant impact raises a question worth considering: in terms of import, have the hundreds of millions spent on political ads and social media outreach been dwarfed by a single unpaid media event? It just may be that audiences prefer authenticity to the confection of attack ads and flag-infested promos on behalf of the candidate.

"Picking a president is a very personal thing," said Mark Shields, the PBS analyst. "You want to get to know the guy."

Viewers, indeed voters, want someone who can stand in the crucible of the public square and not only sell themselves, but also the power of their ideas. When it comes to being president, those skills come in mighty handy.

Election 2012: How Another Obama Term Might Be Different
Sunday, October 14, 2012
Christian Science Monitor

Suppose President Obama wins reelection and the Republicans win control of at least one house in Congress. In other words, the status quo prevails.

Are Americans, therefore, in for four more years similar to the past two, defined by intense partisanship and gridlock? Or would Mr. Obama's reelection change the dynamic in Washington and pave the way for compromise?

Obama is asserting the latter. By definition, he has said in recent interviews, being reelected will put to rest Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell's priority of making Obama a one-term president, and will add new fuel to Obama's agenda - to lock in place health-care reform, raise taxes on the wealthiest Americans, and cut subsidies for oil companies, to name a few of his goals.

"The American people will have spoken," the president told The Associated Press.

It is that vote of confidence, Obama hopes, that will bring Republicans back to the table ready to make a deal - not just on the critical "fiscal cliff" issues that must be resolved by the end of the year, but also toward a "grand bargain" on deficit reduction: spending cuts, including on entitlement programs such as Medicare, in exchange for Republican concessions on revenue.

But it remains far from clear just what kind of mandate, if any, Obama will have gained from reelection, especially if he wins by a slim margin. After all, the Republicans - having lost the presidential race - will probably be embroiled in their own internal battles over the future of their party, and may be in no mood to give ground to a newly energized Democratic president, just as they weren't in the mood in January 2009 after Obama's first inauguration.

"Any kind of dream that it will be 'Kumbaya' up there and that gridlock will suddenly end and Republicans will work with him, that ain't happening," says Democratic strategist Peter Fenn.

But that doesn't mean Obama would give up. Far from it. During his first presidential campaign, in an interview with a Reno, Nev., newspaper, he portrayed himself as a Reaganesque figure who could change the trajectory of America. President Reagan, Obama said, "tapped into what people were already feeling, which was, we want clarity, we want optimism." The senator from Illinois suggested he would do the same.

Republicans Compare Obama's Response To Libya Attacks With George Bush's Handling Of Iraq
Sunday, October 14, 2012
Huffington Post

WASHINGTON — Several prominent Republicans on Sunday sought a pound of flesh from the Obama administration over its shifting explanations for the attack on the American consulate in Libya.

The theme that they returned to was that President Barack Obama had committed the same sort of intelligence mistakes as former President George W. Bush did in his handling of the war in Iraq.

"I have seen this movie before," Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.) told CBS' "Face the Nation," regarding whether the White House had been too quick to assume that al Qaeda was on the run. "I went to Iraq in 2004 and everybody told me things are going fine, this is just a few dead-enders. Iraq was falling apart, and you couldn't get the truth from the Bush administration."

"The Middle East is falling apart, and they're trying to spin what happened in Libya because the truth of the matter is, al Qaeda is alive and well, and counter-attacking," Graham said.

Rep. Darrell Issa (R-Calif.), whose oversight and government reform committee held a hearing on the Benghazi raid, echoed the theme later in the program.

"This is not very Republican, if you will, but when President George W. Bush went aboard an aircraft carrier and said, 'Mission Accomplished,' I listened, rightfully so, to people saying, look, but there are still problems, and they're still dying," Issa said. "And quite frankly, things got worse in many ways after that famous statement."

"We're going through a 'Mission Accomplished' moment," Issa continued. "Eleven years after September 11, Americans were attacked on September 11 by terrorists who pre-planned to kill Americans. That happened. And we can't be in

denial, particularly when there are compounds all over the Middle East that need to be legitimately protected at a level that security professionals ask for."

The Washington Post's Jennifer Rubin, one of the Obama administration's sharpest critics and a frequent defender of Romney, compared Bush and Obama on Twitter. "It is the biggest intelligence screw up since weapons of mass destruction," she declared.

There are problems with all of these points. The Obama administration has never said al Qaeda was defeated, the United States' commitment to Libya is tiny compared to the amount of resources Bush devoted to Iraq and the pretenses for getting involved in each scenario were vastly different.

Moreover, while there clearly were intelligence failures leading up to the attack, it's hard to place blame for the absence of additional security. Some in the diplomatic community didn't want it. A massive amount of bureaucracy didn't allow for tighter measures to be put in place quickly. And House Republicans pushed a budget that cut funds for diplomatic security, something which Issa had trouble dismissing.

But the broader political effort to tie Obama to Bush is still remarkable. Four years ago, Obama ran on a platform that promised an explicit break from Bush's foreign policy. As he lunges toward the finish line of his reelection campaign, he's being painted as a continuation of it.

Also on HuffPost:

Cardenas Sees Obama In 'Real Trouble' In Florida

Monday, October 15, 2012

Politico

By John Bresnahan

President Barack Obama is "in real trouble" in Florida, and the presidential race in the pivotal state may not be even close, says Al Cardenas, head of the American Conservative Union and a former chairman of the Florida Republican Party.

Recent polls have shown GOP challenger Mitt Romney with a small lead in Florida, a state that Romney must have to win the White House.

"Here's why they're in real trouble beyond the polling numbers," Cardenas said of the Obama-Biden ticket during an appearance Sunday on CNN's "State of the Union."

"They're in real trouble in terms of intensity. The 18-29-year-old vote, which was decisive for

[Obama] in 2008, the intensity factor is down 25 percent. And in Florida, it's even higher because of the unemployment rate among young people," Cardenas asserted.

Cardenas added that Obama is doing poorly among seniors, a key Florida demographic.

"If he's behind in Florida, according to history, he's not going to win the election," Cardenas said. Obama won Florida in 2008.

But former Rep. Robert Wexler (D-Fla.) pushed back hard on Cardenas' assertion that only Romney can reach bipartisan accord on the hugely controversial issue of immigration. Obama has an overwhelming lead among Hispanic voters nationwide.

"The most extreme position that Gov. Romney took in the primary may have been in fact on immigration," Wexler said. "He slammed Newt Gingrich, he slammed [Texas Gov. Rick] Perry for being too accommodating to new immigrants... Gov. Romney cannot run from his very harsh position on immigration."

Read more about: Barack Obama, Florida, Mitt Romney, Al Cardenas

New Mayor, Big To-Do List

Monday, October 15, 2012

New York Times

By Dan Barry

ELYRIA, Ohio

Near the cherished gazebo of Ely Square Park, just outside Donna's Diner, the mayor of Elyria waits with patient grace to perform a wedding already running late. She wears a blue blazer, white pants, a red-white-and-blue scarf and an American flag lapel pin that dazzles when caught by the midday June sun. It is Flag Day.

Finally, to the soft aahs of the park's jubilant fountain, the bride arrives in her white finery to take the hand of her buzz-cut fiancé, whose oversize gray suit ends at his feet in crumpled surprise. The dozen or so guests, some in dresses and holding cameras, others in T-shirts and holding cigarettes, rise from park benches as the mayor prepares to speak.

Whenever Mayor Holly Brinda smiles, dimples appear, and here they are again, as she studies the scene of promise before her. Who knows what the future holds, but these newlyweds enter into their compact with hope, just as Ms. Brinda did when she became the mayor of Elyria on New Year's Day a few months before.

Challenges were to be expected, of course. But the mayor has discovered that her to-do list grows anytime she steps out into her city — a city a generation past prosperity.

Where to begin?

The cutbacks that have cost city jobs and reduced city services. The pall settling over downtown. The lack of money to address blight, including the burned-out General Industries factory that a neighboring Fortune 500 company is complaining about — and you never, ever want to give any business a reason to leave.

Don't misunderstand. Elyria has a lot to offer: several global companies that use cutting-edge technology, one of the country's very best hospitals, a park system that includes not one but two waterfalls, a historic high school that recently underwent a \$70 million overhaul; summer concerts in Ely Square. ...

Then again, foreclosed properties pepper the city. The recently renovated train station serves no passenger trains and little purpose, with no connection to the tiny Amtrak depot a quarter of a mile away. Oh, and feral cats: on top of everything else, Elyria has 14,000 feral cats.

Ms. Brinda, 54, plans to address all these problems, cats included. But every day presents a new obstacle, taking up time, eating up momentum. She'll get there, she vows. This is her home. And if any comfort can be found in her city's travails, it is in knowing that Elyria is not alone.

"We're a small window into the opportunities and struggles of all people across the country," she says.

But first things first. Here is a hopeful couple standing before her in the gazebo, in a park that holds romantic resonance for her as well. With radiant pride in her role, Mayor Brinda begins the wedding ceremony:

"On behalf of the City of Elyria. ... "

Elyria's Challenges

On behalf of the City of Elyria, on another fine day, the mayor takes a leisurely drive through her 20-square-mile workplace: a city with 455 public employees, 55,000 residents and about \$30 million in its general fund. She climbs into her black S.U.V. and buckles up, her city identification dangling from a lanyard around her neck.

A toy cat, not feral, and photographs of her four grown children rest on the dashboard of her

"official" — that is, personal — car. During her successful challenge last year against an incumbent and fellow Democrat, Ms. Brinda vowed to save precious resources by eliminating a city car for the mayor.

The official Web site for Elyria celebrates the city as the home of the padded bicycle seat, the colored golf ball, the Easter Seal Society, the Heisman Trophy winner Vic Janowicz. "Founded at the fork of the scenic Black River in 1817 by Heman Ely," it says, "Elyria is a city of 'firsts' and has all the right ingredients to put Elyrians first again."

That wording — "to put Elyrians first again" — hints of the myriad challenges awaiting the new mayor. They begin to reveal themselves the moment she pulls out of City Hall's parking lot, since most of the money set aside for street paving this year has been reallocated for more urgent needs.

The mayoral dimples disappear when she talks about the city's problems. This is where her great-grandparents, German immigrants, settled, and where her father, an electronics technician for the Federal Aviation Administration, met her mother, a receptionist at the old General Industries factory that is now a fire-ravaged ruin. She is a fourth-generation Elyrian, and proud of it.

After twirling batons as a majorette at Elyria High School, Ms. Brinda earned a journalism degree at Ohio State University in Columbus but returned for a copywriting job at a local radio station. That is where she met her husband, Greg Brinda, who would go on to become a Cleveland radio sports personality. His courtship included lunches in Ely Square, by the fountain, where they imagined a shared future.

She helped to raise a family, went to graduate school, held several management jobs and served as the school board president. Then, last year, she was elected mayor on the implied promise to restore some of the grandeur depicted in her late father's vast collection of Elyria postcards.

"This was a destination place," she recalls him proudly telling her.

The mayor has kept those books of postcards. "And before I'm through," she says, "I'm going to create a new postcard for the city of Elyria."

But the Elyria she inherited had lost most of its manufacturing base over the years. Then came the recent recession to smother any shoots of recovery. Income tax revenues dropped, the state reduced financing to local governments and the

state's estate tax was repealed, meaning that the Elyrias of Ohio will soon be operating with even less money.

The resultant casualties included amenities that once fueled Elyrian pride. No Fourth of July fireworks to blow holes in the night sky. No winter festival of lights at Finwood Estate to bedazzle the children. No park rangers patrolling Cascade Park. No forester. No cemetery supervisor.

Now, Frank Gustoff, the parks and recreation director, is also responsible for the city's trees and cemeteries. "One day I'm teaching a 4-year-old how to play soccer," he says. "The next day I'm carrying a casket, and the next I'm inspecting a tree."

In other words, he says, "From tots to plots."

Faded Glory

Heading south on Middle Avenue, Mayor Brinda passes the old Lorain County Courthouse, a stately sandstone building from 1881 that is featured in so many old postcards. But the business of law moved years ago to a new building, and now the old courthouse sits underused and slipping into disrepair.

The mayor, though, is considering the county's offer to lease the building to the city for \$1. Maybe its practical grandeur could be restored one day as, say, a cultural center for the display of local artwork.

"It bothers me that the building is being allowed to go," she says, sounding a familiar theme.

She points proudly to the just-renovated Elyria High School, her alma mater, whose teams and marching band still elicit shouts of "Go Pioneers!" But more than two-thirds of the city's children in public schools receive free or discounted meals — a drastic increase in recent years, she says, that reflects the steady shrinking of the middle class.

"Parents of the last generation were in a position to help their kids," the mayor says one day. "And I think a lot of parents in my generation are just trying to figure out how to make it themselves."

Not far from the high school is Ely Stadium, where Vic Janowicz dominated schoolboy football in the late 1940s, and where Ike Maxwell starred on a championship team in the early 1970s. Mr. Janowicz went on to play in the National Football League; Mr. Maxwell now walks the streets of Elyria shouting out complicated word puzzles that people struggle to solve.

The mayor's drive meanders through Elyria's highs and lows. Here are business anchors like the Ridge Tool Company, the precision-engineering giant Parker Hannifin, and Invacare, a leading maker of wheelchairs and other home-care products. Here is BASF Catalysts, which, thanks in part to a \$24.6 million federal stimulus grant, is opening a plant to help in the making of lithium-ion batteries that, among other uses, power electric cars.

"Huge, huge, huge," the mayor says.

Unemployment here hovers near the national average of 7.8 percent, but the relatively low number provides spare comfort. "The high-paying manufacturing jobs have been replaced by lower-paying retail and food-service jobs," she explains.

The BASF expansion, she says, is a step toward helping Elyria and the rest of northeast Ohio find a marketable niche, in concert with her hope to attract businesses interested in sustainability, establish a local job-creation tax credit and hire an economic development director. "It takes years, but we are doing some things," she says.

The mayor drives on. Here are the stately historic homes along Washington Avenue, and the upper-middle-class neighborhoods like Overbrook and University Oaks. Here, too, are the poor and working-class neighborhoods, plagued by foreclosure.

Here is the nationally respected EMH Elyria Medical Center, built by a grief-stricken community a century ago after a trolley accident killed nine, injured dozens and highlighted the absence of a city hospital. And here is the bone-white Y.M.C.A. building, built in the early 1960s and shuttered since 2006.

The empty Y reflects the diminishing presence of the business titans who once called Elyria home and whose philanthropy provided an extra revenue stream when, say, the need for a hospital arose. That sense of ownership is no longer as strong, since most of the corporate leaders no longer live here.

But, she quickly adds, the global companies and the small businesses, the Rotary and the Kiwanis still rise to the moment. They chipped in for \$1.2 million of various improvements at the high school that were not covered by public financing. They raised \$60,000 for a day camp that provided summer activities for 500 children.

And the mayor hopes they will support her latest campaign: to raise enough money to restore the Elyrian traditions of holiday light displays at Finwood Estate and Ely Square.

For \$25, you're a "sugar plum" donor; for \$5,000, you're "silver and gold."

Reimagining Downtown

Finally, the mayor turns onto Broad Street, the commercial thoroughfare of downtown Elyria that most challenges the communal imagination. If it is true, as she likes to say, that a healthy city requires a healthy downtown, then the patient is sick.

The uneasy emptiness of the storefronts along Broad Street is interrupted here and there by an office or two, a bar or two, a furniture store, a tattoo parlor, a strip club. The buildings, many from the 19th century, seem to rest in a movie-set state of pause, as if waiting for someone to call "Action!"

"You kind of see remnants of greatness," Ms. Brinda says. That kind of greatness once known to the retirees of the Breakfast Club who meet every morning down at Donna's, just around the corner. A greatness that slipped away as the Midway Mall opened on the city's outskirts in the 1960s, as the General Motors plant shut down in the 1980s, as the makers of springs and bolts and other things went away.

A faint seediness has replaced the greatness. But just as Mayor Brinda has hope for the old courthouse, so too does she harbor hope for downtown.

Beyond working with volunteers to provide flower baskets and other aesthetic touches that the city can no longer afford, she is talking with urban planners about developing a mixed-used strategy — through creating tax breaks, maybe, or special-improvement districts, or working with the medical center to find housing for its work force in these historic buildings.

"It's a way to start," she says. But sometimes Elyria gets in its own way.

Forty years ago, the city moved out of the old, inadequate City Hall on Ely Square, and into a Broad Street building that the Sears department store had abandoned for the Midway Mall. But it returned a few years ago to the newly restored City Hall, and the Sears building was emptied and mostly forgotten.

That is until Mayor Brinda learned shortly after taking office in January that her administration had inherited a crisis: the neglected and now-unstable Sears building. Among other problems, rainwater had been pouring for who knows how long through a hole in the roof and down three

stories to the basement, flooding the adjacent buildings and causing wholesale rot.

City workers in hazmat suits returned from an expedition into the building with photographs of black mold covering everything from municipal records to solid-wood furniture. "Rotted from the inside out," recalls Mary Siwierka, the city's safety service director.

By its own neglect, then, the City of Elyria had contributed to the ruination of the very downtown it was forever trying to revive. The city had no choice but to condemn its own building, which it must now demolish before the structure collapses onto Broad Street.

Estimated cost: up to \$600,000 that the mayor would have preferred to spend in other ways. And this doesn't include what might have to be paid to the owners of the adjacent buildings.

Mayor Brinda reluctantly accepts that most residents will not care that the damage occurred before she took office. In the end, she says, "I am The City."

Not long ago, Ms. Brinda attended a function at the renovated train station, which is formally called a transportation center but with no passenger trains and not many buses could more accurately be described as a glorified catering hall. For many years, her grandfather had been a ticket seller and a train dispatcher in this building, giving voice to a community's vitality.

"So I'm sitting there at the table, talking to these people, and they're just marveling at this building," she recalls one day. "And I couldn't help but think about him sitting there, and, um. ... "

Her voice breaks.

"And how great it could still be."

Bearing Witness

An Elyrian wedding continues in the sun-dappled gazebo of Ely Square, where the officiant, Mayor Holly Brinda, seems at ease in the park where she was once courted by the man who became her husband.

To her left is Donna's Diner, where she gets her bacon-lettuce-and-tomato sandwiches topped by a fried egg. To her right is the restored City Hall, where she can hear the evening songs of nearby church bells. Behind her is the park fountain, which adorns more than a few of her father's beloved postcards.

A new postcard for Elyria. So much to do.

But first the mayor of Elyria asks, "As we stand here today as witness to this union, is there anyone present who knows of any reason why we may not legally continue with this wedding?"

And someone shouts, "Absolutely not!"

Spoiler Alert! G.O.P. Fighting Libertarian's Spot On The Ballot

Monday, October 15, 2012

New York Times

By Jim Rutenberg

When he was running for the Republican presidential nomination last year, Gary Johnson, the former two-term Republican governor of New Mexico, drew ridicule from mainstream party members as he advocated legalized marijuana and a 43 percent cut in military spending.

Now campaigning as the Libertarian Party's presidential nominee, Mr. Johnson is still only a blip in the polls. But he is on the ballot in every state except Michigan and Oklahoma, enjoys the support of a few small "super PACs" and is trying to tap into the same grass-roots enthusiasm that helped build Representative Ron Paul a big following. And with polls showing the race between President Obama and Mitt Romney to be tight, Mr. Johnson's once-fellow Republicans are no longer laughing.

Around the country, Republican operatives have been making moves to keep Mr. Johnson from becoming their version of Ralph Nader, the Green Party candidate whose relatively modest support cut into Al Gore's 2000 vote arguably enough to help hand the decisive states of Ohio and Florida to George W. Bush.

The fear of Mr. Johnson's tipping the outcome in an important state may explain why an aide to Mr. Romney ran what was effectively a surveillance operation into Mr. Johnson's efforts over the summer to qualify for the ballot at the Iowa State Fair, providing witnesses to testify in a lawsuit to block him that ultimately fizzled.

Libertarians suspect it is why Republican state officials in Michigan blocked Mr. Johnson from the ballot after he filed proper paperwork three minutes after his filing deadline.

And it is why Republicans in Pennsylvania hired a private detective to investigate his ballot drive in Philadelphia, appearing at the homes of paid canvassers and, in some cases, flashing an F.B.I. badge — he was a retired agent — while asking to review the petitions they gathered at \$1 a

signature, according to testimony in the case and interviews.

The challenge in Pennsylvania, brought by state Republican Party officials who suspected that Democrats were secretly helping the effort to get Mr. Johnson on the ballot, was shot down in court last week, bringing to 48 the number of states where Mr. Johnson will compete on Nov. 6.

Reince Priebus, the national Republican Party chairman, has called Mr. Johnson a "nonfactor." And Danny Diaz, a spokesman for the Romney campaign, said that its entire focus was on beating Mr. Obama and that "voters understand the stakes are high, and if they want to change the trajectory of this country, they'll vote for Romney."

But Robert Gleason, the Pennsylvania Republican Party chairman, vowing that the state will become far more competitive for Mr. Romney than Democrats realize, said he was not about to give Mr. Johnson an easy opening to play a Nader to Mr. Romney's Gore in Pennsylvania this year.

"This election will be close — if you remember, Bush lost by only something like 143,000 votes in 2004," said Mr. Gleason, noting that his party has managed to disqualify tens of thousands of Libertarian signatures. "So we play the game hard here."

Both sides agree that Mr. Johnson, whose pro-marijuana legalization and antiwar stances may appeal to the youth vote and whose antigovernment, anti-spending proposals may appeal to conservative fiscal hawks — and to supporters of Mr. Paul — has the potential to draw from both Mr. Romney and Mr. Obama.

Aides to Mr. Romney, while playing down his impact on their candidate, say Mr. Johnson is more likely to hurt Mr. Obama in the potentially critical state of Colorado, where a marijuana initiative Mr. Johnson supports is expected to draw young voters to his cause on Election Day.

They have said they are keeping a keener eye on Virgil Goode of Virginia, a conservative Constitution Party candidate who is on the presidential ballot in Virginia and 28 other states.

The Republican efforts to impede Mr. Johnson's candidacy have drawn charges of spying and coercion from Libertarians and countercharges from Republicans that the party had resorted to fraud while accepting secret help from Democrats.

Democrats and Obama campaign officials deny any such involvement. But Mr. Johnson has been

receiving critical help from Roger Stone, a longtime Republican operative once so committed to his party that he has a tattoo of President Richard M. Nixon on his back.

A onetime Nixon and Reagan aide, he said he left his party this year out of frustration with its positions on social issues, spending and domestic surveillance. (Mr. Johnson supports same-sex marriage and abortion rights and opposes government surveillance.)

And Mr. Stone says he has become so frustrated with the party's attempts to shut down Mr. Johnson, whom he says he is advising at no charge, that he vowed in an e-mail last month, "Republican blood will run in the streets b4 I am done."

Mr. Johnson credited Mr. Stone — who helped organize for Mr. Bush the so-called Brooks Brothers riot that temporarily shut down the presidential election recount in Miami-Dade in 2000 — with helping him navigate his way through the challenges, and with overall advice.

Mr. Johnson said he had no problem being labeled a potential spoiler in an election that he views as "a debate between Coke and Pepsi." (He said he viewed himself as Perrier.)

"Take the issue of Medicare," he said. "Both parties are arguing over who is going to spend more money on Medicare when we should be having a raging debate in this country over how we're going to cut Medicare."

He admits he has only limited finances. The Federal Election Commission had denied his request for general election matching funds, ruling that he did not meet its requirements for third-party candidates. And his campaign filings show he had roughly \$50,000 in the bank at the end of August, having burned through much of the more than \$350,000 or so he raised in small donations that month.

He said that his campaign had found it hard to keep up with the offers of volunteer help, and that when it came to campaigning, "I think we're going to stick with what we've been doing — stay flexible and take the most advantage out of media appearances."

Democrats say Mr. Johnson could have the biggest effect on Mr. Romney in Nevada, where a Wall Street Journal/NBC News/Marist poll in September showed Mr. Obama and Mr. Romney effectively tied.

Mr. Stone said the campaign believed it had the potential to cut into support for Mr. Romney in three of his must-win states, Florida, Ohio and Virginia — where challenges to the Libertarian candidate quickly failed — as well as in North Carolina and Pennsylvania.

There is very little polling on Mr. Johnson to bear all of this out, which his campaign points to as evidence that he is being unfairly ignored by the news media. However, The Miami Herald and The Tampa Bay Times have measured his support at about 1 percent — far more than the 537-vote margin that was ultimately deemed to have separated Mr. Bush from Mr. Gore in 2000.

"As we all learned in Florida, when something's close enough, even small numbers can make a difference," said Charlie Cook, the publisher of The Cook Political Report, which monitors electoral trends.

That appeared to be the thinking when Pennsylvania Republicans sought to go after Mr. Johnson's petitions, which Mr. Gleason, the party chairman, suspected had been collected with help from Democrats. He noted that many of the signatures came from Democratic precincts of Philadelphia.

One petition gatherer, Tracey Norton of Germantown, said in an interview that she was a Democratic committeewoman, though she said she did not act in a partisan manner when being paid to collect petitions.

In court, the Republicans presented evidence that some petitions had been collected without the proper signatures. But some of that evidence was collected by the private detective, Reynold Selvaggio who, some of the petition workers said in interviews and testimony, flashed his F.B.I. badge "like he was law enforcement," as one worker, Reynaldo Duncan, said in an interview.

In testimony, Mr. Selvaggio denied Libertarian lawyers' suggestions that it was an intimidation tactic, saying his badge stated clearly that he was retired and that he said so in his interviews. The judge hearing the case, James Gardner Collins, a former president judge of the Commonwealth Court of Pennsylvania, seemed displeased.

"I have a badge that says I'm president judge," he said, "but I don't flash it to anyone, because I'm not president judge."

His ruling in favor of the Libertarians came down on Wednesday.

Obama To Appear On 'Daily Show'

Monday, October 15, 2012

USA Today

By David Jackson

President Obama hits the comedy circuit again on Thursday.

When Obama visits New York City that day, he is scheduled to appear with Jon Stewart on The Daily Show, which provides an amusing take on the news.

It may not be all laughs, however; Stewart asked the president some tough questions when he went on The Daily Show in 2010; Stewart has also been critical of Obama's first debate performance against Republican rival Mitt Romney.

Obama and Romney debate again Tuesday, and will no doubt be a Daily Show topic.

The president also has another comedy gig Thursday in New York — one that includes Romney.

The two candidates are scheduled to give separate speeches at the Alfred E. Smith Memorial Foundation Dinner. The annual charity event features humorous remarks by political celebrities.

GOP Plans Fundraiser Retreat In New York After Obama Team Bested Republicans in September, Campaign Hopes to Raise \$100 Million for Last Weeks of the Race

Sunday, October 14, 2012

Wall Street Journal

By Sara Murray And Danny Yadron

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

Daniel Bice - Tommy Thompson's Son Calls For Sending Obama Back 'To Kenya'

Monday, October 15, 2012

Milwaukee Journal Sentinel

By Daniel Bice

Video of Jason Thompson, the son of former Gov. Tommy Thompson, was posted to YouTube by BuzzFeed reporter Andrew Kaczynski.

Jason Thompson, the son of former Gov. Tommy Thompson, was caught on video Sunday suggesting at a Republican event that voters this fall could send President Barack Obama back "to Kenya."

"We have the opportunity to send President Obama back to Chicago — or Kenya," Jason Thompson, an attorney at Michael Best and

Friedrich, said during a fall brunch hosted by the Kenosha County Republican Party.

Jason Thompson's comment about Obama prompted laughs from the crowd, with one woman jokingly adding, "We are taking donations for that Kenya trip."

For years, a fringe group of Obama critics has promoted the discredited "birther" argument that the first-term Democratic president was not born in the U.S. Though Obama's father was Kenyan, the White House released Obama's birth certificate last year showing he was born in a Hawaii hospital on Aug. 4, 1961.

Also speaking at the Kenosha event were Republican National Committee Chairman Reince Priebus and Wisconsin Republican Party Chairman Brad Courtney. The video was taken by Democratic Party operative and posted at BuzzFeed Politics early Sunday evening.

Jason Thompson, 38, has been actively involved in his father's bid for an open U.S. Senate seat, representing the campaign at some events. Running against Thompson is Democratic Rep. Tammy Baldwin of Madison.

A Baldwin spokesman declined to comment on the video.

At an evening news conference in Wauwatosa, the former four-term governor — known for committing his share of verbal gaffes over the years — initially deflected a question from No Quarter about the video.

"I don't know what you're talking about," Thompson said.

About an hour later, however, Thompson's staff sent an email addressing the controversy.

"The Governor has addressed this with his son, just like any father would do," said the campaign statement. "Jason Thompson said something he should not have, and he apologizes."

Priebus and Courtney did not return calls.

During the same Sunday news conference, Thompson had his own slip of the tongue when talking about his Democratic opponent.

A reporter asked Thompson about Baldwin's statements Sunday at the Jewish Community Center in Milwaukee, responding to allegations that she has flip-flopped on imposing sanctions on Iran.

you find out who your friends are." Taylor said Sherman is currently favored in the race.

The increased influence of super PACs in the 2012 election also has fueled a new influx of negative ad campaigns, because outside groups who are not on the ballot are more likely to throw punches than an official candidate. "I think it certainly does ratchet up the vitriol in the campaign," Taylor said of the outside effect.

Take Colorado, where the Democratic House Majority PAC released a 60-second ad on Friday attacking Rep. Mike Coffman, R-Colo., for his opposition to stem cell research. The ad features a young girl theorizing that she might get diabetes and need the benefits of such research. "Help me," she says in the ad. "Maybe I'm your little girl." She adds: "How come he gets to decide who lives and who dies. Who's he?" Coffman's race is rated a toss-up by election forecasters. "The fact that this ad is coming so late, it's really just a sign of desperation," said Owen Loftus, a spokesman for the Coffman campaign.

For Congress In Maryland

Monday, October 15, 2012

Washington Post

SEVEN YEARS AGO, as Robert L. Ehrlich Jr., the first Republican governor of Maryland in half a century, prepared to seek a second term, party leaders spoke hopefully of breaking the Democrats' stranglehold on state politics. It didn't happen. Mr. Ehrlich lost his race and, since then, Republican candidates have embraced the national GOP's rightward tilt and proved a poor fit for Maryland's centrist and liberal voters.

This year's crop of Republican candidates for Congress in Maryland's suburbs illustrates the problem. All of them oppose any deal to reduce the nation's deficit that includes new revenue. Bipartisan compromise is off-limits to these Republicans — the absolutist approach that has led to impasse in the current Congress.

We have written separately in support of John Delaney, the pragmatic Democrat challenging an ineffectual 20-year Republican incumbent, Rep. Roscoe Bartlett, in the redrawn 6th District, which stretches from near the Beltway to Maryland's border with West Virginia.

In three other districts, Democratic incumbents face challenges.

The least entrenched of these incumbents is Rep. Donna Edwards, elected in 2008 in Maryland's 4th District, which includes parts of Prince George's

and Anne Arundel counties. Ms. Edwards is an eloquent lawmaker — she was among those chosen to address the Democratic National Convention in Charlotte — and an effective advocate for liberal causes.

But she has had a prickly relationship with her party's leadership, and her office has a poor reputation for constituent services. She has a checkered record on free-trade issues, a stance affording an angle of attack for an able opponent.

Ms. Edwards's Republican challenger, Faith Loudon, a longtime party activist, is not that opponent. Her grasp of issues is thin. Even in a less Democratic-leaning district than the 4th, Ms. Loudon would make a weak candidate. We endorse Ms. Edwards.

In the 5th District, consisting of parts of Prince George's and Anne Arundel counties, which Rep. Steny Hoyer has represented for more than 30 years, the GOP challenger is more experienced: state Del. Anthony J. O'Donnell (Calvert). Mr. O'Donnell is minority leader in the House and an affable fellow. But his over-the-top rhetoric about Mr. Hoyer, coupled with his decision to sign a pledge never to raise any tax, suggests he would be unable to work across the aisle in Congress.

By contrast, Mr. Hoyer, the second-ranking Democrat in the House of Representatives, is an effective, highly sensible lawmaker with a record of getting things done. He deserves reelection.

In the 8th District, which takes in parts of Montgomery and Frederick counties, Rep. Chris Van Hollen, who is completing a decade in office, is being challenged by Kenneth R. Timmerman, a journalist and an author. Mr. Timmerman is knowledgeable about the Mideast, particularly Iran. But his assessment that the Obama administration is turning America into a European-style welfare state is a cartoonish distortion, as Mr. Timmerman, who has spent much of his life in France, should know.

We support Mr. Van Hollen, an adept legislator who vaulted to the ranks of leadership in the House. He has been at the center of efforts to forge a compromise on long-term debt reduction, and if any such deal can be struck, Mr. Van Hollen is likely to be one of its authors.

Ryan Says GOP Win Would Spur A Tax Deal

Monday, October 15, 2012

Wall Street Journal

By Patrick O'Connor

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

Ed Gillespie Challenged On Studies Supporting Romney Tax Plan

Sunday, October 14, 2012

Huffington Post

WASHINGTON — For the first time publicly, the Mitt Romney campaign was asked Sunday to defend the six studies it routinely cites as supportive of the candidate's tax plan.

The studies have been called into question for weeks now, as only one or two of them are actually academic. The rest are blog posts and op-eds, some written by the same author, others by conservative sources. One study cited was actually paid for by the campaign itself, though the campaign has since replaced that study with another.

More problematic for Romney is that a number of them reached conclusions that he would find uncomfortable. Harvard economist Martin Feldstein, for instance, said that Romney's tax plan could work mathematically if it eliminated deductions and exemptions for individuals making over \$100,000 per year. A Princeton study put that figure at \$200,000, though the author told Bloomberg News that the figure may need to be brought down to pay for Romney's 20 percent across-the-board reduction in tax rates.

Still, the Romney campaign continues to cite those studies, including during the presidential debates. On Sunday, Fox News' Chris Wallace asked top adviser Ed Gillespie whether that was misleading. Gillespie: These are very credible sources, and, you know...

Wallace: One of them is from a guy who is — is a blog from a guy who was a top advisor to George W. Bush. So these are hardly nonpartisan studies.

Gillespie: Look, Chris I think if you look at Harvard and AEI [American Enterprise Institute] and other studies are very credible sources for economic analysis

Wallace: You wouldn't say that AEI is a conservative think tank?

Gillespie: I would say it is a right-leaning think tank. That doesn't make it not credible.

Wallace: It doesn't make it nonpartisan.

Gillespie: It does make it nonpartisan. It's not a partisan organization, I can tell you, there are many instances where there have been things AEI

came out with and said, I didn't find it to be necessarily to be helpful to the Republican Party.

Wallace: Would you say Brookings Institution is nonpartisan? Gillespie: I would say the Brookings Institution is left leaning and nonpartisan.

Also on HuffPost:

Death By Ideology

Monday, October 15, 2012

New York Times

By Paul Krugman

Mitt Romney doesn't see dead people. But that's only because he doesn't want to see them; if he did, he'd have to acknowledge the ugly reality of what will happen if he and Paul Ryan get their way on health care.

Last week, speaking to The Columbus Dispatch, Mr. Romney declared that nobody in America dies because he or she is uninsured: "We don't have people that become ill, who die in their apartment because they don't have insurance." This followed on an earlier remark by Mr. Romney — echoing an infamous statement by none other than George W. Bush — in which he insisted that emergency rooms provide essential health care to the uninsured.

These are remarkable statements. They clearly demonstrate that Mr. Romney has no idea what life (and death) are like for those less fortunate than himself.

Even the idea that everyone gets urgent care when needed from emergency rooms is false. Yes, hospitals are required by law to treat people in dire need, whether or not they can pay. But that care isn't free — on the contrary, if you go to an emergency room you will be billed, and the size of that bill can be shockingly high. Some people can't or won't pay, but fear of huge bills can deter the uninsured from visiting the emergency room even when they should. And sometimes they die as a result.

More important, going to the emergency room when you're very sick is no substitute for regular care, especially if you have chronic health problems. When such problems are left untreated — as they often are among uninsured Americans — a trip to the emergency room can all too easily come too late to save a life.

So the reality, to which Mr. Romney is somehow blind, is that many people in America really do die every year because they don't have health insurance.

How many deaths are we talking about? That's not an easy question to answer, and conservatives love to cite the handful of studies that fail to find clear evidence that insurance saves lives. The overwhelming evidence, however, is that insurance is indeed a lifesaver, and lack of insurance a killer. For example, states that expand their Medicaid coverage, and hence provide health insurance to more people, consistently show a significant drop in mortality compared with neighboring states that don't expand coverage.

And surely the fact that the United States is the only major advanced nation without some form of universal health care is at least part of the reason life expectancy is much lower in America than in Canada or Western Europe.

So there's no real question that lack of insurance is responsible for thousands, and probably tens of thousands, of excess deaths of Americans each year. But that's not a fact Mr. Romney wants to admit, because he and his running mate want to repeal Obamacare and slash funding for Medicaid — actions that would take insurance away from some 45 million nonelderly Americans, causing thousands of people to suffer premature death. And their longer-term plans to convert Medicare into Vouchercare would deprive many seniors of adequate coverage, too, leading to still more unnecessary mortality.

Oh, about the voucher thing: In his debate with Vice President Biden, Mr. Ryan was actually the first one to mention vouchers, attempting to rule the term out of bounds. Indeed, it's apparently the party line on the right that anyone using the word "voucher" to describe a health policy in which you're given a fixed sum to apply to health insurance is a liar, not to mention a big meanie.

Among the lying liars, then, is the guy who, in 2009, described the Ryan plan as a matter of "converting Medicare into a defined contribution sort of voucher system." Oh, wait — that was Paul Ryan himself.

And what if the vouchers — for that's what they are — turned out not to be large enough to pay for adequate insurance? Then those who couldn't afford to top up the vouchers sufficiently — a group that would include many, and probably most, older Americans — would be left with inadequate insurance, insurance that exposed them to severe financial hardship if they got sick, sometimes left them unable to afford crucial care, and yes, sometimes led to their early death.

So let's be brutally honest here. The Romney-Ryan position on health care is that many millions

of Americans must be denied health insurance, and millions more deprived of the security Medicare now provides, in order to save money. At the same time, of course, Mr. Romney and Mr. Ryan are proposing trillions of dollars in tax cuts for the wealthy. So a literal description of their plan is that they want to expose many Americans to financial insecurity, and let some of them die, so that a handful of already wealthy people can have a higher after-tax income.

It's not a pretty picture — and you can see why Mr. Romney chooses not to see it.

The Radical Is Romney, Not Ryan

Monday, October 15, 2012

New York Times

By Steven Rattner

MITT ROMNEY, moderate. That earnestly sought post-debate public image contrasts starkly with Mr. Romney's actual positions on many issues, especially the future trajectory of government spending.

Clinging tightly to a studied vagueness when pressed for unpopular specifics, Mr. Romney has put forward a budget framework that would not eviscerate Medicare and Social Security, as is commonly believed, but would slash everything else that's not defense.

President Obama should use Tuesday night's debate to press Mr. Romney to defend — or even just explain — these proposed cuts, which would be far more draconian than those advanced by his running mate, Paul D. Ryan. Mr. Ryan is widely viewed as the real fiscal hawk, but in key areas, his views on spending levels are actually closer to Mr. Obama's than to Mr. Romney's.

All in all, Mr. Ryan and Mr. Romney do see the future similarly — over the next decade, they want government spending reduced to about 20 percent of the United States' gross domestic product, below the historic average of around 21 percent. (Recognizing that an aging society costs more, Mr. Obama proposes to hold spending at its current level, 23 percent.)

These differences may not sound like much, but by 2023, each percentage point of G.D.P. could represent about \$250 billion in federal spending.

Though Vice President Joseph R. Biden Jr. brought it up repeatedly in his debate with Mr. Ryan on Thursday, Social Security — the single biggest government expenditure — is not on the battlefield. Mr. Romney and Mr. Ryan have each backed away from threats to privatize or cut it and

now propose to spend the same amount on it as Mr. Obama would in the coming decade.

That's not the case with Medicare. Mr. Obama and Mr. Ryan have each endorsed similar packages of about \$950 billion of savings over 10 years, while Mr. Romney has opposed any reduction, making it virtually impossible for him to achieve his overall spending limit.

To be sure, Mr. Romney and Mr. Ryan agree — and differ with Mr. Obama — on many matters, like how to contain the growth in Medicare spending and whether to raise the eligibility age.

And they part company from Mr. Obama when it comes to the Affordable Care Act (the Republicans demand its repeal, claiming it would save about \$1.6 trillion) and Medicaid (Messrs. Romney and Ryan want it turned over to the states and want to cut nearly 20 percent from Mr. Obama's planned levels).

But with respect to nearly half the budget, Mr. Romney and Mr. Ryan widely diverge from each other.

Mr. Romney is calling for a huge increase in defense spending — roughly \$2 trillion more over the next decade than Mr. Ryan wants to spend, which is only \$400 billion above Mr. Obama's budget — even though the military is not asking for such an increase. Such an increase would force giant reductions, about 40 percent, in everything that's left.

"Everything else" isn't some catchall of small items, like feeding Big Bird. We're talking about a vast array of programs including civilian and military pensions, food stamps, unemployment and disability compensation, the earned income and child tax credits, family support and nutrition, K-12 education, transportation, public safety and disaster relief. And on and on.

All told, Mr. Romney would allocate \$6.9 trillion for these items, compared with the \$9.3 trillion proposed by his own running mate (and Mr. Obama's \$12 trillion, which itself represents a 9 percent reduction from current levels, after adjusting for inflation).

No doubt some of what is buried within "other mandatory and nondefense discretionary spending" can be eliminated. Perhaps Americans won't miss a few national parks or the space program.

But also nestled within this category are critical outlays for investments in infrastructure and research.

Eating the seed corn is never advisable, yet that's what Washington is already doing. The share of spending on infrastructure (roads, airports, dams and the like) fell from 2 percent of G.D.P. in 1971 to 1 percent in 2010.

More — not less — government money needs to be invested in these kinds of growth-generating projects (not to mention education and training).

I recognize that in the real world, cuts on the scale envisioned by Mr. Romney will prove politically untenable, which would force a President Romney to rethink his agenda.

But as a statement of intent, it's Mr. Romney — not Mr. Ryan — who has produced the budget that would more dramatically reduce the services offered by government, and in ways that would shock and outrage most Americans. We can only hope that Mr. Obama will draw those contrasts clearly in the debate.

Steven Rattner, a contributing opinion writer, was a counselor to the Treasury secretary in the Obama administration.

Romney The Product

Monday, October 15, 2012

Washington Post

By E.j. Dionne Jr.

As he tries to engineer a comeback in this week's presidential debate, President Obama needs to recognize two things. First, when it comes to politics, Mitt Romney treats himself as a product, not a person. Second, Republicans cannot defend their proposals in terms that are acceptable to a majority of voters.

You can imagine Romney someday saying: "Politicians are products, my friend." There's no other way to explain why a candidate would seem to believe he can alter what he stands for at will. His campaign has been an exercise in identifying which piece of the electorate he needs at any given moment and adjusting his views, sometimes radically, to suit this requirement.

In that respect, Romney does Richard Nixon one better. When Nixon was looking to revive his career in the 1968 campaign, the terribly scarred veteran of so many political wars realized his old persona wouldn't sell. And so he created what came to be known as the "New Nixon" — thoughtful, statesmanlike and tempered. The operation worked until Nixon's old self got him into trouble.

But manufacturing the New Nixon took years of painstaking effort. New Romneys appear on a

monthly, weekly and sometimes daily basis. Thus did Romney move far to the right on immigration last year because he needed to dispatch nomination rival Rick Perry, a moderate on that one issue. Since then, Romney has been trying to backtrack to appease Latino voters.

During the same nomination battle, Romney abruptly changed his tax policy to placate the supply-side-Wall-Street-Journal-Grover-Norquist axis in the GOP. Romney's initial tax proposal was relatively modest. The right wasn't happy. No problem, said Romney, and out came his new tax plan that included a 20 percent cut in income tax rates, "rate cuts" being a term of near-religious significance to supply-siders.

Romney pointedly asserted (again, in the primaries) that he wanted the tax cut to go to everyone, "including the top 1 percent." But this doesn't sell to swing voters now, especially after the leaked video in which Romney wrote off 47 percent of Americans as incorrigibly dependent. So in the first debate, Romney tried to pretend that he didn't want to cut rich people's taxes. He reassured us that "I'm not going to reduce the share of taxes paid by high-income people." (By the way, he could cut taxes for the rich a lot and still keep their "share" of the government's overall tax take the same.)

And then there's abortion, an issue about which you have to wonder if Romney cares at all. Without much effort, you can find video online in which Romney declares with passion and conviction that he is absolutely committed to a woman's right to choose — and video in which he declares with equal passion and conviction that he is absolutely opposed to abortion and committed to the right to life. Just recently, Romney moved again, offering this shameless gem of obfuscation to the Des Moines Register editorial board: "There's no legislation with regards to abortion that I'm familiar with that would become part of my agenda." There is no candidate I am familiar with who has tried to have as many positions on abortion in one lifetime as Mitt Romney.

But there's an underlying reason for Romney's shape-shifting. It's the same reason Rep. Paul Ryan always resorts to impressive-sounding budget speak and mathematical gobbledygook to evade explaining the impact of his budgets on actual human beings.

Romney, Ryan and the entire right know that their most deeply held belief — the one on which they won't compromise — is rejected by the vast majority of Americans. That's their faith that every

problem in the economy and in society can be solved by throwing more money at rich people through tax cuts.

Vice President Biden kept Ryan on the defensive during most of Thursday night's debate precisely because he refused to let anything distract him from driving this central point home. Without pause and without mercy, Biden kept bringing viewers back to the obsession of the current Republican Party with "taking care of only the very wealthy."

Obama doesn't have to look angry or agitated in this week's debate. He simply needs to invite voters to see that Romney, the product, will give them no clue as to what Romney, the person, might do as president. Romney keeps changing the packaging because he knows that the policies inside the box are not what voters are looking for.

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NEAR EAST & NORTH AFRICA

EU Set For New Sanctions On Iran

Monday, October 15, 2012

Associated Press

LUXEMBOURG (AP) — Britain, Germany and France say they expect the European Union to approve even tougher sanctions on Iran to prevent it from developing nuclear weapons.

British Foreign Secretary William Hague said ahead of Monday's meeting of EU foreign ministers that new sanctions would be "a sign of our resolve in the European Union that we will step up the pressure."

Hague said such pressure would continue to mount "over the coming months unless negotiations succeed. We remain open of course to success of negotiations."

The foreign ministers of France and Germany made similar calls. They did not elaborate on the kind of measures under consideration.

The United States and its allies accuse Iran of covertly developing nuclear weapons. Tehran denies that.

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Germany Urges Tougher EU Sanctions On Iran

Monday, October 15, 2012

Associated Press

BERLIN (AP) — Germany's foreign minister is urging the EU to adopt even tougher sanctions on Iran to hinder the country from building nuclear weapons.

Guido Westerwelle said Sunday "we must increase the pressure through sanctions" because Iran has failed to make any concessions during talks on its nuclear program over the past months.

His comments came a day before a meeting of European foreign ministers in Luxembourg at which further sanctions will be discussed.

They were the clearest indication yet that Germany is seeking tougher measures, though he stressed that the group of nations negotiating with Iran — the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council plus Germany — remains committed to a political solution.

The U.S. and its allies accuse Iran of covertly developing nuclear weapons. Tehran denies that.

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Peres Tells Brazil To Boycott Iran's Ahmadinejad
Monday, October 15, 2012
AFP

Israeli President Shimon Peres on Sunday told Brazil's foreign minister his country should boycott Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in the future, Peres's office said.

"We expect Brazil to boycott future meetings with Ahmadinejad," Peres was quoted as saying to visiting Brazilian Foreign Minister Antonio Patriota in a statement.

In 2010 Brazil's then president Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva met Ahmadinejad and helped broker a nuclear trade-off under which Iran would deposit a significant part of its low-enriched uranium stocks in Turkey in return for nuclear fuel enriched to a level sufficient for medical use, but not enough for military ends.

Israel at the time criticised the deal as liable to "radically complicate" sanctions efforts against Iran

"When we met in 2010 I told former president Lula that it was a mistake to sit and talk with Ahmadinejad, a leader that threatens the destruction of a people, a leader that denies the Holocaust and a leader that funds international terrorism," Peres told Patriota.

The Brazilian minister was quoted as saying he was present at the meeting with Ahmadinejad in Tehran and that Lula had made it clear he opposes Holocaust denial and believes strongly in peace and a nuclear-weapons free Middle East.

Israel and much of the international community believes Iran's nuclear programme masks a weapons drive, a charge Tehran denies.

The Jewish state, the Middle East's sole, if undeclared, nuclear power, has said a nuclear-armed Iran would pose an existential threat to Israel and will not rule out military action to prevent Tehran obtaining such arms.

"Do not be mistaken, Iran is developing nuclear weapons. The Iranian nuclear threat casts a heavy shadow over the whole region," Peres told Patriota.

"All the options must be on the table, we would all prefer to solve the problem through negotiations or economic sanctions but if those methods fail the military option will remain and will be serious and credible.

The statement quoted Patriota as telling Peres that "Brazil sees with great concern Israel's threats to attack Iran," and that "these threats and their potential future consequences are dangerous to the stability of the Middle East."

Iran Denies Role In Gulf Cyberattacks
Monday, October 15, 2012
Associated Press
By Nasser Karimi, Associated Press

TEHRAN, Iran (AP) — Iranian officials denied any role in recent cyberattacks against oil and gas companies in the Persian Gulf and said they welcomed a probe of the case, a semiofficial news agency reported Sunday.

Mahdi Akhavan Bahabadi, secretary of the National Center of Cyberspace, denounced as "politically motivated" American allegations of an Iranian link to the Shamoon virus that hit Saudi Arabian state oil company Aramco and Qatari natural gas producer RasGas, according to remarks carried by ISNA.

"We interpret the issue politically and in light of U.S. domestic issues as well as the (U.S. presidential) election," he said.

The virus can spread through networked computers and ultimately wipes out files by overwriting them. Defense Secretary Leon Panetta said they rendered more than 30,000 computers useless, calling them probably the most

destructive cyberattacks the private sector has seen to date.

Last week a former U.S. government official said American authorities believe that Iranian hackers, likely supported by the government, were responsible for the Gulf cyberattacks. U.S. agencies have been assisting in the Gulf investigation and concluded that the level of resources needed to conduct the attack showed there was some degree of involvement by a nation state, said the former official. The American official spoke on condition of anonymity because the investigation is classified as secret.

"American officials have said they are able to discover the source of the recent cyberattacks. We do welcome this and announce our readiness for any international cooperation to find the source of the attacks," Bahabadi said.

The Iranian official said Tehran has already offered help to boost the companies' cybersecurity, as Iran has itself recently been the victim of cyberattacks on its offshore oil platforms.

Iran periodically reports the discovery of viruses and other malicious programs in government, nuclear, oil and industrial networks. On Monday, Tehran said it had successfully blocked a cyberattack on the computer network of its offshore drilling platforms. It briefly shut down part of its oil facilities because of a cyberattack in May.

Iran blames Israel and the United States for the attacks. Israel has done little to deflect suspicion it uses viruses against Iran.

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Iran: Hezbollah Drone Proves Our Capabilities
Monday, October 15, 2012
Associated Press

TEHRAN, Iran (AP) — Iran's defense minister said Sunday that Hezbollah's launch of a drone into Israeli airspace earlier this week proves the Islamic Republic's military capabilities, state TV reported.

The statement by Gen. Ahmad Vahidi was Iran's first official acknowledgement that the Lebanese militant group's drone used Iranian technology. It came a few days after Hezbollah leader Sheik Hassan Nasrallah claimed responsibility for the launch and said the drone was manufactured in Iran and assembled in Lebanon.

"Great job by Hezbollah," Gen. Vahidi said. "The era in which the Zionist regime (Israel) could think it has regional supremacy is over."

Israeli warplanes shot down the unmanned plane, but the infiltration marked a rare breach of Israel's tightly guarded airspace.

Vahidi said Hezbollah had the right to launch the drone since Israeli warplanes routinely overfly Lebanon. Nasrallah warned that it would not be the last such operation by the group.

Iran routinely announces technological breakthroughs in its defense program. Last month it claimed to have started producing a long-range missile-carrying drone, months after it said it was reverse-engineering an American unmanned aircraft that went down in Iranian territory last year.

The defense minister reiterated Tehran's position that the Jewish state does not have the capability to act against Iran. Israel has not ruled out a military strike against Iran's nuclear program, which the West suspects are aimed at developing weapons. Iran denies the charge, saying its nuclear activities are only geared toward peaceful purposes like power generation and cancer treatment.

Hezbollah, a powerful Shiite group committed to Israel's destruction, has long served as an Iranian proxy along Israel's northern border. Israel and Hezbollah fought a brutal month-long war in mid-2006. Hundreds of people were killed, and Hezbollah fired several thousand rockets and missiles into Israel before the conflict ended in a stalemate.

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Iran Mocks Israel Air Defences After Drone Flight
Monday, October 15, 2012
AFP

Iran on Sunday scoffed at Israel's air defences as it confirmed Tehran had provided Lebanon's militant group Hezbollah with the sophisticated drone which overflew the Jewish state earlier this month.

Iran's "capabilities are very high and are at the disposal and service of Islamic nations," Defence Minister General Ahmad Vahidi said, quoted by state television when questioned on the origins of the unmanned aerial vehicle.

"It is natural to use whatever we have at our disposal at the necessary time to defend the lands of the Islamic world," the general said. "This move shows that Hezbollah is fully prepared ... and will respond to the Zionist regime."

He said the drone which overflew Israel "shattered everything that was said about the Iron Dome system (Israel's air defence shield) and it became clear that the Zionist regime can not escape Muslim anger."

Iran has developed a programme of manufacturing drones to be used for surveillance and attacks.

Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah boasted last week that his group sent a sophisticated unmanned drone over Israel, saying the device was built by the Jewish state's archfoe Iran.

His acknowledgement of the drone which Israel shot down on October 6 came shortly after Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu pointed at Hezbollah and vowed to defend his country against further "threats."

Nasrallah said the latest drone was "Iranian built and assembled in Lebanon."

Israeli Air force jets shot down the unarmed drone over southern Israel's Negev desert after it entered the country's airspace from the Mediterranean Sea.

Tiny Azerbaijan Unleashes Pop-Power Against Iran's Mullahs
Monday, October 15, 2012

Washington Post
By Joby Warrick

BAKU, Azerbaijan — The latest weapon in this country's ideological war with Iran arrived late last month in an armada of jets from California, accompanied by a private security force, dazzling pyrotechnics and a wardrobe that consisted of sequins and not much else.

A crowd of nearly 30,000 gathered to watch as the leader of this mini-invasion pranced onto a stage built on the edge of the Caspian Sea. With a shout of "Hello, lovers!" Jennifer Lopez wiggled out of her skirt and launched into a throbbing disco anthem, delighting her Azerbaijani fans and — it was hoped — infuriating the turbaned ayatollahs who live just across the water.

"You could almost feel the Iranians seething," said an Azerbaijani official who attended the U.S. pop star's first concert in this predominantly Shiite

Muslim country of 9 million. "This stuff makes them crazy."

The effect on Iran's leaders is real enough, and it is at least partly by design. Azerbaijan, Iran's neighbor and longtime rival, is coming to relish its role as the region's anti-Iran, a secular, Western-leaning country that is working mightily to become everything that Iran is not.

As Iran sinks ever deeper into isolation and economic distress, its northern neighbor is sprinting in the opposite direction, building political and cultural ties to the West along with new pipelines connecting energy-hungry Europe with the country's rich petroleum fields on the Caspian Sea. Where Iran is repressive and theocratic, Azerbaijan is socially and religiously tolerant, offering itself as a model of a nonsectarian, Muslim-majority society that champions women's athletics and embraces Western music and entertainers.

It also enthusiastically pursues diplomatic and business ties with Israel, the Jewish state that Iranian officials have threatened to destroy.

Azerbaijan's leaders insist that such policies have nothing to do with Iran, and they point to a record of mostly cordial relations with the vastly larger, notoriously peevish republic to the south. Yet, with each stride toward modernity — and with every Western diva who arrives to croon and titillate on Baku's expanding international stage — Azerbaijan chips away at the legitimacy of Iran's government and fuels discontent among ordinary Iranians, say Western officials who study the region.

"It is one of the most serious threats to the long-term viability of the Iranian regime," said Matthew Bryza, a former U.S. ambassador to Azerbaijan who now works as a private consultant. "Every day that Azerbaijan grows stronger economically and more connected to the Euro-Atlantic community — that's another day in which the Iranian regime grows weaker."

It is hardly a perfect role model. The government in Baku is dominated by a single political party, and it has frequently come under criticism by independent watchdogs for its human rights record and alleged corruption. Azerbaijan also is mired in a nearly two-decade-old conflict with another of its neighbors, Armenia, over control of the disputed enclave known as Nagorno-Karabakh.

Still, even as they press for faster reforms, Western governments are seeing a lot to like about a country whose steady ascent makes Iran's

failings appear even more wretched by comparison.

"Iranians now see Azerbaijan emerging as a regional player at a time when they are being sidelined by sanctions," said a Baku-based Western diplomat who insisted on anonymity in discussing his country's geopolitical assessments. "They see new embassies opening and new foreign investment pouring in. . . . Azerbaijan is gaining, and Iran is losing."

A cultural coming out

The visit to Baku by the pop star known as J-Lo was only one in a string of events marking the cultural coming out of a newly assertive Azerbaijan. Concert promoters have lured a steady stream of A-list Western entertainers to the country in recent weeks, including fellow pop icon Rihanna, who arrived in this Caspian seaport two weeks after Lopez's Baku premiere on Sept. 23. Rihanna was followed by blond songstress Shakira, the closer in a triumvirate of female performers known for skimpy costumes and sexually provocative dance moves.

If Baku's mostly Muslim concert-goers were offended, they showed no signs of it. Tens of thousands of young Azerbaijanis paid the equivalent of a week's salary to dance along with Lopez at her show in Baku's Crystal Hall, a lavish arena built on a small finger of land jutting into the Caspian. Many others camped outside a downtown hotel for a chance to glimpse the American pop icon.

"Best show I've ever seen," gushed "Leyla," a Baku woman who posted a pithy review on a fan site after Lopez's performance.

Azerbaijani officials say they invited female vocalists to help draw attention to yet another event: the Women's World Cup soccer tournament, hosted this year by Baku. The overall idea, they say, is to burnish Azerbaijan's standing as a progressive country that not only protects women's rights, but also promotes female participation in sports and the arts.

"We recognize that having a secular, progressive state is important for the well-being of this country," said Novruz Mammadov, an Azerbaijani diplomat and director of foreign relations in the administration of President Ilham Aliyev.

Azerbaijani officials say it's by happenstance that the country's policies run against the grain of more conservative countries in the region. In fact, the contrasts could not be more striking —

particularly with regard to Iran. And Western concerts and soccer games are only part of it.

In Baku, an ancient seaport in which Zoroastrian ruins coexist with brilliantly lighted glass skyscrapers, young couples hold hands or embrace on park benches along the broad, tree-lined promenade that hugs the Caspian shoreline — public displays of affection that are officially banned in Tehran. Women and girls in designer jeans hunt for bargains at Western clothing stores such as Bebe and Benetton. Head scarves are rare, but karaoke bars and nightclubs are plentiful along the downtown thoroughfares choked with traffic and new construction.

Fueled by a booming oil industry, the country's gross domestic product rocketed forward at a 35 percent annual rate — the world's highest — in the mid-2000s before cooling off in the face of the European recession. The cash influx paid for the city's gleaming skyline while helping lower the official poverty rate from nearly 50 percent to less than 16 percent in a single decade.

The central government has struggled to raise standards for education and health care, particularly in rural areas. But, while most Azerbaijanis share the same Shiite beliefs as their Iranian cousins, Baku has managed to prevent the emergence of religious extremism — at times trampling on political freedoms to do so. Government officials say an overwhelming majority of Azerbaijanis are proud of the country's secular traditions, which already were well established before Azerbaijan became part of the Soviet Union.

"It's not so much that we have changed, it's that others have come to understand who we are," said Mikayil Jabbarov, director of the country's historical and architectural preservation agency. "We had girls' schools 100 years ago, and we were the first Muslim country to give women the vote. The mentality was shaped back then."

Song contest crisis

Only more recently have these traditions become a problem for Azerbaijan's neighbors, government officials say. Iran's irritation with Western-leaning Azerbaijan turned to resentment and then hostility in the wake of published reports last year that Azerbaijan supplied assassins for an Israeli effort to kill Iran's nuclear scientists — an allegation that Azerbaijan vehemently denies.

Then, in February, Azerbaijani authorities disrupted what they said was an Iranian plot to kill Israeli diplomats and Jewish schoolteachers in

Baku. An investigation would later implicate 22 Iranian operatives in a series of alleged schemes to target Western embassies and businesses, including the U.S. diplomatic mission in Baku.

Relations between the two capitals cratered. But the worst crisis was yet to come, and it was over a cultural event: Azerbaijan's election to become the host of this year's televised and highly popular Eurovision Song Contest. The contest was Azerbaijan's chance to shine, and the country spent billions of dollars building an arena and sprucing up its central avenues for the expected onslaught of tourists. Iran, however, attacked the event as an anti-Islamic "gay parade" and withdrew its ambassador in protest.

The harsh reaction left Azerbaijanis shaking their heads. "I do not know who got this idea into their heads in Iran," Ali Hasanov, head of the administration's public and political issues department, told reporters at the time. "We are hosting a song contest, not a gay parade."

But by then, Azerbaijanis had acquired a taste for Hollywood-style glamour, and their government was enjoying the international attention as well as an awareness of Iran's extreme discomfort. Tickets for the Jennifer Lopez concert went on sale the following month and sold out quickly — delighting the city's concert promoters and winning new admirers for a country that appears to have sided firmly with musicians over mullahs, with implications that extend far beyond its borders.

"It's easy to make fun, but this is part of their foreign policy strategy, and it's actually smart," a second Western diplomat said of Azerbaijan's canny embrace of pop. "On one level, it says to the world, 'We're a real country, and we can attract world-class entertainment.' On another level, it drives the Iranians to distraction."

Prosecutor's Victory Shows Judiciary's Power In Egypt

Monday, October 15, 2012

Wall Street Journal

By Matt Bradley

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

Tunisia Sets June Date For Polls After Compromise

Monday, October 15, 2012

AFP

Tunisia will go to the polls next June, the Islamist-led government said Sunday, after striking a deal on a new constitution for the North African state which was the cradle of the Arab Spring.

The announcement of the June 23 date for both presidential and parliamentary elections came after National Constituent Assembly speaker Mustapha Ben Jaafar told AFP in an interview that a key proposal by the Islamist Ennahda party to outlaw blasphemy in the new constitution would be dropped.

The proposal stoked fears of creeping Islamisation in Tunisia, which has been wracked by political tensions and a wave of violent attacks in recent weeks that have been blamed on radical Salafists.

Ennahda and its coalition partners — centre-left parties, the Congress for the Republic (CPR) of President Moncef Marzouki and Ettakatol — also agreed that a second round in the presidential ballot will take place on July 7.

A statement said the parties agreed "on a mixed political system in which the president will be elected by universal suffrage for a better balance of power, including at the heart of the executive branch."

Disagreement has been rife over the content of the constitution and the political system in Tunisia, which sparked the Arab Spring when it ousted veteran strongman Zine El Abidine Ben Ali early last year.

Ennahda, an Islamist party which touts itself as moderate, won Tunisia's first post-uprising poll in October, taking 41 percent of the seats in the National Constituent Assembly.

It said that Islamic law would not be inscribed in the new constitution and eyed a parliamentary system, while the other parties insisted that key powers should be held by a president elected by universal suffrage.

But polls can only be held after parliament adopts the new constitution which is being drafted by the interim assembly.

Assembly speaker Jaafar told AFP this week that a first draft of the text will be submitted in November to parliament which is expected to debate each article over a period of several months before a vote takes place.

The ruling coalition also agreed overnight on setting up an independent electoral commission to be headed, according to sources, by Kamel Jendoubi, architect of Tunisia's first free polls in October last year.

The compromise is a leap forward in Tunisia, a still fragile nation despite the gains achieved from the revolution that ousted Ben Ali in January 2011.

Jaafar, who heads Ettakatol party, admitted in the interview with AFP this week that the coalition government had made several "mistakes" and "lacked firmness" towards the increasingly assertive Salafist movement.

The government also has been accused of authoritarian tendencies, and of having failed to make progress on social and economic issues that were driving factors behind the revolution.

Bahrain King Blasts 'Foreign' Links In Unrest Monday, October 15, 2012
Associated Press

MANAMA, Bahrain (AP) — Bahrain's king says his country will stand against foreign interference — a clear reference to Iran — in clashes between the Sunni-led ruling system and majority Shiites seeking a greater political voice.

The comments Sunday to parliament by King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa are part of efforts to link Iran to the 20-month Shiite uprising in the strategic Gulf nation, home to the U.S. Navy's 5th Fleet. Iran has denounced the violence, and there is no firm evidence of Tehran aiding the protesters.

Bahrain presents a difficult challenge for Washington, which seeks to keep its military ties but also has expressed concern about the unrest that has claimed more than 50 lives.

Shiite opposition groups claim the government is not willing to hold full-scale dialogue on political reforms.

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Bahrain King Urges Talks, And To Make 'Violence' A Crime Monday, October 15, 2012
AFP

Bahrain's King Hamad said at the opening of parliament on Sunday that the government was open to dialogue with the opposition and also urged the body to criminalise "violence."

"The door to talks remains open to everybody," he said in a speech to MPs, while also warning the opposition against resorting to violence for political aims.

"Demands cannot be met through the use of force and violence but through dialogue and national understanding," he said of near daily anti-government protests by Shiites in the Sunni-ruled Gulf kingdom.

The Shiite-led opposition in Bahrain wants a constitutional monarchy.

"We reject a grave escalation on the streets," the king stressed, regretting that "democracy is being exploited so demands can be met through the use of violence and terrorism."

He asked both chambers of parliament to consider "promulgating the necessary legislation to criminalise everything that harms our unity and the security of the population."

Earlier on Sunday, the main Shiite opposition group Al-Wefaq in a statement lamented what it called "the absence of credibility" in statements by those in power on their openness to "dialogue."

It issued the statement after its leader, cleric Sheikh Ali Salman, was called in by police for questioning over over remarks the authorities said related to "sectarian and security" matters.

Criminal investigation police questioned him in the presence of two lawyers over statements he made during a visit to Egypt earlier this month, according to a statement carried by the BNA state news agency.

Al-Wefaq dominated elections twice in 2006 and 2010 in Shiite areas of the Sunni-ruled kingdom, and formed the largest single bloc in both parliaments.

But its MPs resigned in protest over violence used by security forces against Shiite-dominated protests that broke out in mid-February 2011 and came under a deadly crackdown a month later.

According to the International Federation for Human Rights, a total of 80 people have been killed in Bahrain since the violence began on February 14, 2011.

Jailed Bahrain Medics "Go On Hunger Strike" Monday, October 15, 2012
AFP

Five medics jailed in connection with last year's anti-regime protests in Bahrain went on hunger strike on Sunday, urging international rights groups to campaign for their release, lawyers said.

The Shiite medics, who have been in prison since October 1 after the Gulf kingdom's highest court upheld their prison sentences, called their action

"The Lost Justice," and have stopped taking food and medicine, the lawyers said.

A sixth medic has been released because of time already served.

The medics reiterated accusations that the authorities used "harsh and systematic torture" during months of initial detention in the wake of a deadly crackdown on protests in March last year.

In a statement transmitted by lawyers, they claimed the alleged torture "caused injuries and disabilities whose traces remain on the bodies of the medics."

The statement urged "all international organisations to demand their release."

The hunger strikers include consultant orthopaedic surgeon Ali Alekri, who was sentenced to five years, and senior nurse Ibrahim Damastani who was given a three-year term.

Both were convicted of possessing a weapon and of illegal assembly.

The remaining medics were found guilty of illegal assembly and inciting hatred, and were sentenced to between two months and a year.

Three other medics' convictions were also upheld by the high court, but they had already served their sentences.

They were among 20 doctors and nurses who worked at the Salmaniya Medical Complex in Manama during the predominantly Shiite month-long uprising against the kingdom's ruling Sunni dynasty in February 2011.

All 20 were first charged and convicted by a quasi-military court formed after the government crackdown on the protests, and many initially received harsh sentences of up to 15 years.

Nine were acquitted by a lower appeals court in June.

Sporadic protests still take place in Bahrain's mainly Shiite neighbourhoods, often sparking sometimes deadly clashes with police.

According to the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), a total of 80 people have been killed in Bahrain since the violence began on February 14, 2011.

US Drops Gaza Scholarships After Israel Travel Ban

Monday, October 15, 2012

Associated Press

By Lauren E. Bohn, Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Amal Ashour, 18, loves Shakespeare and American pop music. One of the brightest students in the Gaza Strip, she studied her senior year of high school in Minnesota through a U.S.-government funded program.

She had planned to study English literature this fall at a university in the West Bank through another U.S.-sponsored program, but just a month before school started, she was informed the scholarship was no longer available.

"When you live in Gaza, you're a pawn in a greater political game," she said in a telephone interview. "There's nothing we can do about it." She is now enrolled at Islamic University, a stronghold of Gaza's ruling Islamic militant Hamas.

Under Israeli pressure, U.S. officials have quietly canceled a two-year-old scholarship program for students in the Gaza Strip, undercutting one of the few American outreach programs to people in the Hamas-ruled territory. The program now faces an uncertain future, just two years after being launched with great fanfare by U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton during a visit to the region.

The program offers about 30 scholarships to promising but financially challenged Palestinian high school seniors from Gaza and the West Bank to study in local Palestinian universities.

It is a rare opportunity for gifted students in Gaza, which has been constrained by an Israeli blockade since Hamas seized power five years ago. The blockade has made it harder for Palestinians to travel abroad. Both Israel and the U.S. consider Hamas a terrorist group because of its hundreds of attacks against Israelis, including suicide bombings, and frequent rocket attacks from Gaza.

After allowing the scholarship program to proceed in 2010, Israel this year refused to give permits for the Gaza students to travel to the West Bank. Hamas' rival, the Western-backed Palestinian Authority, governs the West Bank.

Citing security reasons, Israel bans most Gazans from traveling to Israel or the West Bank. Exceptions are made for about 5,000 humanitarian cases each month.

Education is not considered a humanitarian concern. Israeli officials claim that West Bank universities are breeding grounds for militant groups like Hamas. Last month, Israel's Supreme Court upheld this travel ban on students.

Israeli military spokesman Guy Inbar said the policy is part of Israel's struggle against Hamas, an Iranian-backed group committed to Israel's destruction.

"Hamas makes great efforts to establish new affiliates of the terrorist infrastructure from Gaza to the West Bank, and to transfer knowledge to strengthen the existing infrastructure in the West Bank today," Inbar said. He noted that nearly 300 Gaza students have been able to leave the region to study abroad since 2010.

The Palestinians seek to turn Gaza and the West Bank, located on opposite sides of Israel, into an independent state. But since the Hamas takeover, the Palestinians have been torn between rival governments, and Israel has treated them separately. Israel maintains relations with the Western-backed Palestinian Authority in the West Bank, while branding Hamas-run Gaza a hostile territory. Repeated attempts by the Palestinian rivals to reconcile have failed.

In a statement, the American consulate in Jerusalem said it decided not to grant the scholarships over the summer after Israel said it would not permit the students to travel. "Because of the timing and risk of losing funding, available scholarships were awarded to other applicants," it said. "We hope to include Gazan students in future programs."

The scholarship program, administered by the nonprofit group Amideast, is one of the few contacts between the U.S. and Hamas-ruled Gaza.

Sari Bashi, director of Gisha, an Israeli advocacy group dedicated to increasing the free movement of Palestinians, said the case reflected U.S. unwillingness to confront a strong ally.

"It's unfortunate and telling that the U.S. government cannot convince its closest ally in the region to allow its scholarship holders to travel from Gaza to Palestinian universities in the West Bank, for fear of clashing or making a diplomatic issue," she said.

Hamas, meanwhile, has also jumped in. Last year, it barred seven high school students from traveling to the United States for a year of study under a U.S. program, citing worries over their supervision.

Ashour said students like her are caught in the political battle and stand to lose the most.

"When I studied in America, I loved how you could travel from state to state without any borders. You live your life," she said. "I can't leave Gaza.

Everyone — Hamas, Israel, everyone — is controlling us. We are just students. We don't have anything to do with politics."

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Cabinet: Israel To Head To Polls January 22
Monday, October 15, 2012
Associated Baptist Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Israel's parliamentary election has been set for Jan. 22, the Cabinet decided Sunday, with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu leading in the polls.

Netanyahu said he was forced to call early elections last week after he was unable to pass a budget for the coming year. Elections were originally scheduled for October 2013.

The Cabinet's decision Sunday awaits final approval from the parliament on Monday, where an endorsement is expected.

Most polls have shown Netanyahu is likely to retain his post if the current party alignment remains in place. He has presided over a stable coalition for nearly four years in a country where governments rarely serve out their full terms.

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Israel Ministers Back Jan 22 Election
Monday, October 15, 2012
AFP

The Israeli cabinet gave its approval on Sunday to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's proposal to hold an early general election on January 22, a statement from the premier's office said.

Netanyahu had on Tuesday announced his intention to bring forward an election that had been scheduled for October 2013, saying the decision was driven by the current deadlock among coalition partners over the passage of a budget packed with austerity measures.

The Israeli parliament, or Knesset, will have to vote on the date in the coming days, in a move which is likely to be approved.

That will pave the way for an election which polls suggest Netanyahu and his coalition of rightwing and religious parties will comfortably win.

Analysis: Israel's Netanyahu Faces Wild Cards

Sunday, October 14, 2012

Associated Press

By Dan Perry, Associated Press

TEL AVIV, Israel (AP) — The Israeli government has called a general election for Jan. 22, and polls suggest Benjamin Netanyahu's rightist-religious coalition is likely to win a renewed majority — but an array of wild cards make the outcome of this campaign unpredictable nonetheless.

The stakes are high: A Netanyahu re-election could make an Israeli attack on Iran's nuclear program more likely, risking regional war and global economic crisis. And it could end whatever small chance still exists of a genuine Israeli pullout from even parts of the West Bank — something the Israeli opposition is almost desperate to bring about, but Netanyahu's nationalist allies fervently oppose.

The vote also comes at a pivotal point in the increasingly acrimonious cultural clash between Western-oriented liberals and Netanyahu's resilient alliance of social conservatives, security hawks and fundamentalist Jews.

That dichotomy is mirrored in Israel's traditional electoral map, a bewildering affair that nonetheless reduces to two rival "blocs" vying for 61 out of 120 Knesset seats — the threshold needed to form a government.

The "left" bloc, historically led by the Labor Party, wants the West Bank and Gaza — captured from Jordan and Egypt respectively in the 1967 war — either traded for peace or separated from Israel in some other way to protect a Jewish majority within "Israel proper." Jews currently make up about three-quarters of Israel's population, but when the West Bank and Gaza are included, the breakdown between Jews and Arabs is close to 50/50. Smaller dovish groups and parties from Israel's Arab minority are also in this bloc.

The "right" bloc is led by Netanyahu's Likud, which historically has been hostile to territorial concessions. Netanyahu now says he is ready for a limited Palestinian state in some of the West Bank — yet his government continues to build Jewish settlements deep inside it and few take him at his word. Rounding out the bloc are even more nationalist groupings and religious parties eager to deepen the Jewish character of the state.

Polls suggest the right could win about 65 Knesset seats — a near-default majority that has mostly held for decades, built in part by the demographic advantage of a religious minority with high birthrates.

It is only occasionally overturned, either by circumstance or machination: An experiment with direct election of the prime minister resulted in a win for Labor's Ehud Barak in 1999. The defection of Likud Prime Minister Ariel Sharon — creator of the centrist Kadima Party that cannibalized Likud and ended up in the left bloc — led to the more dovish Ehud Olmert serving as premier from 2006-9.

The new campaign presents a significant number of wild cards that could affect the result:

THE CENTER

Popular dissatisfaction with the left-right dichotomy occasionally gives rise to "centrist parties" that claim they might align with either bloc. But these days such parties — whose support and makeup generally reflects the secular and Westernized side of Israel — find their natural location with the left, as Kadima did, and amount to a device for taking votes from the right.

The newest centrist offering is Yesh Atid (There Is A Future), built around the popularity of 49-year-old Yair Lapid — a former TV news anchor, talk show host, newspaper columnist, movie star, mystery novelist and amateur boxer. Polls show he could lead one of the largest parties, with up to 19 seats. Depending on whom he chooses to run by his side, he seems to have a shot at taking votes from the right.

A RIVAL

Whereas Netanyahu is unchallenged in his bloc; the left is splintered into at least three mid-sized parties: a somewhat resurgent Labor, with former journalist Shelly Yachimovich as its leader, running mostly on social issues such as redistribution of wealth; Kadima, now led by the relatively unpopular former military chief Shaul Mofaz; and Yesh Atid.

There is tremendous pressure on them to unite, driven by the idea that this would change the psychology of the race and draw support greater than the sum of the left's current parts. Indeed, a poll in the Jerusalem Post found that a unified party would outpoll Likud and become the largest party.

Would that be enough to crack the advantage of the wider right bloc? That may depend on whether a galvanizing figure is brought in to lead it.

The current speculation focuses on an Olmert comeback, which he is believed to be considering and which would be a gamble. Forced from office four years ago by a corruption scandal, he has

been cleared of most charges but still faces trial in a bribery case. The backup is Tzipi Livni, Olmert's foreign minister and a former Kadima leader — who is also said to be mulling the creation of yet another centrist party.

THE GENERAL

Gabi Ashkenazi, who was military chief until last year, is so popular that it is generally accepted that the recent law freezing top security officials out of politics for three years after their retirement was formulated mostly to keep him from leading the left against Netanyahu — and so in popular parlance it bears his name.

Taciturn and tough-looking, with security credentials and of politically useful mixed European and Middle Eastern heritage, he is believed to have strong appeal to the right. The much-discussed scenario has him campaigning for the left under the understanding that if the bloc wins it would repeal the "Ashkenazi Law" and appoint him defense minister.

DEFLECTIONS

Although the right bloc has propped Netanyahu nicely for four years, two potential defections exist. Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman, head of the mid-sized Yisrael Beiteinu party, is an aggressive nationalist who nonetheless took part in the last Kadima government, is bitter about a years-long corruption investigation, and harbors ambitions of leading the right bloc that suggest an interest in seeing Netanyahu go down. And Arieh Deri, the only major ultra-Orthodox leader who is seen as moderate on the Palestinians, is returning to politics after a jail spell and a long hiatus; if he is not reinstated as head of the religious Shas Party many expect him to run against it, taking some of its dozen-odd seats and possibly delivering them to the left.

IRAN

Some in Netanyahu's circle cast the election as a referendum on attacking Iran — or at least on Israel's right to act militarily to prevent the Islamic Republic from achieving nuclear weapons capability. Normally, on security issues, Israelis do turn hawkish at the polls.

But this one is complicated: The security establishment considers the talk of an attack reckless and seems to oppose the idea; much of the world is arrayed against the notion, seeking more time for economic sanctions to force Iran's hand; and polls show the Israeli public — fearing a massive counterstrike including missiles on their cities and mayhem on their borders — opposes

any move that is not coordinated with the United States. It could make very uncomfortable campaigning for Netanyahu.

IT'S THE ECONOMY

Netanyahu supporters nonetheless hope the election hinges on the usual strategic issues, especially the Palestinians. On that well-worn ground, Likud is helped by the perception here that the Palestinians are sticking to unreasonably maximalist positions — including a division of Jerusalem that would mean a potentially tense border running right through the downtown of the holy city.

But if the left can change the discourse, Netanyahu is vulnerable on two issues.

So many Israelis are unhappy with the economy — surprisingly good macroeconomic figures alongside tremendous income gaps and widespread poverty — that a social protest movement largely aimed against the government last year sent hundreds of thousands to the streets. If this becomes an election issue it could galvanize the left vote — which historically, unlike the disciplined masses of the religious right, tends to be lazy on election day.

And Netanyahu is dangerously exposed on the question of ending the current system of draft exemptions for tens of thousands in the burgeoning ultra-Orthodox minority — ordered earlier this year by the Supreme Court, supported by most Israelis, and largely ignored by his government. The secular majority, including many on the right, is increasingly alarmed by Orthodox efforts to segregate the sexes in public, their widespread reliance on state handouts, and their school system, which turns out Torah scholars who know little English or math and have few skills for the work world. Netanyahu's utter dependence on their parties' votes for the right bloc's majority could focus minds, drive away the center and amount to his Achilles' heel in this campaign.

Dan Perry has covered the Mideast since the 1990s and currently leads AP's coverage in the region. Follow him at twitter.com/perry_dan

An AP News Analysis

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Israel Aims Air Attacks At Gaza Militants

Monday, October 15, 2012

Wall Street Journal

By Joshua Mitnick

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

Israeli Airstrike Kills Senior Gaza Militant

Monday, October 15, 2012

Associated Press

By Ibrahim Barzak, Associated Press

GAZA CITY, Gaza Strip (AP) — Israel claimed a significant blow against al-Qaida-inspired militants in the Gaza Strip Sunday, killing one of the most influential leaders from an extreme branch of Islam that has targeted Egypt and Gaza's Hamas rulers as well as Israel.

Hisham Saidani was killed alongside another top militant in the northern Gaza Strip in an airstrike late Saturday, Israel's military said. He was one of the main ideological guides for the violent, ultra-conservative Islamic movements in Gaza known as Salafi jihadis.

The Israeli military said Saidani, 43, was suspected of carrying out attacks against Egyptian and Israeli targets, but they would not provide further information.

Militants on jihadi websites identified the other dead man as Ashraf Sabah, 37. They said he was the leader of another al-Qaida inspired group, Ansar al-Sunnah.

In recent years, a number of shadowy groups that claim inspiration from al-Qaida have been on the rise in Gaza. While they are not believed to have direct links with the global terror network, they share the same belief that they can impose their fundamentalist version of Islam by force and frequently borrow its tactics. They have also clashed with Gaza's ruling Islamic militant Hamas movement.

Saidani led a small group, "Tawhid wal Jihad," or "Monotheism and Holy War," believed responsible for killing of an Israeli civilian working along the Egyptian border last June. He was also linked to the Mujahideen Shura Council, another militant group operating in Gaza and Egypt's neighboring Sinai desert.

Salafi militants first emerged in Gaza around 2005, after Israel withdrew from the territory. Members of one such group, the Army of Islam, cooperated with Hamas in the abduction of an Israeli soldier the following year. But after Hamas

seized power in Gaza in 2007, differences emerged, and the sides parted ways.

Several hundred Salafi militants are now believed to be in Gaza. Saidani was the best known.

Saidani returned to Gaza in 2008 when Gaza militants blew a hole through the border fence with Egypt. Thousands of people crossed the border at the time.

Followers of Saidani were responsible for kidnapping and killing Italian activist Vittorio Arrigoni in Gaza in March 2011. Saidani later denounced the act.

He sought to unite the many groups of ultraconservative Salafis in Gaza, according to jihadis commenting about his death.

In response to Saidani's death, al-Qaida's media arm warned Israel that its "joy will not last long."

"We fully trust our brothers that they will be capable of avenging the killing," said a statement by the Global Islamic Media Front, a European group that supports al-Qaida and other extremist organizations. The statement underscored Saidani's prominence among jihadis.

Over the past year, Israel has targeted militant Salafi militants with airstrikes in Gaza, seeing them as a new threat to its southern border.

On Sunday, Israeli airstrikes killed three more militants, said Palestinian health spokesman Ashraf al-Kidra. In all, five militants were killed in weekend fighting.

Israeli officials believe the militant Salafis sometimes cross between Gaza and Sinai, using the lawless Egyptian territory as a base to conduct attacks, or to flee after carrying out attacks elsewhere. Many adopt a Pakistani style of dress: long loose shirts over baggy pants, sandals and turbans.

They are considered a threat not only to Israel, but to Hamas and Egypt as well.

Militant Salafis consider Hamas, which itself is dedicated to Israel's destruction, to be too moderate because it seeks to establish a Palestinian state. Instead, they believe all Muslim lands should be united under the rule of fundamentalists, forcefully applying an extremely conservative version of Islam.

Most Salafis disavow militancy. They have lived quietly in Gaza for decades, some in separate, closed communities.

Hamas arrested Saidani, also known as Sheik Abu Walid-al-Maqdasi, last year in the one of most high-profile arrests against the territory's militant Salafis. He was released two months ago.

Saidani was also imprisoned in Egypt after he tried to join militants fighting in Iraq. He was arrested again after he tried to enter Gaza through smuggling tunnels that connect the two territories, according to a militant website that listed Saidani's biography.

Speaking to his Cabinet on Sunday, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu praised the attack.

"The global jihad is stepping up its efforts to harm us, and we will continue to act against it aggressively and powerfully, both reactively and pre-emptively," Netanyahu said.

During the last few days of violence, Palestinians fired more than 40 rockets at Israeli communities near Gaza, the military said. The salvos damaged property, but nobody was hurt.

Israel says it holds Hamas responsible for the barrages because it rules Gaza. The two have largely maintained an unwritten truce since a brief war nearly four years ago, but flare-ups occur occasionally.

In a separate development, the U.N.'s Middle East envoy harshly criticized attacks blamed on Israeli settlers against Palestinian farmers and their olive trees in the West Bank.

In a statement, Robert Serry said Israel must do more to protect Palestinians and their property in the West Bank. The West Bank, claimed by the Palestinians for a state, is under Israeli military rule.

"These acts are reprehensible, and I call on the government of Israel to bring those responsible to justice," Serry said.

The Israeli military said security forces were taking "every measure to ensure the safety and security of the local residents."

Additional reporting by Maamoun Youssef in Cairo and Diaa Hadid in Jerusalem. Follow Hadid on twitter.com/diaahadid

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UN Envoy Alarmed By Attacks On Palestinian Trees
Monday, October 15, 2012

Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — The U.N. Middle East envoy says he's alarmed by attacks blamed on Israeli settlers against Palestinian farmers and their olive trees.

Robert Serry says Israel must do more to protect Palestinians and their property in the West Bank, in a statement sent to reporters Sunday. Israel's military had no immediate comment. The West Bank, claimed by the Palestinians for a state, is under Israeli military rule.

An Israeli rights organization, B'Tselem, counts 450 Palestinian-owned trees either damaged or uprooted since the harvest season began on October 10.

Every year a small number of extremist Jewish settlers carry out attacks during harvest season. Most attacks occur close to Jewish settlements in the West Bank. Olive groves provide crucial income for Palestinian farmers.

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Settler Raids On Palestinian Olives 'Reprehensible': UN
Monday, October 15, 2012
AFP

A senior United Nations envoy on Sunday condemned a wave of attacks by Israeli settlers on Palestinian olive groves and called on Israel to punish the perpetrators.

"I am alarmed at recent reports that Israeli settlers in the West Bank have repeatedly attacked Palestinian farmers and destroyed hundreds of their olive trees at the height of the harvest season," said Robert Serry, UN special coordinator for the Middle East peace process.

"These acts are reprehensible and I call on the government of Israel to bring those responsible to justice," he said in a statement.

Israeli rights group Yesh Din said it had logged 35 attacks targeting olive trees, grapevines and other fruit trees between September 2011 and July 2012, but in 99 percent of cases police had closed their probes for lack of evidence.

"The phenomenon of tree vandalism continues even more forcefully this year and targets the property and livelihood of many Palestinian families," said Yesh Din.

"The police's failure to enforce the law and protect the Palestinians' property encourages this phenomenon because the criminals who go unpunished are not deterred from repeating their actions."

Israeli police challenged Yesh Din's findings.

"They are inaccurate and out of date," spokesman Micky Rosenfeld told AFP. "Police have stepped up activity, particularly over the past few weeks, in dealing with the incidents which have been taking place."

"There was an undercover police operation which took place just under two weeks ago where three police officers dressed up as Palestinian shepherds were attacked (by settlers)," he said, adding that the officers were specifically watching out for attacks on Palestinian farmers at the time.

"Israeli police have arrested four people who were directly connected in that attack."

On Saturday, dozens of olive trees were set ablaze in the West Bank village of Qaryut village, south of Nablus, in an attack villagers and Palestinian security officials blamed on settlers.

Yesh Din quoted Qaryut farmer Said Ahmad Jaber as saying that just a few days earlier, on Tuesday, he had 120 olive trees cut down.

Rosenfeld said an investigation into those attacks was under way but no arrests had so far been made.

A coalition of Israeli rights groups said hundreds of trees had been damaged or had their crop stolen since October 7.

"The past week was unusual in terms of the extent of the theft and destruction of Palestinian olive groves, especially those near settlements and outposts known as trouble spots," they said.

"According to early estimations, over 450 Palestinian trees have been damaged this week."

The threat faced by Palestinian olive farmers during the harvest, which began last week, was raised by senior Palestinian official Hanan Ashrawi in a letter to diplomats.

"Palestinians across the country have begun the annual olive harvest this month and once again they are being attacked by violent Israeli settlers," she wrote in the letter, a copy of which was seen by AFP.

"The Palestinian people request that your mission to our country send observers to all major at-risk olive picking areas to document Israeli settler and

military abuses. In addition we believe your presence will be a deterrent to further violence."

Figures released last year by aid group Oxfam indicated there are about 9.5 million olive trees in the West Bank, where the crop is a vital source of revenue for Palestinian farmers.

In a good year, the olive harvest contributes around \$100 million (77 million euros) in income to some of the poorest Palestinian communities.

All-Female Ticket Aims To Be Heard, If Not Seen

Monday, October 15, 2012

New York Times

By Jodi Rudoren

HEBRON, West Bank — The faces of five men in business suits and one woman in a white head scarf beam under the slogan "Modern Hebron" on campaign banners along the streets of this famously conservative city ahead of local elections scheduled for Saturday. Other banners saying "Hebron Independents" feature 12 less formal photos, including three women, with looks more stern than smiling.

But the purple banners labeled "By Participating, We Can" show no faces, only a drawing of a vaguely female figure, arms aloft, in front of the Palestinian flag and the Tomb of the Patriarchs. The drawing stands in for the pictures of 11 women, the first all-female list of candidates for elective office in the Palestinian territories, and possibly the Arab world.

"My picture, perhaps it will lose a vote," explained Maysoun Qawasmi, 43, the leader of the Participation ticket. "I'm sure if I put pictures on my fliers, people will say, 'Maysoun is coming here to teach the women of Hebron to go against customs.'"

Ms. Qawasmi's long-shot, low-budget campaign is one of hundreds unfolding across the West Bank this month in the first Palestinian elections of any kind in six years, which analysts describe as an important if imperfect taste of democracy in a place where politics are adrift.

Peace talks with Israel are frozen. Reconciliation efforts between the Fatah party, which controls the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank, and the Hamas faction that rules the Gaza Strip also seem to be perpetually stalled. Last month's street protests were largely suppressed, and there is no internal challenge to President Mahmoud Abbas of the Palestinian Authority.

So the chance to elect municipal councils is seen as a much needed opportunity for political expression, and 4,696 candidates, including 1,146 women, are running in 94 cities and villages.

"People are fed up; they don't think they should be held hostage until the reconciliation is there," said Hisham Kuhail, chief executive of the Palestinian election commission. "There are things that can be moved."

But the balloting, which has been postponed twice since 2010, is hampered by a Hamas boycott and the Fatah leadership's ousting of members who chose to run outside the party's official lists. (Some 250 localities are not voting either because no candidates registered in time or because only a single slate signed up.) And while municipal councils are the closest form of government to people's lives the world over, in the West Bank they lack control over taxes, development projects and, in most places, even basic services.

"It's an attempt on the part of Fatah to generate a sense of legitimacy," explained Basem Ezbidi, a political-science professor at Birzeit University. "Of course it's always nice to have the fresh blood, but in Palestine it's a different story. It's not going to make that much of a difference on the ground whether X or Z or Y is really running the city, knowing that the money comes from the Europeans and the ability to operate comes from Israel."

A September poll by the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research found that 50 percent of West Bankers did not plan to vote, and 43 percent said the elections would not be fair; nearly half did not believe that the balloting would ultimately take place.

On the street, cynicism abounds. Ayub Sharawi has a "Modern Hebron" poster in his clothing store because he is a friend of two of the candidates, but he said he would probably not vote.

"We don't trust Palestinian leaders; we see each one of them is working for himself," Mr. Sharawi said. "Even the good people couldn't do anything because of the pressures around."

Some are trying. In Bethlehem, Fadi Kattan, a tourism entrepreneur, is managing a list of candidates called "The Future" and pushing the message on social media that, he said, "you don't need any more people who are 75 years old, you need young people" who can run a modern city. In Nablus, Ghassan Shaka, a member of the Palestine Liberation Organization's executive committee, said he resigned from Fatah to run an

independent list because "people want to see change." In the village of Qira, Mr. Kuhail of the election commission said, nine slates are vying for 600 votes.

For the first time this year, there are quotas requiring that one of every five council seats goes to a woman, and in nine cities, there are set-asides for Christians as well. Nour Odeh, a Palestinian Authority spokeswoman, said that 17 percent of the current municipal council members were women, and noted that a group of women was the first to lobby for Palestinian independence in 1920.

Here in Hebron, home to about 200,000 Palestinians, 50,000 of whom live in an area controlled by Israel, these will be the first local elections since 1976, when Ms. Qawasmi's father-in-law was elected mayor. Khalil Shikaki, who runs the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research, said the "all-female list is a very innovative idea, but Hebron is the worst place to test its viability." (Another women's slate is running in a village near Ramallah.)

This is a tribal, religious place where it is rare to see women's hair; a decade ago it was unusual to see a woman driving. Few women work outside the home, and Ms. Qawasmi said she closed the women's sports club in 2005 because the members were blocked from playing soccer or basketball in public or jogging on the street.

"If you are a nurse or you are a teacher, O.K., but to be a leader, a decision-maker — they think the woman has a small mind," Ms. Qawasmi said of her neighbors. "The woman needs help, but she can't do anything because she's afraid to raise her voice. I will shout."

Raised in Jordan, Ms. Qawasmi went to a university in Beirut before marrying an architect from one of Hebron's leading families 21 years ago. She has five children, ages 7 to 20, and manages the local office of the Palestinian news agency while volunteering with women's groups.

She said she was spending about \$5,000 of her own money on the campaign, and struggling even to recruit candidates. People have warned that her husband would take a second wife because the campaign was causing her to neglect her duties at home. Her platform is, essentially, that more women should be on the 15-member council. At a meeting last week, when the owners of a factory raised issues like new roads, smoke-free workplaces, electric bills and public toilets, she responded mostly with statements like, "Those who took care of you are women — your mother."

In the middle of a recent day of campaigning, she came home to a sink full of dirty dishes. Later, her youngest child, Lilah, complained, "You forget us," and asked for a bedtime story.

"I said, 'I'm tired,'" Ms. Qawasmi recalled. "So I told her a story about me, about my campaign. I said, 'Give me a chance; in 10 years, you'll be so proud of me.' She said, 'I'm proud of you now.'"

And then Ms. Qawasmi fell asleep in her daughter's bed.

Khaled Abu Aker contributed reporting.

Israel Facing "Increasing Number Of Cyberattacks"

Monday, October 15, 2012

AFP

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Sunday said Israel was facing an increasing number of cyberattacks, just days after Washington issued a veiled warning to Iran over digital attacks on its interests.

"There have been increasing efforts to carry out cyberattacks on Israel's computer infrastructure," Netanyahu said at the weekly cabinet meeting, without giving details.

"Every day there are many attempts to infiltrate Israel's computer systems. That's why I established the National Cyber Directorate last year, which serves as an electronic 'Iron Dome' against computer terrorism," he added.

He did not specify which systems had come under attack, nor did he say who was behind them.

On Friday, former US official James Lewis told AFP that Washington believed Iran was behind a major cyberattack on Saudi Arabia's state oil company and a Qatari gas firm in August.

According to Lewis, who has worked for the State Department and other government agencies on national security and cyber issues, US Defense Secretary Leon Panetta issued a veiled warning to Tehran that Washington was ready to take preemptive action to protect US computer networks.

At the start of the year, various prominent Israeli websites were hacked, many of which were claimed by Arab hackers. Israeli hackers claimed to have attacked several Iranian websites in retaliation.

Cyberattacks against Iran in recent years have slowed down its nuclear programme, which the

United States and Israel believe could be converted to serve military purposes.

Woman Must Relinquish Kafka Papers, Judge Says

Monday, October 15, 2012

New York Times

By Jodi Rudoren And Myra Noveck

JERUSALEM — An Israeli judge has ruled that a huge trove of documents written by Franz Kafka and his friend Max Brod that have been hidden from view for decades must be turned over to Israel's national library, which plans to publish them online.

The ruling, made public on Sunday, came after a lengthy legal battle that divided literary scholars around the world and pitted the government of Israel against the reclusive daughter of Mr. Brod's former secretary, who had possession of the papers and sold some of them for millions of dollars.

"This case, complicated by passions, was argued in court for quite a long time across seas, lands and times," Judge Talia Kopelman Pardo wrote in a 59-page decision. "Not every day, and certainly not as a matter of course, does it happen that a judge dives into the depths of history and it is revealed before him fragment by fragment, shard by shard."

The archive includes tens of thousands of pages, most of them written by Mr. Brod, a prolific journalist and novelist who carried a suitcase of Kafka's work with him when he fled to Tel Aviv from Prague in 1939. Nurit Pagi, who is finishing her doctoral dissertation on Mr. Brod at the University of Haifa, said the material included letters, diaries, sketches and notations by Kafka — "1,001 things that are in this archive that was closed to research for 40 years."

"This is a huge archive of massive breadth that has an economic significance, but first and foremost historical and literary significance," Ms. Pagi said on Israel Radio. "And I hope it marks a change, a beginning, in adopting this whole culture which belongs to the heritage of the Jewish people and finally the state of Israel will fully adopt it and maybe even implement it."

When Mr. Brod, who had been the administrator of Kafka's estate, died in 1968, he bequeathed to his secretary, Esther Hoffe, his and Kafka's papers. Ms. Hoffe stashed them in her Tel Aviv apartment, where a scholar was last permitted to examine them in the 1980s; in 1988, she sold Kafka's manuscript for "The Trial" for \$2 million.

When she died in 2007, the materials passed to her daughters. One of them, Eva Hoffe, said in a 2008 interview that she was destitute and saw Mr. Brod's archive as her only asset; she said she wanted to write a book about Mr. Brod. The German Literary Archive had supported her legal position, demanding the right to purchase the papers.

But Judge Kopelman Pardo rejected Ms. Hoffe's claim that the papers were a gift from Mr. Brod to her mother, instead viewing them as a trust she was to administer. The judge noted that Mr. Brod's 1948 will instructed that his archive go to a "public Jewish library or archive in Palestine," and that he later specified Hebrew University, where Israel's national library is housed.

Some scholars have argued that the papers belong in Jerusalem, alongside those of other major Jewish thinkers like Einstein and Martin Buber, saying that Kafka — like Mr. Brod — was deeply connected to Zionism and Judaism. Others contended that Kafka was deeply ambivalent about his Jewish identity, and that Germany's claim on the papers was just as strong.

Ms. Hoffe plans to appeal the decision, her lawyer said.

Key Qaeda Militant Killed In Algeria: Security
Monday, October 15, 2012
AFP

A militant charged with liaising between Al-Qaeda and its North African branch Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) has been killed in an ambush by Algerian forces, security officials said on Sunday.

Boualem Bekai, who was known as Khaled El Mig, was killed on Friday at Azrou some 50 kilometres (30 miles) from the Tizi Ouzou region east of the capital, the APS news agency cited the officials as saying.

His identity was confirmed on Sunday by his family who collected his body from the hospital at Tizi Ouzou, the sources said.

The 45-year-old AQIM member became an Islamist militant at the beginning of the country's civil war in the 1990s.

His group is suspected of being behind several attacks in the region, including an April 2011 assault on an Algerian military barracks at Azazga near Tizi Ouzou that killed 14 soldiers.

The Azazga guard post is on the edge of the dense Yakouren forest, where AQIM is active.

AQIM, headed by Abdelmalek Droukdel, emerged in early 2007 from an Algerian armed Islamist movement, the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat. It operates in several northwestern African countries, including Mali, Mauritania and Niger.

The group has since been boosted by the turmoil in neighbouring Mali that followed a coup there in March, with hardline Islamists occupying the country's vast northern region.

EUROPE & EURASIA

Spain Is Urged To Consider Bailout Request
European Central Bank Council Member Says Madrid
Should Explore Aid Option Despite Improvement in
Investor Sentiment
Monday, October 15, 2012
Wall Street Journal
By Brian Blackstone

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

Austerity Protests Are Rude Awakening In
Portugal
Monday, October 15, 2012
New York Times
By Raphael Minder

LISBON — Portugal has long been regarded a role model in the grinding euro zone crisis. In return for an international bailout, its government cut services and raised taxes while its citizens patiently endured with little of the popular outcry seen elsewhere in southern Europe.

That is, until now.

Suddenly, the Portuguese, too, have joined the swelling ranks of Europe's discontented, following Greece and Spain, after the government tried to take another step up the austerity path last month. For many here, it was one step too far, driving tens of thousands into the streets in the largest protest of Portugal's crisis.

As Pedro Passos Coelho, Portugal's center-right prime minister, prepares to announce a new budget on Monday — filled with still more steep tax increases and public sector job cuts — he faces the kind of popular backlash that was, until recently, absent from the political and social landscape here.

Taking a page from the playbook of their Spanish neighbors, Portuguese protesters are planning to encircle the Parliament building here in the capital

for the budget announcement. For their part, Portugal's powerful trade unions are preparing a general strike for Nov. 14. Arménio Carlos, the leader of the CGTP union, compared Mr. Passos Coelho to Pinocchio, accusing him of constantly changing his austerity message.

"It's clear that the amount of good faith the government enjoyed has been turned into large skepticism and distrust," said Pedro C. Magalhães, a professor of politics at the University of Lisbon.

For a government that has assiduously followed the belt-tightening prescriptions of its international lenders — who rewarded Portugal with a 78 billion euro (\$101 billion) bailout — it has been a rude awakening to the risks of austerity, which has even strained the governing coalition of Mr. Passos Coelho's Social Democrats and the rival Popular Party.

Many here say the government has taken the population's compliance for granted.

The turning point came in September when Mr. Passos Coelho offered a plan to redistribute social security funds by cutting employers' social security taxes while significantly raising those of employees. Although the measure was meant to lower labor costs, the outcry from workers was so ferocious that he was soon forced to withdraw it.

But the damage was already done. The misstep is now credited with having rattled the social and political cohesion that had underpinned Portugal's painful but steady progress.

The withdrawal of the tax plan left the Portuguese, who had once grudgingly accepted the pain of austerity, with a new sense of empowerment, Mr. Magalhães said. "The fact that the government backed down and the fact that no catastrophe or international censure came out of it suddenly shows that there are no inevitabilities," he said.

Carlos Moedas, secretary of state to the prime minister and in charge of overseeing Portugal's bailout program, said the reversal was "part of the journey" for any government forced to make significant adjustments in return for a bailout.

"The fact that we came back on our decision," Mr. Moedas said, "had absolutely nothing to do with people coming out on the streets and everything to do with the fact that we got to understand that the ones who were supposed to be the beneficiaries actually did not want the measure."

Still, the prime minister has struggled to regain the public's confidence. The effort has been clumsy at best, his critics say. Many felt insult was

added to injury when the government subsequently suggested that employers should lower not only their labor costs but their prices as well.

"We are at a low point in our relationship because a government seriously damages its credibility when it doesn't take the pulse of the real economy before coming up with new measures," said João Vieira Lopes, the president of the Portuguese Commerce and Services Confederation, which represents about 200,000 companies. Indeed, after watching helplessly while their economy shrank, many Portuguese are now openly challenging the austerity prescription as the wrong medicine for the malaise.

Mr. Vieira Lopes suggested that the fundamental problem was that the bailout assistance program from Portugal's international lenders did not take sufficiently into account the specifics of the nation.

"The austerity model has been applied rather mechanically," he said. "This is not a country full of big companies that can adjust to a decline in their domestic market, but rather small and medium-sized companies whose only option is then to close down."

Many stores in downtown Lisbon are now either closed or advertising huge discounts, as citizens struggle in a deepening recession that has pushed unemployment to a record 15 percent. A sharp rise in the sales tax has decimated the restaurant sector. One measure of the hardship has been the sudden proliferation of the "marmita," or lunch box, used by employees to take their home cooking to work. Even the investment banking division of Banco Espírito Santo, one of Portugal's largest financial institutions, recently refitted a room with tables, refrigerators and microwaves to accommodate the trend.

As consumer spending is declining, so too are tax revenues. As part of its 2012 budget, the government anticipated that sales taxes would produce revenues 11.6 percent higher than in 2011. Instead, revenues were down 2.2 percent in the first eight months of this year, as the tax increases suffocate the economy.

This month, the International Monetary Fund predicted that Portugal would remain in recession next year, with an economy set to contract 3 percent this year and a further 1 percent in 2013.

Still, Abebe Selassie, the I.M.F.'s mission chief for Portugal, said that "it would be a mistake not to recognize the progress that has been made so far in Portugal despite stronger adverse negative

shocks than assumed when we started the program.”

In particular, he added, “the Portuguese have been putting in place their program even in the face of strong headwinds from other parts of Europe.” In fact, like Spain, Portugal has recently been granted an additional year to meet previously agreed deficit targets, meaning that the new budget must allow Portugal to lower the deficit to 4.5 percent of gross domestic product in 2013 from an expected 5 percent this year. Portugal also recently managed to postpone the repayment of part of its debt after reaching an agreement with investors.

But the immediate concerns for Mr. Passos Coelho are on his doorstep. The aftermath of the social security reversal may be lasting, warned António Vitorino, a former Socialist minister and European commissioner.

“Such a political mistake can have permanent consequences when it hits a society that is already in a state of clear austerity fatigue,” he said.

Putin Loyalists Set To Win Russian Local Votes

Monday, October 15, 2012

Associated Press

MOSCOW (AP) — President Vladimir Putin’s loyalists swept to victory in most local election races in Russia, early results showed Monday, while independent observers said the vote was marred by widespread fraud.

The Central Election Commission’s results show Kremlin-backed candidates and incumbent governors have swept all five gubernatorial races in the country’s five regions. Putin’s United Russia party also dominated mayoral races and those for local legislatures.

Observers from the independent monitoring organization Golos recorded over a thousand violations nationwide, including voter roll irregularities and multiple voting.

Evidence of election fraud at the parliamentary election last December triggered massive anti-Putin protests in Moscow, empowering marginalized opposition leaders. In response Kremlin promised to ease stiff election laws and re-introduce gubernatorial races in the five regions. But once the protests abated, it introduced new restrictions such as requiring would-be governors to run only if they represent a party, and have the endorsement of at least five percent of lawmakers in regional legislatures.

In one of the most visible races, award-winning environmentalist and opposition leader Yevgeniya Chirikova came in second with 18 percent in the mayoral election in Moscow’s suburb of Khimki against Kremlin-backed Oleg Shakhov who got 48 percent, early results showed.

Turnout was the highest in the gubernatorial race in Belgorod region, where 48 percent of the electorate cast their vote, while the lowest was in the race for the local legislature in Vladivostok, in the Far East, where only eight percent cast their ballot.

Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev, who is also the chairman of United Russia party, hailed the results.

“Everyone was expecting the party’s fiasco after the December election,” he said. “But nothing of the kind happened, and we’ve got this result in a completely different environment.”

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Ruling Party Shows Strength Amid Low Turnout In Russian Vote

Monday, October 15, 2012

New York Times

By Ellen Barry And Andrew Roth

MOSCOW — Russians voted in nearly 5,000 regional and local elections on Sunday, as opposition candidates tried to take advantage of electoral laws loosened last year in response to demands for open political competition.

As polls closed, though, candidates from United Russia, the ruling party of President Vladimir V. Putin, were favored to win most races, and a low turnout in some places was testament to weak fields of competitors. United Russia’s incumbents were poised to win in all five elections for governors— including two who were considered so unpopular that they were vulnerable to Communist Party challengers.

Prime Minister Dmitri A. Medvedev, who now heads United Russia, congratulated party members in Moscow, saying heightened competition had improved the party’s performance.

“Everyone expected a party fiasco after December’s elections,” he said. “Supposedly there was a downward trend, and everything was going to collapse under us. But nothing of the kind happened — under completely different circumstances, this was the result.”

8/14/2015 100 of 124 pages

What intrigue there was came from volunteer election monitors, who fanned out to polling stations across the country hoping to document fraud. Since last year's parliamentary elections, election-monitoring has leapt in popularity.

"The types of violations which people used to accept calmly, and accepted as something unavoidable — people are now taking them much more seriously," said Aleksei V. Makarkin of Moscow's Center for Political Technologies.

A particularly dramatic showdown was in the Moscow suburb of Khimki, where one mayoral candidate was Yevgenia Chirikova, a young mother who organized against the destruction of a local forest and became one of the most recognizable faces of the protest movement. Late Sunday night, exit polls suggested that she was running well behind Oleg Shakhov, the acting mayor.

Officials said 3,000 election observers — some linked to individual candidates, others independent — fanned out to cover 72 locations in Khimki. Surrounded by a crowd of journalists, Ms. Chirikova traveled from one polling station to another all day, taking reports. Late at night, she spoke to reporters outside a station where, she said, one of her campaign's observers had gotten into a brawl with an official. The police were guarding the site, but she was angry and protective.

"I am watching to make sure they do not beat my observers," she said, adding that if that happened, "no riot police will be able to restrain me."

Officials were braced for a wave of reported violations to be published online, a trend that caught the government unaware ahead of last December's parliamentary elections. Mr. Shakhov said the opposition activists had flooded into Khimki hoping to sabotage the election.

"It's a show," Mr. Shakhov said. "These are provocations that are designed to raise questions about the elections here. They are playing a game, and they are going to lose it."

Russians in five regions were voting for governor — a novelty in and of itself, since Mr. Putin abolished direct elections for governors eight years ago in favor of presidential appointments. More than 4,500 candidates were competing for seats in local councils, and Kalininograd, Russia's westernmost city, was electing a new mayor.

Most races turned out to be less than riveting. The contests for governor were micromanaged by the Kremlin, which imposed strict screening of

candidates and then made back-room deals to force strong contenders to drop out. United Russia has made great efforts to avoid losing races, in part because its future is in question, Mr. Makarkin said.

"They want to win as many elections as possible with as few scandals as possible," he said. "The priority is survival."

Parliamentary elections last December showed that support for United Russia was strikingly low in a range of industrial regions surrounding Moscow — a fact that was lost amid reports of vote rigging and large antigovernment protests.

The rising discontent seemed to be stanching by March, when Mr. Putin was elected president for a third time after a campaign of lavish pre-election spending and targeted television coverage meant to discredit the opposition.

Early results on Sunday in the Siberian city of Barnaul showed that United Russia had won just over 50 percent in elections for the city council. In Nizhny Tagil's mayoral race, meanwhile, which has been styled as a pro-Putin stronghold, the United Russia candidate was leading with 92 percent of the vote.

Andrei Y. Buzin, head of election monitoring for Golos, a nonprofit organization, said the number of violations recorded on Sunday was probably no higher than in previous elections, but there were more reports because observers were both trained and more motivated.

In Bryansk, a Communist Party candidate told the Interfax news service that one of the party's observers had approached a parked Mercedes, suspecting that people inside were distributing absentee ballots. The driver suddenly accelerated, and the car sped about 300 yards with the observer on its hood, said the candidate, Vadim Potomsky. The police in Bryansk later detained the driver and said they were investigating.

In Khimki, one of Ms. Chirikova's supporters said election commission workers refused to display the voting list until reporters had left. The observer, Alla N. Chernysheva, said she believed that officials were adding more than 1,000 pro-government votes at Polling Station 3008, which is near the forest Ms. Chirikova campaigned to protect.

"This is one of the areas of Khimki where the protest is the greatest," Ms. Chernysheva said. "People are angry and they're trying to cover it up."

Not everyone was impressed with Ms. Chirikova's defiance. As he left a voting station with his wife, one voter, Dmitri Trevin, watched her give an impromptu news conference. "I'll tell you one thing," he said. "No matter what she is saying right now, they all change when they come into power."

Ellen Barry reported from Moscow, and Andrew Roth from Khimki, Russia.

Russian Opposition Weak At Polls

Monday, October 15, 2012

Washington Post

By Kathy Lally

MOSCOW — The political opposition that emerged on Russian streets nearly a year ago apparently has been unable to turn discontent with President Vladimir Putin into victory at the ballot box, according to early results from Sunday's regional and local elections.

Russians, voting for five governors, along with a number of mayors, regional parliaments and city councils, were largely sticking with Putin's United Russia party, which has been working hard to solidify its grip on power since a dismal showing in December elections for the national parliament.

Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev virtually declared victory for the party Sunday night, based on results from Russia's Far East, which is eight time zones away from Moscow. "I'll say it straight," he said. "United Russia did well, better than in the December state Duma elections."

Medvedev went on to caution party officials against letting the results make them overly confident. "Work hard," he said, "and do all that we have promised."

In the December elections for the lower house of parliament, United Russia took 49 percent of the vote, a big setback after the 64 percent it won in 2007. But its roots sink deep into Russian soil, and party members remained in control of most offices, from the Kremlin to governors, mayors and local legislatures. They exert enormous influence through the media and by controlling budgets, dispensing government funds to the favored and withholding them from those who are not. Outside of Moscow, Putin remains a popular figure.

Nearly 5,000 candidates were running nationwide, with elections in most of Russia's 83 regions, with the exception of Moscow and a few others. A mayoral race in the Moscow suburb of Khimki illustrated the difficulty the opposition

encountered. Yevgenia Chirikova, a 35-year-old environmental activist who has been one of the most appealing members of the opposition, said United Russia used its might against her at every turn.

She said that public employees were told by their bosses to vote for the sitting mayor and that her complaints of election violations had not been dealt with in court before the election. An exit poll showed incumbent Mayor Oleg Shakhov with 43 percent of the vote, while Chirikova had about 20 percent. Later in the evening, with 30 percent of the vote counted, election officials said Shakhov had 47 percent of the vote.

Public anger over election rigging set off protests in December, bringing tens of thousands of people out on the streets, first against election manipulation, then against Putin, who won the presidential election in March. Recently, the protests have been more sporadic.

Final results in Sunday's regional and local elections are expected Monday, along with reports from poll monitors.

Belgian Vote Reflects Tensions Over Unity

Monday, October 15, 2012

Wall Street Journal

By Frances Robinson And Inti Landauro

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

Belgian Elections A Test Of Flemish Separatists

Monday, October 15, 2012

Associated Press

BRUSSELS (AP) — Belgians are going to the polls in municipal elections seen as a test of separatist sentiment in the northern Dutch-speaking Flanders region.

In particular, observers are watching the wealthy northern port of Antwerp, where Bart De Wever of the NV-A separatist party is seeking to become mayor and use the city as a base for a bigger challenge during national elections in 2014.

De Wever has been at odd with economically ailing French-speaking Wallonia.

Polls predict a surge for the NV-A, but De Wever said Sunday that "you never know for certain. When the polls close then you become nervous, then you are in the eye of the storm."

The first results are expected around 8 p.m. (1800GMT; 2 p.m. EDT).

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Flemish Nationalists Set For Big Election Breakthrough

Monday, October 15, 2012

AFP

Flemish nationalist leader Bart De Wever appeared set for a breakthrough win in Belgian local elections on Sunday, moving well ahead in the key northern city of Antwerp, the country's economic heart.

With a nearly a third of the votes counted shortly after 6 pm (1600 GMT), De Wever's New Flemish Alliance (N-VA) had 37.4 percent in Antwerp, the giant port city where he was aiming to end some 90 years of Socialist rule.

His Socialist rival had around 29.1 percent, according to Flanders government figures.

The vote is the latest chapter in a tussle between Belgium's Dutch- and French-speaking halves.

On the eve of the election, De Wever told a rally that "the Flemish have had enough of being treated like cows only good for their milk," lambasting the Socialist-run, French-speaking and largely poorer south.

If the preliminary outcome is confirmed, then De Wever, 41, will be well placed to confront a central government in Brussels led by Socialist Prime Minister Elio Di Rupo which he considers "illegitimate".

"It's a personal failure for Elio Di Rupo," said Olivier Maingain of the FDF party of Francophone federalists as the results came in.

"It's dramatic but it was predictable," Maingain said, looking ahead to the inevitable strains likely in the run-up to 2014 general elections, with De Wever seeking to re-negotiate a "confederal" restructuring of the state.

"It looks like (De Wever) has won his bet to make the big breakthrough," said Pascal Delwit, a political scientist at the Universite Libre de Bruxelles.

Across Flanders, the wealthier north of the country and home to some six-million people, the N-VA was scoring 20-30 percent, compared with just five percent in the last municipal polls six years ago.

Some 7.8 million voters were picking councillors and mayors at regional level across essentially Dutch-speaking Flanders, mostly French-speaking Wallonia and the federal Brussels capital region.

De Wever had told AFP on the hustings that he was using the elections as a calculated "stepping stone" aimed at pressuring what he considers an "illegitimate" central government.

Keeping a low profile throughout the campaign, Di Rupo and other Belgian parties supporting a unitary state in the fragile, six-party coalition, sought to avoid rising to De Wever's baiting.

Analysts had said an N-VA victory in Antwerp would be hugely important in shaping the run-up to 2014 and that now appears to be on the cards.

The vote is also being closely followed as the eurozone debt crisis tests loyalties in the European Union.

Catalonia is pushing for fiscal autonomy from Spain going into November 25 elections, while on Monday, British Prime Minister David Cameron will sign terms in Edinburgh with the leader of Scotland's government on a 2014 referendum on full independence.

Belgium has a complicated proportional voting system which means much horse-trading to find coalitions will now take place.

With the Socialists having run Antwerp for 90 years, De Wever fully realised the stakes in going for broke there.

"If we can take Antwerp, then we are waking up in a different country," he told AFP a week before the polls.

De Wever had described the vote as "do-or-die" for his movement, and said that tensions between the prosperous Flemish north, which generally votes to the right, and the Walloon south run by what he described as irresponsible, free-spending Socialists, were driving a "democratic revolt."

Flanders "clearly wants to go the German way," De Wever told AFP on the hustings, while Wallonia "wants to go the Latin way".

Lithuanian Voters Shift To Opposition Party

Monday, October 15, 2012

Wall Street Journal

By Ben Seeder

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

Lithuanians Sway Toward Opposition Parties

Monday, October 15, 2012

Associated Press

By Liudas Dapkus, Associated Press

VILNIUS, Lithuania (AP) — Lithuanians exasperated with economic hardship handed a stunning victory to a populist party led by a disgraced Russia-born millionaire, nearly complete results of Sunday's election show, while voicing resounding disapproval of plans to build a costly new nuclear power plant.

The opposition Labor Party, led by Viktor Uspaskich, once dubbed as the "pickle king" for having made his fortune selling jarred pickles, was leading with 23.4 percent of the vote after nearly three-fourths of precincts was counted.

The victory set the stage for a coalition with the Social Democrats, who were second with 19.4 percent, and Order and Justice, a populist party led by Rolandas Paksas, a stunt pilot who eventually became president in 2003 — only to be impeached the following year for violating the Constitution and abuse of office. Paksas' party was fourth with 9.2 percent.

All three parties promised radical policy changes, including increased wages and lower taxes, while the Social Democrats said that Lithuania should postpone introducing the euro until Europe could straighten out its current financial mess.

The current conservative ruling coalition, led by Prime Minister Andrius Kubilius, has expressed its interest in adopting the euro in 2014.

Some 12.3 percent of voters supported the Kubilius-led Homeland Union, which came to power just as Lithuania was sliding into one of the worst recessions in Europe. Kubilius' government was forced to raise taxes and cut expenses to ward off bankruptcy, and largely succeeded given that Lithuania did not have to turn to international lenders for bailout funds.

Lithuania is nevertheless beset with high unemployment — over 13 percent in the second quarter — and falling living standards due in large part to higher energy costs. Tens of thousands have left the country to find jobs elsewhere in Europe, and the results of a recent census showed that the Baltic state has lost about 1 percent of its population over the past two decades since splitting from the Soviet Union and that this year the population dipped below the threshold of 3 million people.

Leaders of the three opposition parties met early Monday to hash out the broad outlines of an

agreement that could possibly lead to a new government coalition.

However, only half the seats in the 141-member Parliament are determined by party lists, while the other half consists of single-mandates, many of which will require a run-off ballot in two weeks. Only then will a clear picture of who could form the next government emerge.

"Tonight we started to form a working group that will conduct coalition talks and coordinate our moves in the second round (of voting) on Oct. 28," Uspaskich told reporters.

The Labor Party victory in the party-list phase would signify a tremendous comeback for Uspaskich, a member of the European Parliament still under investigation in Lithuania for allegedly fraudulent party finance operations.

In 2006 he was forced to resign as economy minister for a conflict-of-interest case with Russia and suspicions about a faked diploma from a Moscow-based institute. At one point he fled Lithuania, claiming political persecution, only to return to the Baltic state and be perp-walked in handcuffs in front of reporters.

Even if Uspaskich's party wins the greatest number of seats in the 141-member Parliament, it is far from certain that he would get the nod for prime minister, since President Dalia Grybauskaite, whose duty is to appoint the head of government, has expressed deep reservations about Uspaskich's integrity.

Meanwhile, Lithuania's election authority said that nearly two-thirds of voters have rejected the idea of building a new nuclear power plant.

The Central Election Commission said that with 45 percent of precincts counted, some 64 percent of votes cast in the referendum were against the new plant, while 36 percent were in support. The commission said the proportion was unlikely to change.

Although the referendum was non-binding, a strong 'no' vote could torpedo Lithuania's plans to build the facility along with neighbors Estonia and Latvia and Japan's Hitachi, as all sides have suggested that the project made no sense if it lacked popular support.

No less important, the opposition parties geared to take over the government have expressed reservations about the project and said that Lithuania should seek cheaper energy alternatives.

The current center-right government has argued that the plant is necessary to wean Lithuania off

its energy dependence on Russia, while critics have countered that the project, at a cost of \$6 billion, is too expensive and the Fukushima catastrophe has cast an indelible shadow over Japanese nuclear technology.

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A Shift To The Left In Lithuania Jeopardizes The Ruling Party
Monday, October 15, 2012
New York Times
By David M. Herszenhorn

MOSCOW — Preliminary returns from parliamentary elections in Lithuania on Sunday showed voters on track to oust the conservative government of Prime Minister Andrius Kubilius — an apparent reflection of public anger over tax increases and other austerity measures imposed in response to the European financial crisis.

The preliminary returns showed voters favoring two left-leaning opposition parties: the Labor Party in first place, with 28.3 percent of the vote, followed by the Social Democratic Party with 19.2 percent, according to the Central Electoral Commission of Lithuania.

Mr. Kubilius's Homeland Union-Lithuanian Christian Democratic Party was running fourth, with 9.7 percent.

"It's clear that the Lithuanian people expect changes," the leader of the Social Democratic Party, Algirdas Butkevicius, said in a statement.

Lithuania's conservative government successfully steered the country through a recession, but much of the public remains embittered by the steep cuts in spending, including reductions in pensions, and increases in taxes.

A second round of parliamentary elections will be held later this month, when the contours of a new coalition government are likely to come into sharper focus. The left-leaning parties have promised to increase aid to the poor, in part by raising the minimum wage, and also to improve relations with Russia, which have been strained.

Lithuania Swings Left In Parliamentary Polls
Monday, October 15, 2012
AFP

Austerity-fatigued Lithuanian voters swung solidly left in a parliamentary election, partial results showed, evicting the Conservative government which steered the Baltic nation through one of the

world's deepest recessions but failed to reap the rewards of recovery.

Figures from the national elections commission covering 892 of the country's 2,017 polling stations gave the leftwing populist Labour party 25.45 percent of the vote and their likely governing allies the centre-left Social Democrats 19.6 percent.

Turnout was just over 50 percent.

The figures showed the Conservatives with just 10.9 percent of the vote — expected to rise as the count comes in from large cities where the centre-right tends to perform better — and their Liberal Movement governing allies with 4.89 percent.

The rightwing populist Order and Justice party, with which Labour and the Social Democrats plan to form a coalition, secured 9.35 percent of the votes cast.

As the results rolled in, the leaders of Labour, the Social Democrats and Order and Justice put out feelers about forming a government, holding a closed-door meeting.

"We're creating a working group to start consultations on a coalition," said Labour's Viktor Uspaskich afterwards.

Seventy members of Lithuania's 141-seat parliament are elected by proportional representation from party lists in the first round. The remaining 71 are chosen in single-member constituency races, with two-candidate run-offs on October 28 where no candidate won a majority on Sunday.

Less than half the constituency seats tend to be decided in the first round.

But in past votes the final balance of forces has been sufficiently clear after the first round to enable the process of forming a government to begin immediately — even if who gets which job is only announced after the second round.

"We won't talk about the prime minister or ministers before the results of the second round are clear," said Uspaskich.

The Russian-born ex-minister and businessman — best known for his gherkin business — is a controversial figure, having been subject to a party funding probe, and is highly unlikely to become premier.

Social Democrat leader Algirdas Butkevicius is tipped to take the helm but would not be drawn.

"We did not talk about that. So far we agreed only on forming a ruling majority," he said.

The Lithuanian Peasants' and Greens' Union scored 6.48 percent, an ethnic-Polish party 6.16 percent and the new anti-graft Way of Courage movement 5.33 percent, the results showed.

The Conservatives appeared to have paid the price for undertaking a tough austerity drive well beyond those of western members of the European Union, which Lithuania joined in 2004.

The left-leaning parties pledge to raise the minimum wage and introduce a progressive income tax, but Butkevicius, a former finance minister, has played on his prudent credentials. He quit in 2005 when a Social Democrat-led government failed to close the gap between spending and revenue.

Kubilius — the only premier to survive a full term since Lithuania seceded from the Soviet Union in 1990 — ousted the Social Democrats in the last election in 2008.

His message then was that the Social Democrats let growth stoked by credit and wage hikes get out of hand and left the nation of three million people ill-prepared for hard times.

Kubilius was also premier in 1999-2000, when Lithuania was lashed by the economic meltdown in neighbouring Russia. But the 2009 crisis was far deeper, as Lithuania's economy shrank by 14.8 percent.

His government launched the austerity drive in response.

"We took responsibility for crucial decisions and guaranteed a responsible fiscal policy. I hope this responsible policy will continue," Kubilius had said after casting his ballot on Sunday.

Growth returned in 2010, at 1.4 percent, before hitting 6.0 percent in 2011, but analysts say too few voters have felt the benefits. The government forecast growth to slow down to 2.5 percent this year, and a rate of 3.0 percent in 2013.

The left also pledges to "reset" ties with Moscow, rocky since independence and spiking over alleged market abuses by Russian energy giant Gazprom, Lithuania's sole gas supplier.

Ruling Coalition Leads In Montenegro Vote: Exit Poll
Monday, October 15, 2012
AFP

Montenegro's centre-left ruling coalition, headed by veteran politician Milo Djukanovic, leads in Sunday's parliamentary vote, according to an exit poll by the University of Podgorica.

Djukanovic's European Montenegro coalition has won 46.1 percent of votes, well ahead of the largest opposition block, the Democratic Front, which won 20 percent, according to the exit poll presented on state television, which has a two-percent margin of error.

Britain, Scotland To Agree On Terms Of Independence Vote
Monday, October 15, 2012

Washington Post
By Anthony Faiola

LONDON — British Prime Minister David Cameron is set to sign a landmark accord Monday that paves the way for a vote on Scotland's independence in fall 2014, Scottish Secretary Michael Moore announced Sunday on the BBC.

Cameron is scheduled to meet with Scotland's First Minister — and its leading independence advocate — Alex Salmond before inking the deal, which would lay out the long-awaited terms of the ballot initiative. There reportedly will be one yes or no question on the ballot, a victory for Cameron who has fought attempts by Salmond to add a second option asking Scots if they wanted even greater autonomy from the British state if the bid for independence fails.

Salmond, according to the BBC, won a concession that 16- and 17-year-olds will be able to cast a vote, a plus for the independence movement as younger voters in Scotland are believed to more receptive to the notion of breaking away from Britain. In addition, Cameron reportedly also has given in on the timing of the vote; he had initially wanted the referendum held next year. The most recent opinions polls show a declining number of Scots in favor of independence, with roughly 28 percent now supporting it. Salmond, however, has argued that a delayed vote would give the independence movement more time to convince skeptical voters.

"What we are now setting up is to allow people in Scotland to make the most important decision in 300 years," Moore said on the BBC's Andrew Marr show. "People can have confidence that when they see that agreement, it will ensure that both governments' sets of objectives have been achieved."

EAST ASIA & PACIFIC

Asia Will Resist U.S. Efforts To Contain China, Says Singapore Diplomat

Monday, October 15, 2012

Washington Times

By Ashish Kumar Sen

Asian nations will resist any U.S. attempts to block the rise of China, as Washington pursues a new strategy in the Asia-Pacific region, according to Singapore's former ambassador in Washington.

"I think if the United States re-engages Asia to contain China it won't work because countries in Asia won't sign on to containment," Chan Heng Chee said in a phone interview from Singapore.

"We don't want another Cold War. The United States should not ask Asian countries to choose. You may not like the results if you ask countries to choose."

Ms. Chan returned to Singapore in July after 16 years as Singapore's ambassador to the U.S., a tenure that made her the second-longest-serving foreign envoy in Washington after Djibouti Ambassador Roble Olhaye. She was replaced by Ambassador Ashok Kumar Mirpuri, who previously served as Singapore's envoy in Indonesia, Malaysia and Australia.

President Obama has adopted a rebalancing stance toward the Asia-Pacific region and has spelled out military, economic and trade, human rights and diplomatic initiatives. Much of the commentary in Washington has described this policy as a "pivot" and framed it in the context of a military containment of China.

Ms. Chan arrived in Washington in 1996 at a tense period in the U.S.-Singapore relationship. Two years earlier, Michael Fay, an American student, had been caned by authorities in Singapore for vandalism and theft, sparking criticism of Singapore's capital punishment sentences.

"When I arrived, we were at a low point, so the only place was to go up," said Ms. Chan.

She described that period as a "blip" in the relationship.

"By the time I arrived, the Clinton administration was ready to turn the page, and cooperation now is at a very high level," she added.

On Ms. Chan's watch, the United States and Singapore signed a free-trade agreement and a strategic framework agreement that has laid the foundation for broad-based defense cooperation across a range of areas, including policy

engagement, military operations and technology. Singapore agreed in June to allow the U.S. Navy to deploy four littoral combat ships to the city-state on a rotational basis.

Since the signing of the free-trade agreement, commerce between the U.S. and Singapore has increased 12 percent to 15 percent.

"U.S. two-way trade with Singapore is \$50 billion," said Ms. Chan. "We are a very small country; but as a trading partner we are not very small."

Ms. Chan served during the tenures of three U.S. presidents — Bill Clinton, George W. Bush and Barack Obama.

"It was quite a learning experience. There was never a dull moment," she said.

"I saw the good years of the United States, and I saw the United States go to two wars," she added.

Singapore supported the U.S.-led war in Afghanistan in 2001 and was a member of the coalition that toppled Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq in 2003.

Ms. Chan left the United States with a great deal of respect for the patriotism of Americans, especially those who serve in the armed forces.

"The great thing about Americans is that they are very open," she said.

Ms. Chan, who now has the title ambassador-at-large, will offer her government advice on specific policy issues. She will also set up the Lee Kuan Yew Center for Innovative Cities in the Singapore University of Technology and Design.

When she arrived in Washington, Ms. Chan was one of five female ambassadors.

Ask whether she faced any difficulty as a woman in a diplomatic world dominated by men, she paused and then said:

"I find that rather hard to answer. I do not know what it is like to be a male ambassador."

But, she conceded, it is harder representing a small country.

"Big countries will always get attention," she said.

China Says Inflation Slows To 1.9% In September

Monday, October 15, 2012

AFP

China's inflation rate slowed in September, official data showed on Monday, potentially giving the

government further room to stimulate the economy to boost slumping growth.

The country's consumer price index rose 1.9 percent year-on-year, the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) said. Inflation had stood at 2.0 percent in August.

The result matched a median forecast of 1.9 percent in a survey of 12 economists by Dow Jones Newswires.

Producer prices — which measure the costs of goods as they leave factories — declined 3.6 percent year-on-year, falling for the seventh straight month, NBS data showed. Producer prices fell 3.5 percent in August.

China's economy grew 7.6 percent in the second quarter through the end of June for its weakest performance in three years and the sixth straight quarter of slowing expansion.

Authorities have taken steps to boost growth by cutting interest rates twice in quick succession this year and reducing the amount of funds banks must keep in reserve to boost lending three times since December.

China is scheduled to announce third-quarter economic growth figures on Thursday.

China IMF Boycott 'Sign Of Things To Come': Analysts

Monday, October 15, 2012

AFP

China's top level boycott of global financial meetings in Japan this week is a sign of things to come, analysts say, as an economically emboldened Beijing shows struggling Western nations it doesn't need to play by their rules.

With global growth slowing, many in the developed world are looking to Beijing to pick up the slack, and the annual meetings of the International Monetary Fund and World Bank seemed a good place to press the point.

But while Tokyo was graced with global financial luminaries such as Timothy Geithner from the US and Wolfgang Schaeuble from Germany, China's finance minister and central bank chief both stayed at home.

Beijing gave no official reason for sending their deputies, with foreign minister Yang Jiechi telling reporters in Beijing only that "the arrangement of the delegation for the meeting was completely appropriate".

Observers say China's stay-away was the result of a spat with Japan over disputed islands, and points to Beijing's calculated willingness to use its financial muscle to make a political point.

"China made this decision by precisely weighing the disadvantages of the no-shows against the advantages of its presence," said Yoshiaki Shimamine, executive chief economist at Dai-ichi Life Research Institute in Tokyo.

"It was an example of how China won't always act within the Western-dominated framework and doesn't see any contradiction between such absences and its responsibility as a major power," he said.

IMF chief Christine Lagarde rapped Beijing, saying it would "lose out" by not showing up, while World Bank President Jim Yong Kim urged the two countries to sort out their differences for the good of the global economy.

China — whose predicted growth of 7.8 percent this year is slower than the blistering pace of the last few years, but still leaps and bounds ahead of the West — merely shrugged.

In his report to a key committee that advises the IMF board, deputy central bank governor Yi Gang said the failure by Washington and Tokyo to fix their fiscal problems was the reason the global economy was struggling.

"Uncertainties related to fiscal sustainability weigh on sentiment and confidence, negatively affecting consumption, investment, and hiring decisions," Yi said.

"The slow recovery in these major advanced economies poses costly spillover effects to the rest of the world," he added.

While Chinese officials did take part in a number of meetings and seminars, their absence at a Japan-chaired lenders' gathering on Myanmar was noted, with Tokyo saying it was "disappointing".

Japanese politicians repeatedly urged Beijing to look at relations "from a broader standpoint".

The dispute over Tokyo-controlled islands known as the Senkakus in Japan and the Diaoyus in China flared in August and September with landings by nationalists from both sides and the subsequent nationalisation of the islands by Japan.

Street protests erupted in China, alongside consumer boycotts of Japanese goods, as reports emerged that firms were finding their China operations hampered by sudden extra red tape.

Japan's big three automakers — Toyota, Nissan and Honda — reported plunging sales, while airlines said tens of thousands of bookings had been cancelled.

Figures released in China this week showed trade with Japan slumped 1.8 percent to \$248 billion for the year's first three quarters, although the customs bureau made no link with the row.

Analysts say Beijing is likely to continue to conflate bilateral political issues with multilateral financial ones.

Yoshinobu Yamamoto, honorary professor of international politics at the University of Tokyo, said at a time when the world needed China to be paying attention, it was focused instead on the sovereignty spat.

"The move was intended to expose Japan to international pressure to solve the spat with China," he said.

"For Beijing, the top priority is national governance. For the sake of this objective, China is likely to take similar action in the future."

But some argue that China's behaviour is self-defeating because it will make it seem like a less attractive place to do business.

Some Japanese insurance firms have reportedly stopped offering coverage against riots for companies operating in China and manufacturers are said to be looking anew at third countries as a base for operations.

Dai-ichi Life's Shimamine said Beijing runs the risk of cutting its nose off to spite its face.

"China's policy of putting weight on politics has given the impression that China has risks and is not an easy country to deal with," he said.

North Koreans See Few Gains Below Top Tier Monday, October 15, 2012

New York Times

By Andrew Jacobs

DANDONG, China — On her weekly shopping trips to downtown Pyongyang, the capital of North Korea, a 52-year-old pig farmer who gave her name as Mrs. Kim tries to ignore the dusting of prosperity that has begun to transform the city in recent years: the newly built apartment blocks, the increasing number of Mercedes-Benzes that zip along once-empty boulevards, the smartly dressed young women who conspicuously gab on their newly acquired cellphones. She has never been to the Rungna People's Pleasure Ground, a new amusement park where children of the elite

howled with delight this summer as they shot down a waterslide.

"Why would I care about the new clothing of government officials and their children when I can't feed my family?" she asked tartly, wringing her hands as she recounted the chronic malnutrition that has sickened her two sons and taken the lives of less-well-off neighbors.

In the 10 months since Kim Jong-un took the reins of his desperately poor nation following the death of his autocratic father, North Korea — or at least its capital — has acquired more of the trappings of a functioning society, say diplomats, aid groups and academics who have visited in recent months.

But in rare interviews this month with four North Koreans in this border city on government-sanctioned stays, they said that at least so far, they have not felt any improvements in their lives since the installment last December of their youthful leader — a sentiment activists and analysts say they have also heard. In fact, the North Koreans said, their lives have gotten harder, despite Mr. Kim's tantalizing pronouncements about boosting people's livelihoods that have fueled outside hopes that the nuclear-armed nation might ease its economically ruinous obsession with military hardware and dabble in Chinese-style market reforms.

Food prices have spiked, the result of drought and North Korea's defiant launching of a rocket in April that shut down new offers of food aid from the United States. Development organizations also blame speculators who have hoarded staples in anticipation of reforms that have yet to materialize. The price of rice has doubled since early summer, and chronic shortages of fuel, electricity and raw materials continue to idle most factories, leaving millions unemployed.

"People were hopeful that Kim Jong-un would make our lives better, but so far they are disappointed," said a 50-year-old named Mrs. Park, who like Mrs. Kim spoke on the condition that only her last name be used, fearing retribution when she returned home.

A member of the ruling Workers' Party from a major city, Mrs. Park said that to feed her family, she sells cornmeal cakes from a market stall, but she complained of sluggish sales and famished children who snatch her wares from beneath a protective swatch of fabric. More than once this year, she said she walked by the lifeless bodies of those who were too weak to steal.

"I would have given them food if I had any," she said, looking away with shame.

What has become clear in recent months is that Mr. Kim is intent on a new leadership style — allowing more women to dress in Western wear that had long been branded a capitalist affectation, and breaking with tradition by publicly admitting a failure when the much ballyhooed rocket launch went awry. What is less clear is whether he will allow more than the baby steps toward economic reform that he is reported to have taken.

Those changes include a pilot project that North Korean defector groups say was introduced last spring that aims to let farmers keep 30 percent of their yield. The government has reportedly begun a guest-worker program, with the goal of giving thousands a chance to earn foreign currency in and around Dandong, a booming city that taunts hungry North Koreans across the Yalu River with its neon-lit barbecue restaurants.

In interviews with the four North Koreans, though, optimism was in short supply. Emaciated beggars haunt train stations, they said, while well-connected businessmen continue to grow rich from trading with China and government officials flourish by collecting fines and bribes.

They were all anxious about speaking out; the gulag awaits those who speak to journalists or Christian missionaries, they were warned during two-day orientations that preceded their departure. "If the government finds out I am reading the Bible, I'm dead," one woman said.

Heightened security on both sides of the border since Mr. Kim took power has made sneaking into China much harder than in recent years; activists who help ferry refugees to freedom in South Korea say sweeps by Chinese police and a crackdown on North Korean smugglers who guide the way to the border has reduced to a trickle those who try to leave.

Even if their lives are stalked by deprivation and a fear of North Korea's omnipresent security apparatus, the people who made it to Dandong are a privileged lot: all of them arrived on two-month visas that let them visit relatives here — allowing their government to charge steep fees that bring it much-needed foreign currency. All of them said they overstayed their visas in the hope they might earn enough money in Chinese factories or breweries to feed their families and repay black market loans that financed the official paperwork.

With little information seeping out of the tightly controlled police state, their accounts, told from a safe house rented by a Christian group, provided a glimpse into how North Koreans are living under the reign of Mr. Kim, whose family has ruled the country for decades.

Although it is possible the North Koreans interviewed are more disenchanting than others — given their affiliation with Christians, who are generally very critical of the Communist state — their accounts, told separately, largely dovetailed with one another's and with the assessments offered by foreign aid workers and academics who recently spent time in the country.

Daniel Pinkston, a North Korea expert with the International Crisis Group, said much of the talk about change was fueled by Mr. Kim's pronouncements about improving the standard of living and a public persona that appears far more amiable than his mirthless father, Kim Jong-il, whose disastrous economic policies helped produce a famine in the 1990s that claimed as many as two million lives.

"People leapt to very sweeping conclusions about reform, but it's not a switch that happens in a day," said Mr. Pinkston, who visited North Korea this summer. "On the other hand, the privileged few who have a monopoly on certain sectors are making out like bandits."

In two days of interviews with the North Koreans, a thinly concealed disgust over inequality that has risen in recent years — and a realization that the national credo of *juche*, or self-reliance, was a carefully constructed lie — was striking. While such feelings appear to be fed by the creeping availability of at least some information from the outside world, disillusionment mounted last spring after the government's promised era of prosperity, slated to begin in April, went unfulfilled. The discontent seemed to solidify with the government's rare admission of the failed rocket launching.

"We were led to believe that even dogs would eat rice cakes in 2012," said Mrs. Kim, the pig farmer. Asked if she thought there were those who still believed in North Korea's Stalinist, brutally enforced single-party system, she shook her head and said "zero."

She and the others suggested that the information vacuum had been eased by the spread of cellphones (though sanctioned phones cannot call outside the country) and by South Korean soap operas that are smuggled across the border and secretly viewed despite the threat of prison. A 58-

year-old retired truck driver from Suncheon, a city north of the capital, said he and his family locked their doors and covered their windows when watching the DVDs that offered glimpses of well-stocked supermarkets and glittering shopping malls.

"I wish we could have such a clean, shiny life," he said, adding that few people he knows still believe the government propaganda that paints South Korea as far more impoverished than the North.

While he and the other North Koreans are not foolish enough to openly question their leaders at home, their personal reactions to the death of their former leader last December were telling. Upon hearing the news, Mrs. Kim instinctively bought a bouquet of white flowers and headed to a local government building, where throngs waited before a large portrait of their Dear Leader. Mrs. Kim followed their lead, but admitted that her tears were not genuine.

At home, she has precious little time to think about politics. She wakes up each day at dawn to scavenge for edible greens, then returns home to tend the family's pigs. Her other vocation, carried out in secret, is making homemade spirits, brewed from acorns and corn cobs, that she sells to wholesalers.

But the two enterprises barely provide sustenance for her husband and sons. The family subsists on the greens, cornmeal porridge and the occasional potato or radish. Food shortages are so widespread that one son had to return home from the military because he was ill. (His doctors at home say he was starving.)

Escaping hunger by illegally crossing into China appears to be less viable since Mr. Kim came to power. According to South Korean officials, the number of defectors who arrived there after traveling through China had dropped to 751 during the first six months of 2012, a 42 percent decline from the same period last year.

Such figures do not tell the whole story, since it can take months or even years for refugees to earn enough to travel to South Korea, but rights advocates say the border has become increasingly impenetrable.

The North Korean government has recently erected miles of electrified fencing at the border and sent as many as 20,000 additional guards, according to Open Radio for North Korea, which is based in South Korea, but has contacts in the North. In recent months, the Chinese government has also begun a crackdown on defectors who live

in the three provinces closest to North Korea. Rights advocates say those caught are deported to North Korea, where they often face imprisonment.

Kim Tae-jin, the president of Free NK Gulag, an activist group in Seoul, said defectors living in the South have been finding it nearly impossible to reach the "escape brokers" who can bring a relative to freedom, for a steep fee. "Before, the brokers used to be lined up near the border, but I think most of them have been caught," said Mr. Kim, who himself defected.

The lucky few who make it to Dandong are stunned by what they find: the car-choked streets, hot showers and the ability to speak out without fear. But mostly, they are overwhelmed by the array and abundance of inexpensive food. While her compatriots said they stuffed themselves with meat-filled dumplings and rice, Mrs. Kim ate only apples for the first five days. She said she had not eaten them since childhood.

"I thought our country lived well," she said, "but I was mistaken."

Su-Hyun Lee contributed reporting from Seoul, South Korea.

Muslim Rebels Ink Philippine Pact As Step To Peace

Monday, October 15, 2012

Associated Press

By Hrvoje Hranjski And Jim Gomez, Associated Press

MANILA, Philippines (AP) — Muslim rebels and the Philippine government overcame decades of bitter hostilities and took their first tentative step toward ending one of Asia's longest-running insurgencies with the ceremonial signing of a preliminary peace pact Monday that both sides said presented both a hope and a challenge.

The framework agreement, also called a roadmap to a final peace settlement that is expected by 2016, grants minority Muslims in the southern Philippines broad autonomy in exchange for ending more than 40 years of violence that has killed tens of thousands of people and crippled development.

It was signed in Manila's Malacanang presidential palace by government negotiator Marvic Leonen and his counterpart from the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, Mohagher Iqbal. Also on hand to witness the historic moment were President Benigno Aquino III, rebel chairman Al Haj Murad Ebrahim — who set foot in the palace for the first time — and Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak, whose country helped broker the deal.

"We are men and leaders who want to make a difference and we have decided that the time has come for us to choose the moral high ground," Najib said. He said the deal "will protect the rights of the Bangsamoro people and preserve the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Philippines."

He cautioned it "does not solve all the problems, rather it sets the parameters in which peace can be found."

"After four decades, peace is within reach," he said.

The 13-page document outlines general agreements on major issues, including the extent of power, revenues and territory granted for a new Muslim autonomous region to be called Bangsamoro in this predominantly Roman Catholic nation.

It calls for the establishment of a 15-member Transition Commission to draft a law creating the new Muslim-administered region. The 11,000-strong rebel army will be deactivated gradually "beyond use," the agreement says, without specifying a timetable.

Aquino also said much work remains to be done and "the devil is in the details," but his government is committed to the country's south.

Murad said the agreement, on the heels of "almost 16 years of hard negotiations interspersed with armed confrontations ... (is) the most important document in the chapter of our history, a landmark document that restores to our people their Bangsamoro identity and their homeland, their right to govern themselves and the power to forge their destiny and future with their very hands."

Michael Mastura, a member of the rebel negotiating team, likened Monday's agreement to a takeoff.

"But then we have to fly, reach a plateau, and move on," he said.

Sonny Davao, deputy chief of the rebel army, said guerrilla commanders were ready to shift from armed struggle to helping build a new Muslim-administered region.

"We have to transform ourselves because we have responsibilities and obligations to our people and to Islam," said Davao, who shed his camouflage uniform for a dark coat with tie for the signing ceremony. "We are one in supporting the decision of our entire leadership."

The agreement says that the new Muslim-administered region will replace an existing autonomous territory made of five of the country's poorest and most violent provinces.

That territory was created by a 1996 peace agreement the government signed with the Moro National Liberation Front, but it was considered a failure because it did not end the conflict, the rebels did not disarm and it did not improve the lives of Muslims. Corruption, political violence and crimes such as kidnappings and extortion persisted, and the current Moro group continued to fight for self-rule.

Another preliminary accord in 2008 was struck down as unconstitutional because the Supreme Court ruled it would create a separate state.

Western governments have long worried over the presence of small numbers of al-Qaida-linked militants from the Middle East and Southeast Asia seeking combat training and collaboration with the Filipino insurgents.

One of those extremist groups, the Abu Sayyaf, is not part of any negotiations, but the hope is that the peace agreement will isolate its militants and deny them sanctuary and logistical support they had previously received from rebel commanders.

One of those hardline commanders, Ameril Umbra Kato, broke off from the main Moro insurgents last year. Kato's forces attacked the army in August, prompting an offensive that killed more than 50 fighters in the 200-strong rebel faction.

Abu Misri Mammah, a spokesman for Kato's forces, said Sunday that his group does not recognize the peace accord.

"That's a surrender," he said. "We won't waver from our armed struggle and continue to aspire for a separate Muslim homeland that won't be a creation of politicians."

Mastura said that rebel leaders have to forge a strong peace deal that could withstand any opposition.

"It is easy, just gather a few men and disturb, because there are many firearms around. But that's not the mainstream line," Mastura said. "That is why we have to show that this is the way rather than their way."

Iqbal has said his group would not lay down its weapons until a final peace accord is concluded. He said the insurgents could form a political party and run in democratic elections to get a chance at leading the autonomous region.

Associated Press writer Oliver Teves contributed to this report.

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Cambodia's Former King Norodom Sihanouk Dies At 89

Monday, October 15, 2012

Associated Press

By Sopheng Cheang, Associated Press

PHNOM PENH, Cambodia (AP) — Norodom Sihanouk, the revered former king who was a towering figure in Cambodian politics through a half-century of war, genocide and upheaval, died Monday. He was 89.

Sihanouk abdicated the throne in 2004, citing his poor health. He had been getting medical treatment in China since January and had suffered a variety of illnesses, including colon cancer, diabetes and hypertension.

Prince Sisowath Thomico, a royal family member who also was Sihanouk's assistant, said the former king suffered a heart attack at a Beijing hospital.

"His death was a great loss to Cambodia," Thomico said, adding that Sihanouk had dedicated his life "for the sake of his entire nation, country and for the Cambodian people."

Sihanouk's successor, Norodom Sihamoni, flew with Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen to Beijing on Monday to retrieve the body, said Col. Chhay Bunna, a senior police officer in charge of security at Phnom Penh's international airport.

State flags flew at half-staff, and Cambodian government spokesman Khieu Kanharith said an official funeral will be held once the former king's body is repatriated.

In January, Sihanouk requested that he be cremated in the Cambodian and Buddhist tradition, asking that his ashes be put in an urn, preferably made of gold, and placed in a stupa at the country's Royal Palace.

Sihanouk saw Cambodia transform from colony to kingdom, U.S.-backed regime to Khmer Rouge killing field and foreign-occupied land to guerrilla war zone — and finally to a fragile experiment with democracy.

He was a feudal-style monarch who called himself a democrat. He was beloved by his people but was

seldom able to deliver the stability they craved through decades of violence.

Born on Oct. 31, 1922, Sihanouk enjoyed a pampered childhood in French colonial Indochina.

In 1941, the French crowned 19-year-old Sihanouk rather than relatives closer in line to the throne, thinking the pudgy, giggling prince would be easy to control. They were the first of many to underestimate him, and by 1953 the French were out.

Two years later, Sihanouk stepped down from the throne, organized a mass political party and steered Cambodia toward uneasy neutrality at the height of the Cold War.

Sihanouk accepted limited U.S. aid and nurtured relations with Communist China. He was also a founder of the Non-Aligned Movement.

Sihanouk was a ruthless politician, talented dilettante and tireless playboy, caught up in endless, almost childlike enthusiasms.

He made movies, painted, composed music, fielded a palace soccer team and led his own jazz band. His large appetite extended to fast cars, food and women. He married at least five times — some say six — and fathered 14 children.

After 1960, Sihanouk drifted toward the communist camp, seeking assurances from his powerful neighbors, China and Vietnam, that his country's neutrality would be respected.

In 1965, Sihanouk broke off relations with Washington as U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War shifted into high gear. But by 1969, worried about increasing Vietnamese communist use of Cambodian soil, he made new overtures to the United States and turned against China.

Sihanouk's top priority was to keep Cambodia out of the war, but he could not. U.S. aircraft bombed Vietnamese communist sanctuaries in Cambodia with increasing regularity, and his protests were ignored.

Internally, Cambodia was a one-man show. Sihanouk's sharpest critics accused him of running a medieval state as an ancient Khmer ruler reincarnated in Western dress.

"I am Sihanouk," he once said, "and all Cambodians are my children."

Nonetheless, the country was at relative peace and some attempts were made to better the life of the peasants, who adored Sihanouk as a near-deity.

Outsiders saw a country of shimmering temples and emerald green rice fields that seemed a chapter from an Oriental fairy tale. But that face of Cambodia would soon vanish.

In 1970, a U.S.-backed coup sent the prince to Beijing for years of lonely, if lavish, exile. Within weeks, war broke out, beginning a systematic destruction of Cambodia that killed millions and impoverished the survivors.

Sihanouk, seeking to regain the throne, joined the Khmer Rouge-dominated rebels after his overthrow. They had numbered only a few hundred until then, but his presence gave them a legitimacy they had never before enjoyed.

The alliance left Sihanouk open to subsequent criticism that he opened the way for the Khmer Rouge holocaust. But his relations with the rebels were always strained.

"The Khmer Rouge do not like me at all, and I know that. Ooh, la, la ... It is clear to me," he said in a 1973 interview. "When they no longer need me, they will spit me out like a cherry pit."

When the Khmer Rouge seized power in 1975 and Sihanouk returned home, they detained him and ordered his execution. Only the personal intervention of Chinese leader Zhou Enlai saved him.

With Sihanouk under house arrest in the Royal Palace, the Khmer Rouge ran an ultra-radical Maoist regime from 1975 to 1979, emptying the cities to create a vast forced labor camp. An estimated 1.7 million Cambodians were executed or died of disease and hunger under their rule.

Vietnam invaded Cambodia in December 1978 and toppled the Khmer Rouge a few weeks later. Freed as the Vietnamese advanced on Phnom Penh, Sihanouk found exile in Beijing and North Korea.

From there, he headed an unlikely coalition of three guerrilla groups fighting the Vietnamese-installed puppet government. The war lasted a decade.

In a mix of politics and theater — bringing his French poodle to negotiations, singing love songs over elaborate dinners — Sihanouk engineered a cease-fire and moves toward national unity and peace.

Sihanouk headed the U. N.-supported interim structure that ran Cambodia until the 1993 elections, lending his prestige to attempts to unite Cambodia's factions.

The election was won by the royalist FUNCINPEC party of Sihanouk's son Prince Norodom Ranariddh. But it was forced into a coalition with the Cambodian People's Party of former Khmer Rouge officer Hun Sen.

In September 1993, Sihanouk re-ascended the throne in a traditional Khmer coronation.

But the bright promise of the elections soon faded.

Four years after the polls, Hun Sen ended his constant bickering with Ranariddh by overthrowing the prince in a violent coup that shattered the results of the election.

International pressure forced Hun Sen to accept Ranariddh's return for a second election in 1998, which was narrowly won by Hun Sen, but ended in more bloodshed as the royalists and other opposition parties forced a constitutional crisis by refusing to join a coalition with the CPP.

Sihanouk stayed on the sidelines for most of the two-year crisis, but as demonstrators clashed in the streets of Phnom Penh, he finally intervened by urging Ranariddh to accept a new coalition with his enemy Hun Sen.

During his last years, Sihanouk's profile and influence receded. While old people in the countryside still held him in reverence, the young generation regarded him as a figure of the past and one partly responsible for Cambodia's tragedy.

Rarely at a loss for words, he became for a time a prolific blogger, posting his musings on current affairs and past controversies. Most of his writing was literally in his own hand — his site featured images of letters, usually in French in a cramped cursive script, along with handwritten marginalia to news clippings that caught his interest.

His production tailed off, however, as he retreated further from the public eye, spending more and more time under doctor's care in Beijing.

The hard-living Sihanouk had suffered ill health since the early 1990s. He endured cancer, a brain lesion and arterial, heart, lung, liver and eye ailments.

Ailing and weary of politics, Sihanouk stepped down from the throne in 2004 in favor of Sihanouk's son Prince Norodom Ranariddh, a well-liked personality but one with little of the experience needed to negotiate Cambodia's political minefields.

Senior officials in Hun Sen's party were said to favor Sihanouk's son Prince Norodom Ranariddh, a one-time ballet dancer and

cultural ambassador, rather than a more combative figure to sit atop the influential throne.

In late 2011, on his return from another extended stay in China, Sihanouk dramatically declared that he never intended to leave his homeland again. But true to his mercurial reputation, he flew off to Beijing just a few months later for medical care.

During the same period, some of the defendants at Cambodia's U.N.-assisted genocide trial of former senior Khmer Rouge figures sought to divert blame from themselves by suggesting that Sihanouk, as their collaborator, shared responsibility for their actions, despite his powerlessness as their virtual prisoner.

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WESTERN HEMISPHERE

Colombia Rebels Opaque Heading Into Talks Monday, October 15, 2012

Associated Press

By Vivian Sequera

BOGOTA, Colombia (AP) — Absent from the peace talks opening in Norway this week between Colombia's main leftist rebel movement and the government will be the guerrilla heavyweights who presided a decade ago over the last attempt to end a conflict that has claimed tens of thousands of lives over nearly half a century.

Either they are dead, mostly killed in military raids, or believed to be in the field commanding an insurgency badly battered by a Colombian military fortified by years of U.S. financial and logistical support.

This time, most of the faces and names of the negotiators for the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, or FARC, are little known to their countrymen. And unlike in the last talks in 1999-2002, the rebels this time enjoy no safe haven. President Juan Manuel Santos would not agree to one.

Both parties to the negotiations were keeping a low profile heading into the talks at an undisclosed location outside Oslo. There is no media access and even the hour and date of the first meeting are uncertain, though a news conference is set for Wednesday.

The rebels, meanwhile, have offered only a vague sense of what they will demand in exchange for laying down their arms, beyond land reform and guarantees of safety for fighters who demobilize.

On Sunday, about 200 people rallied in central Bogota to demand an accounting from the FARC for relatives kidnapped by the rebels and never released.

Andres Pastrana, who presided over Colombia's last round of peace talks that ran nearly the entire length of his 1998-2002 presidency before collapsing in discord, is among Colombians who wonder why two still-powerful commanders who took part in the previous negotiations, Joaquin Gomez and Fabian Ramirez, will be absent from the Norway talks.

"The question we have to ask is: Is the FARC monolithically united behind this process?" said Pastrana, who met secretly with legendary FARC founder Manuel Marulanda in 1998 to arrange the last round of talks. "I don't have that very clear. Let's hope it is."

The FARC negotiators, whose discussions with the government are to move to Havana later this month, include one member of the rebels' ruling six-man Secretariat, Ivan Marquez, as well as Marco Leon Calarca, the rebels' public voice during the 1990s.

Another negotiator, Ricardo Tellez or Rodrigo Granda, was seized in 2004 by Colombian agents in Venezuela but freed by the Colombian government three years later as a good-faith gesture to encourage the FARC to free all its "political hostages."

The rebels released their last such captives in April, meeting a condition of the agreement under which secret preliminary talks began on Feb. 23 in Havana.

The only top FARC negotiator well-known to Colombians, Ricardo Palmera, is serving a 60-year sentence in the United States. A former banker, he gained fame during the last talks.

Colombia's chief prosecutor has said that Palmera could be allowed to participate in the Oslo talks via teleconference from a prison in Colorado.

Palmera was convicted in the abduction of three U.S. military contractors whose surveillance plane crashed in rebel territory in 2003 due to mechanical failure. The three men were rescued in July 2008 along with former presidential candidate Ingrid Betancourt in a sophisticated ruse involving Colombian commandos posing as international relief workers.

Many of the FARC's former top leaders have been killed by the military in raids that began tipping the conflict in the government's favor in 2008.

Marulanda died of an apparent heart attack in 2008 just after its chief spokesman at those talks, Raul Reyes, was killed in a cross-border military raid into Ecuador that briefly brought regional tensions to a boiling point. In September 2010, the group lost its undisputed field marshal, Jorge Briceno, or Mono Jojoy, in an air assault on his jungle hideout. And Marulanda's successor atop the FARC, Alfonso Cano, was killed by Colombia's military last year.

The rebels' footprint is also much diminished, though the insurgents have stepped up hit-and-run attacks in recent months, particularly on oil installations.

While the FARC operated in more than half of Colombia's 1,102 municipalities at the height of its strength in the 1990s, its activity is now focused on just 70 municipalities, the Defense Ministry says. The FARC's current top commander, Timoleon Jimenez, commands an estimated 9,000 rebels, a force depleted by desertions from roughly twice that number a decade ago.

Jimenez acknowledged on Sept. 4, when both sides announced the formal peace talks, the damage inflicted on his organization by the U.S.-backed military buildup that began in 2000 under Pastrana and was intensified by his successor, Alvaro Uribe, for whom the country's current president, Santos, served as defense minister from 2006-2009.

"Let us seek dialogue, a bloodless solution, an understanding through political means," Jimenez, 53, said in an interview published last month by the Communist Party weekly *Voz*.

The weekly's editor, Carlos Lozano, says it is crucial to the FARC that if its fighters lay down their arms and enter politics they are not hunted down and killed as some 5,000 partisans were in the 1980s from the rebels' then-political arm, the Union Patriotica.

While Colombians are weary of the decades-long conflict, the FARC's leftist politics remains anathema to Colombia's ruling elite. The peasant-based insurgency grew out of a 1950s agrarian self-defense movement that later fused with communist activists who the U.S. government helped suppress.

The agreement signed Aug. 26 in Havana setting the peace talk agenda says the goal will be to achieve "economic development with social justice" for the great majority of Colombians. It prioritizes access to fertile land for the rural poor,

full political rights and the end of rebel participation in the illegal narcotics trade.

While the last priority is the government's, the others are FARC goals, Lozano said. The government accuses the group of being financed by the cocaine trade.

Colombia is a land of deep inequities. Much of its countryside is controlled by cattle ranchers who in the 1980s formed far-right militias to defend themselves against rebel kidnapping and extortion.

More than 1.2 million people have been forcibly displaced in the past five years and 5.2 million people since 1985, mostly by the far-right militias, according to the CODHES independent rights group.

Sixty percent of Colombia's fertile land is in the hands of just 14,000 landowners while 2.5 million peasants together own no more than 20 percent, according the Alejandro Reyes, director of Colombia's INCODER land reform agency.

Former President Belisario Betancur, who attempted to make peace with the rebels during his 1982-86 term, says he's optimistic this time around. But the 89-year-old Betancur says he's not sure how FARC demands for a more equitable society and for attacking rural poverty can be met quickly.

"Governments can't satisfy FARC demands by decree," he said. "Imagine. That would be childish, a utopia."

Associated Press writers Cesar Garcia in Bogota and Frank Bajak in Lima, Peru, contributed to this report.

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Once A Partner Of Colombian Guerrillas, Venezuela Now Helps In Peace Talks

Monday, October 15, 2012

Washington Post

By Juan Forero

BOGOTA, Colombia — When peace negotiations between Colombia's government and Marxist rebels begin this week, a country once accused of helping the guerrillas in their war against the government will be on hand: Venezuela, whose president, Hugo Chavez, has had an affinity with the insurgents.

For many Colombians, the populist firebrand is a destabilizing force who wanted to see the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, or FARC, take power late in the last decade from right-wing President Alvaro Uribe. Chavez once told the Venezuelan congress that Colombia's guerrillas were fighting for a legitimate cause, and his government was accused of trying to isolate Uribe, a key U.S. ally in the war on drugs during an eight-year term that ended in 2010.

But Uribe's center-right successor, Juan Manuel Santos, repaired tattered relations with Venezuela and then opted to take advantage of the admiration the FARC has for Chavez. Santos named Venezuela as one of four countries to participate in negotiations that begin Monday with the rebel group in Norway before moving to Cuba, where the bulk of the talks will take place.

And it has become clear in recent weeks that Chavez and his aides — particularly Nicolas Maduro, who was foreign minister until being named vice president this past week — have helped ensure that FARC commanders feel secure about meeting with Santos's negotiators.

"Chavez has been extremely active on the peace process, not only logistically," said Aldo Civico, a Rutgers University conflict resolution expert who has spoken to Colombian negotiators about the talks. "My understanding is that he has been able to talk to the members of the FARC negotiation team and encourage them to stay within the dynamic of the peace talks, to engage constructively."

Norway, a country with a long history of brokering deals in conflicted countries, and Cuba, the host of the talks in the months ahead, will serve in the role of guarantors, with representatives from those countries sitting in on negotiations.

Venezuela and Chile, whose government is considered a close ally of Colombia's government, are known as "acompañantes" — literally, company. They are to help with logistics, provide diplomatic support and "do whatever the parties ask them to do," said a Colombian official familiar with the talks, speaking on the condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the negotiations.

Those who closely track the policies in the region said that Venezuela's role is especially important because of the relationship Chavez and his closest associates have forged with FARC commanders during the Venezuelan leader's 14 years in power.

"Without Venezuela, it would be very difficult to have a successful negotiation," said Michael Shifter, president of the Inter-American Dialogue policy group in Washington. "They give some guarantees of legitimacy and credibility to the process and ensure that the talks stay on track."

Santos, as defense minister for Uribe, oversaw some of the army's biggest blows against the FARC, including strikes that killed some top commanders.

At the same time, Colombian military and police intelligence reported that the long, porous border Colombia shares with Venezuela had become a sanctuary for FARC units — a claim that was supported by people who live in border towns, rebel deserters and documents seized by Colombia's army in abandoned rebel camps.

The United States also asserted that Venezuela had close ties to the FARC, and in 2008 it accused three top aides to Chavez of helping the rebels traffic in cocaine and battle Uribe's government.

But upon his inauguration as president in August 2010, Santos moved fast to reopen a dialogue with Venezuela. "His main objective was to pursue a peace process, and he knew it would be hard to achieve without Chavez's cooperation," Shifter said.

The Venezuelan government, which had strenuously denied the accusations against it, responded positively to Santos's diplomatic initiatives, noted Adam Isacson, a senior analyst on Colombia for the policy group Washington Office on Latin America.

"You have a president who wants to be seen as a peacemaker and wants to unite the region and cares about that," Isacson said of Chavez. "Whatever advantage he saw in having a relationship with the FARC is probably now gone."

Guerrilla negotiators have recently spoken publicly of Venezuela's role in facilitating the talks and helping with the logistics that permitted them to get to Cuba for the preliminary negotiations that took place earlier this year with Colombian government representatives.

Chavez, too, has spoken about his government's role in the talks, saying that his hope is for the guerrillas to reintegrate into society and continue their struggle through politics. He has also named a representative who will be in Cuba, Roy Chaderton, an experienced diplomat who has served in Washington as ambassador to the Organization of American States.

"With the guarantees Colombia's government offers, with a good debate, with good talks, with a good accord, I think that the FARC could move into a political process," Chavez said at a news conference last month in Caracas, Venezuela's capital.

"They asked us for help," he said of the FARC, "and I told the president, 'Whatever needs to be done for Colombia's peace, I'm willing to do it.'"

Cuban Missile Crisis: Really Touch-and-go? See News Photos Of The Day On Your Smartphone

Monday, October 15, 2012

USA Today

By Rick Hampson

Greenville, S.C. — The forgotten man of the Cuban missile crisis was once its hero — the only American to perish in a conflict that could have killed millions.

Scan with a QR reader or download the scanner at scan.mobi (available on most U.S. smartphones). Get codes for your business: att.com/mcode

Maj. Rudolf Anderson was "the martyr who died for us all," said Eric Sevareid, the CBS Evening News analyst. Future generations would lay flowers at Anderson's grave, he predicted, in thanks for the "hosts of others who did not die."

The crisis, the closest the planet has come to nuclear war, took place over 13 days — Oct. 16-28, 1962. It started after aerial photos showed the Soviet Union was deploying nuclear missiles in Cuba in order to bolster its communist ally, Fidel Castro, and its own ability to strike the United States.

Armed only with a camera, Anderson flew an unescorted U-2 spy plane over the island more times in the crisis than any other pilot. He and his comrades took the photos that the United States used to show the world the Soviets had nuclear missiles 90 miles from Florida.

After Anderson was shot down by a Soviet missile — without permission from leaders in the Kremlin — President Kennedy and his Soviet counterpart, Nikita Khrushchev, realized they had to end the crisis before their underlings pushed them into war. Within 24 hours, they did.

Fifty years later, Anderson's memory has faded, along with that of the crisis itself.

There are unforgettable moments — Kennedy on TV telling the nation about the missiles and announcing a quarantine around Cuba; United

Nations Ambassador Adlai Stevenson unveiling photos of the missile sites and offering to wait "until hell freezes over" for a Soviet response; Soviet ships in the Atlantic turning back from the quarantine line.

But the crisis that historian James Blight calls "the most dangerous moment in modern history" is hazy to young Americans and widely misunderstood by their elders.

Despite revelations since the end of the Cold War, the crisis is encrusted by myth: of a cool, hard-line Kennedy, a bellicose Khrushchev and a resolution in which the Americans stood firm and the Russians backed down.

Alice George, author of a social history of the crisis, says its memory was diminished by subsequent traumas, especially the assassination of Kennedy a year later. And the end of the Cold War two decades ago deprived the crisis of its doomsday context.

"If you were alive in 1962, you have a story about the crisis," George says. "If you weren't, you have no clear idea what happened."

Here in Anderson's hometown, some people want to change that. One is Jack Parillo, a retired architect who learned of Anderson only when he stumbled on his memorial. "People don't realize Rudy's importance to history," he says. "Without him, there might not be any history."

'A taste of death row'

By 9 a.m. on Oct. 27, 1962, Rudolf Anderson was 72,000 feet above Cuba, on the blue-black edge of space, snug in a pressurized flight suit, flying an aircraft that did not officially exist. In addition to the top-secret target list, he carried photos of his two sons and his wife, two months pregnant with what he hoped would be a girl.

The U-2 was one of the most exotic aircraft ever made. Fly too fast at this altitude (twice that of a commercial jetliner's) and the wings and tail break off; fly too slow, and the engine stalls. The difference between the two extremes: 7 mph.

It was Day 12 in the crisis. With the Soviet missiles in place, Alice George says, "everyone in America got a taste of death row." The nation's southeastern quarter, including Greenville, was in range of warheads 70 times more powerful than the bomb that destroyed Hiroshima.

Day and night, U.S. military forces moved toward Florida. The Strategic Air Command, which controlled the nation's nuclear arsenal, moved to DEFCON2, one alert level short of war. It

dispersed 183 B-47 bombers to 33 civilian and military airfields and kept 60 B-52 bombers, most carrying atomic bombs, aloft at all times. About 130 long-range nuclear missiles were ready to be fired; their silo hatches were open, and the Soviets could see it.

Americans reacted with a mixture of anxiety and resignation. Some hoarded canned food and built fallout shelters. Millions of city dwellers decided it was a good time for a trip to the country. In Memphis, a man told police who found him lifting a manhole cover that he was seeking a bomb shelter for his family.

Bunkers outside Washington were readied for government officials, and federal agencies made plans for emergency wage-price controls, rationing and censorship.

Anderson's hometown was jittery, especially after the state civil defense director told local officials there was emergency shelter space for only 7% of the population. A 16-year-old called the Marine recruiter in Greenville to ask whether the president had lowered the enlistment age. Ed Smith, American Legion district commander, said he had volunteered for World War I and was ready again.

Few knew that Greenville already was represented by Rudy Anderson.

He'd always wanted to fly. As a kid, he built model airplanes, and once got in trouble in school for using his pencil to trace in the air the flight of a fly.

He was something of a daredevil. At Clemson, he was so intent on catching a pigeon that had gotten loose in his dorm that he chased it down a hallway and out a second-story window, breaking a few bones in the fall. His buddies would call it "Rudy's first flight."

As an officer, he was both top gun and by-the-book, a pilot's pilot who was selected to evaluate his peers. All agreed he'd make general. "He wanted to keep climbing the wall ... to be the leader," recalls Jim Black, a fellow Korean War reconnaissance pilot. "He was strong-headed. It was his way or no way."

He wanted as many flights as he could get, even if it created jealousy in the competitive U-2 brotherhood. "Hot to go all the time," Black says. "He was bent on being in the middle of whatever was going on."

He'd jockeyed for this flight over Cuba, his sixth in the crisis, even though two days earlier, another

pilot reported being fired on by Soviet surface-to-air missiles — the first time any of the U-2 flights had drawn fire.

He didn't seem worried. The night before, he called his mother in Greenville and told her not to worry, he was doing what he loved.

After 10 a.m., Anderson completed his pass over the eastern end of Cuba — his plane's camera clicking, Soviet radar watching — and turned toward Florida. A Soviet general, absent his commander and for reasons still unclear, ordered two surface-to-air missiles fired at the U-2.

One exploded behind Anderson, sending shrapnel into the cockpit and through his pressurized suit. He probably was dead before the plane hit the ground, 13 miles below. He was 35.

'The first shot'

The executive committee of the National Security Council was meeting in the White House Cabinet Room when word arrived. "You can hear the tension in their voices," says Sheldon Stern, former historian at the Kennedy Presidential Library, who has studied the tapes on which the president secretly recorded the deliberations.

"This is much of an escalation by them, isn't it?" Kennedy said.

"They've fired the first shot," said Paul Nitze, an assistant secretary of Defense.

Later, Attorney General Robert Kennedy, the president's brother, would write, "There was the feeling that the noose was tightening on all of us."

To most in the room, Anderson was merely "that U-2 boy," as Vice President Johnson called him. But the president seemed to see a father with a son not much older than his John-John. Later, in the Oval Office, the president told his brother that "the politicians and officials sit home pontificating about great principles and issues, make the decisions and dine with their wives and families, while the brave and the young die." As RFK left, the president was writing a letter to Anderson's widow.

A U.S. invasion of Cuba seemed likely, and an attack on the anti-aircraft missile site that hit Anderson almost certain. The military waited for Kennedy's order.

He never gave it, even though he could not have known that either move probably would have led to all-out nuclear war. Unknown to the United States, Soviet troops in Cuba (there were 40,000, not the 8,000 the CIA estimated) had tactical

nuclear weapons to use against a U.S. invasion, and Soviet nuclear cruise missiles were pointed at the Guantanamo naval base in case of a U.S. invasion or attack on Soviet anti-missile sites.

Instead, Kennedy offered Khrushchev a final compromise.

Sunday morning, they had a deal: The Soviets would pull their missiles out of Cuba; the United States promised not to invade Cuba and to secretly remove its own nuclear missiles from Turkey.

Two days later, Maj. Steve Heyser, Anderson's comrade and rival in the U-2 squadron, went to the White House to receive Kennedy's thanks for taking the first photos of the Soviet missile installations.

Afterward, Gen. Curtis LeMay, the cigar-chomping Air Force chief of staff, told Heyser that because Anderson was dead and he was alive, Anderson was going to be the hero of the crisis. Did the major have a problem with that?

LeMay had four stars on his shoulder. Heyser had no choice. "No, sir," he replied.

Air Force accounts at the time gave both Heyser and Anderson credit for the first photos. Anderson received the first Air Force Cross, the service's highest decoration short of the Medal of Honor. Heyser and the nine other U-2 pilots who flew over Cuba got the Distinguished Flying Cross, even though they'd all taken the same risks.

Some thought it unfair; Heyser, who died in 2008, told the LeMay story many times.

Being the hero's wife was no consolation to Jane Anderson. Seven months earlier, she'd been traumatized by a false report of Rudy's death in an air crash. Now, when the casualty notification team arrived at her door at Laughlin AFB in Texas, she ran into the bathroom and locked the door.

"She said, 'I don't want to live without Rudy,'" recalls Marlene Powell, wife of another U-2 pilot.

At Rudy's funeral in Greenville, Jane recoiled at the site of an Air Force staff car like the one used by the notification team. Jerry McIlmoyle, a U-2 pilot, was a pallbearer. "His death blew her mind," he recalls. "She was down; I mean really down."

Although Jane Anderson eventually remarried, "I don't think she ever got over it," McIlmoyle says. "We couldn't do anything for her. She didn't want anything to do with the Air Force." She died in 1981.

Jane couldn't come to Greenville the following year for the dedication of her husband's memorial. A plane like the one he flew in Korea was placed in a park where he'd played as a boy. The plane seemed to be landing, "as if it was coming home," his sister said.

The next month, Jane gave birth to the daughter Rudy always wanted. People said her name, Robyn, evoked her father's love of flight.

Camera as weapon

Decades later, Jack Parillo was driving past Greenville's Cleveland Park when he stopped to check out the F-86 fighter behind the fence. A marker said Maj. Rudolf Anderson died in 1962, but nothing about how or why.

Parillo, an Air Force veteran, was intrigued. The more he learned about Anderson, the more he felt he had been overlooked. He hit upon a remedy: the Medal of Honor.

The area's congressional representatives were receptive, and the local American Legion post endorsed the idea. But Parillo ran into an unexpected obstacle — Anderson's fellow pilots.

Today, four of the 11 U-2 pilots who flew over Cuba in the crisis are alive. In interviews with USA TODAY, three said Anderson did not deserve the Medal of Honor, because he was simply doing his duty — as they all were — and did not go "above and beyond" it.

"I respect Andy, but that was not a Medal of Honor action," says Buddy Brown, 83, using his fellow pilot's nickname. "You haven't saved anybody; you're not coming out of a foxhole. You just happened to be in a spot and got hit." Were Anderson alive, he adds, he'd feel the same way.

On Oct. 27, Greenville will unveil a redesigned Anderson memorial that will explain all about him and the missile crisis. As Severeid predicted, his old friends will lay flowers on his grave, as they have every year since 1962.

At one such ceremony, Steve Lorys, husband of the daughter Anderson never knew, spoke of his father-in-law as a warrior in a new kind of war that couldn't actually be fought, at least not with a winner.

For all the warheads and missiles that October, Anderson's "camera was the only weapon that would have worked," he said, "because it showed the world."

Cuba's Ladies In White Mourn Leader 1 Year Later

Monday, October 15, 2012

Associated Press

By Anne-Marie Garcia

HAVANA (AP) — Cuba's Ladies in White dissident group on Sunday marked the one-year anniversary of their co-founder's death with cries of "Laura Pollan lives!" outside a Havana church.

Several dozen women dressed in white and carrying gladiolas also yelled "freedom!" at their weekly protest march in a western neighborhood of the Cuban capital.

Many wore T-shirts bearing the image of Pollan, who died Oct. 14, 2011 after a week in intensive care for a respiratory virus.

"We are in mourning today. We have a lot of pain," said Berta Soler, who has become the group's most public face since Pollan died. "But we also have great strength, because Laura is giving us great strength."

Cuban authorities call the dissidents "counterrevolutionaries" who take money from Washington and anti-Castro interest groups to undermine the island nation's Communist system.

The Ladies in White were formed in 2003 by wives and relatives seeking the release of 75 dissidents rounded up that year and given long prison sentences, including Hector Maseda, Pollan's widower.

The last 52 people in the group still behind bars seven years later were freed under a 2010 deal brokered by the Roman Catholic Church. Most went into exile in Spain along with their families.

But under Pollan's and Soler's leadership, the Ladies in White adopted a more general political agenda and continued protesting with a mostly new membership.

In 2005, the European Union awarded the Ladies in White its annual Sakharov human rights prize.

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800 Brazil Police In Shantytown Clean Up Operation

Monday, October 15, 2012

AFP

Police in Rio de Janeiro on Sunday took control of the crime-infested favelas of Jacarezinho and Mangueiras in a bid to claim back portions of the city controlled by violent gangs, AFP reporters witnessed.

The operation began shortly before 5:00 am (0800 GMT) and involved about 800 police in riot gear and 13 armored personnel carriers.

Heavily armed officers began patrolling the streets as soon as they moved in.

"The situation is calm," police spokesman Colonel Federico Caldas told Globo News television. "There have been no incidents, but we are prepared for any possible development."

The favelas are known as major drug trading and consumption centers.

Authorities plan to install a so-called Police Pacification Unit (UPP) in Mangueiras, which will be staffed with agents specially trained to address the community's violence and drug problem.

Jacarezinho will be patrolled by strengthened but regular police units.

Authorities in Brazil are trying to take control of and clean up some of the most dangerous areas of the country in preparation for the 2014 Soccer World Cup and the Olympic Games of 2016.

With the addition of Mangueiras, authorities have deployed 29 of the UPPs in more than 170 local communities, which are now patrolled by more than 6,770 special agents, according to military police statistics.

Brazil plans to deploy 40 UPPs by 2014.

SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

Talk Of N. Mali Intervention Grows, No Action Soon

Monday, October 15, 2012

Associated Press

By Krista Larson, Associated Press

MOPTI, Mali (AP) — Before Islamists seized the northern half of Mali, Mamadou Sekere sold masks and jewelry in Timbuktu to European tourists who rode camels and slept in the desert under the stars.

Now, Sekere is in Mopti where one of his wives gathers leaves to feed the family. His other wife, who stayed behind when he fled Timbuktu, calls several times a day. He's got 10 children with one and eight with the other, but can only shake his head when asked where they all are now.

Sekere waits for the day when the Islamists leave Timbuktu, where they recently carried out a public execution in front of 600 people and have banned items ranging from perfume to Nokia ring tones.

Sekere's handicrafts are hidden inside the walls of his home until he, and the tourists, can return

"Here I am getting by only on the generosity of my friends," Sekere told a reporter from the upper level of a mud home in this central Malian town, now home to thousands of displaced northerners. "There at least I have a plot of land that I can work."

Sekere is one of nearly 500,000 people who fled northern Mali since the crisis began earlier this year. Many, like Sekere, who came to the south have found life difficult because unemployment is high. Here the civilian government is trying to exert authority over the military, whose junior officers launched a coup in March right before elections were to have been held. The soldiers still call a lot of the shots, even though they made a show of returning power to the civilians in April.

Ordinary Malians and international experts alike are not sure what will reunite and bring back political stability to a country that until recently had a reputation as one of West Africa's most steady democracies.

"This is not only a humanitarian crisis; it is a powder keg that the international community cannot afford to ignore," U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton said recently.

The Obama administration, France and neighboring African countries are all weighing what will be the most effective policies to halt the rapid success of Islamic extremists in Mali. The 15-nation West African regional bloc, the Economic Community of West African States, or ECOWAS, has discussed sending 3,000 troops to help oust the Islamist militants from the north.

Many, though, question how Mali's weak military could take the lead on such an intervention.

"All the military force in the world cannot put Mali back together and sustain it unless there is a legitimate political process that the majority of Malians will accept," said J. Peter Pham, director of the Africa program at the Washington-based Atlantic Council.

Analysts believe ECOWAS would need to send more soldiers to take and hold the France-sized area of desert now controlled by the militants.

"There's been a serious mismatch between the type of mission that is talked about and the type of resources that anyone is willing to cough up in support of that mission," noted Pham.

The U.N. Security Council on Friday unanimously approved a plan to back an African-led military

force to help the Malian army oust Islamic militants. But the plan still faces delays: The French-backed resolution gives Mali, the West Africans and the African Union 45 days to develop plans to recover the occupied territory.

Representatives of the United Nations, the African Union and ECOWAS are to consider the situation on Oct. 19 in a meeting in Mali's capital, Bamako. The head of the Germany-based U.S. Africa Command, Gen. Carter Ham, said recently that "a military component" would be a part of an overall solution in northern Mali, but he ruled out an overt U.S. military presence.

While diplomats from other countries discuss options, no action on the ground to retake the north appears imminent.

"We're in this period of stagnation, effectively a stalemate in the north," said Gregory Mann, a history professor at Columbia University who specializes in Mali. "Some form of outside intervention is probably both undesirable, inevitable and necessary."

Mali's transitional government has accepted in theory the prospect of the regional military intervention, though those involved in the discussions suggest there is a reluctance to allow foreign troops in Mali's capital in the south.

There has been nominal progress toward restoring democracy after the military coup but there is no clear path for holding fresh elections. The possibility of national elections being held within six months is "extremely slim," according to the International Crisis Group.

"All scenarios are still possible, including another military coup and social unrest in the capital, which risk undermining the transitional institutions and creating an even more explosive situation," said Gilles Yabi, West Africa project director for the International Crisis Group.

Calls for an ECOWAS regional intervention have prompted protests in Mali's capital in recent weeks, though others have marched in favor of an ECOWAS mission.

Korotoumou Diakite, a 22-year-old student who took part in the pro-intervention march in Bamako this week, said: "I have faith that ECOWAS and the international community so that Mali remains one and indivisible."

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Mauritania Says Soldier Shot Leader By Accident

Monday, October 15, 2012

New York Times

By Adam Nossiter

DAKAR, Senegal — The president of Mauritania, Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz, was shot and wounded while returning home from a country weekend on Saturday evening in what his spokesman said Sunday was an accidental shooting by a nervous soldier.

That explanation was echoed by the official Mauritanian news agency on its Web site, and by the wounded president himself in a halting televised declaration on the state broadcaster from his military hospital bed, shortly before being flown to Paris for further treatment on Sunday.

But the shooting took place in a fraught regional context in which Mr. Abdel Aziz, a former general who seized power in a 2008 coup and was later elected, is one of the few leaders to have successfully fought Al Qaeda's local franchise, Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, on the battlefield. The group, which now controls northern Mali, has previously declared the Mauritanian president a sworn enemy.

In addition, Mr. Abdel Aziz presides over a desert nation of chronic political instability, two coups d'état since 2005 and armed vigilance against the Al Qaeda faction. The militant group, in turn, is now under pressure as nations in West Africa have vowed to dislodge it by force from Mali, a pledge given preliminary approval by the United Nations Security Council last week.

Those factors have already led some commentators on a widely followed Mauritanian news Web site, Cridem (Carrefour de la République Islamique de Mauritanie), to question the official version of Saturday's shooting.

Still, the government on Sunday insisted that the shooting was the result of friendly fire and was neither a terrorist attack nor a coup attempt, an explanation supported by at least one prominent Mauritanian journalist.

The journalist, Isselmou Ould Moustapha, editor of the newspaper Tahalil, said Sunday by phone from the capital, Nouakchott: "The accidental explanation is the likeliest. The president himself is saying it. And the soldiers are very nervous. They live with their fingers on the trigger."

Mr. Abdel Aziz was driving on a track through the desert near Tweila, northeast of Nouakchott, when

soldiers mistakenly opened fire on his unescorted vehicle, the communications minister, Hamdi Ould Mahjoub, said by telephone on Sunday. Mauritanian news Web sites reported that the president had been shot in the arm and that no vital organs had been hit. Mr. Abdel Aziz, 55, was returning to Nouakchott after one of his habitual weekend excursions in the wilderness, Mr. Mahjoub said, when he came on a military checkpoint, which are scattered throughout the country, ostensibly to counter the threat from Al Qaeda.

The president was driving the unmarked car, with one passenger, Mr. Mahjoub said, and there was no escort in the immediate vicinity. Mr. Abdel Aziz is known for sometimes driving himself around Nouakchott, and for occasionally wading into crowds with minimal security.

"He was shot at an army checkpoint," Mr. Mahjoub said. The president was hit but his passenger was not, a circumstance that fueled more speculation on the Mauritanian Web sites that Mr. Abdel Aziz was targeted deliberately.

Mr. Mahjoub, the communications minister, insisted that that was not the case. "This was friendly fire, a mistake," he said. "He's used to driving out, himself, in an unmarked car." The minister suggested that the president might have been driving fast, perhaps startling the soldiers at the checkpoint.

The Cridem site said two officers had already been detained for questioning, a claim that could not be immediately verified. It said that soldiers at the checkpoint had fired in the air to stop the vehicle, but that the president was engaged in conversation with his passenger — his cousin — and ignored the warning. The soldiers then opened fire on the vehicle, the Web site said.

Kenya Dissent Is Street Smart

Robust Sidewalk Debate Is Symbol of Growing Free-Speech Rights

Monday, October 15, 2012

Wall Street Journal

By Drew Hinshaw

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

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CBS: New Mexico-Skydiving Record, Politics-Presidential Debate Prep, Politics-Foreign Policy, Arlen Specter Obit, Pakistan-Pro-Schoolgirl Demonstrations, Turkey-Syria Tensions, Florida-Navy Investigates Collision, Colorado-Marijuana, Health-Meningitis Outbreak, North Carolina-E.Coli Outbreak, NASA-Endeavour Arrives

NBC: New Mexico-Sky Diving Record, Politics-Presidential Debate, Arlen Specter Obit, Health-Meningitis Outbreak, Syria-Fighting Continues, Pakistan-Pro Schoolgirl Demonstrations, Education-Texas-Student Tagging, NASA-Endeavour, NASA-Endeavour

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ABC: Pakistan-Malala Sent Abroad, Politics-Presidential Election Poll, US Airways-Cracked Windshield, New Mexico-Skydiving Record, Sound Barrier Record Anniversary

CBS: Pakistan-Malala Sent Abroad, Pakistan-Police Station Attacked, Politics-Presidential Debate, NASA-Endeavour

Arrives At Museum, New Mexico-Skydiving Record, Sound Barrier Record Anniversary, Arlen Specter Dies,



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SECRETARY OF STATE

Clinton Seeks Fundamental Changes In American Foreign Policy

Tuesday, October 30, 2012

Bloomberg News

By Nicole Gaouette

(Updates in third paragraph to reflect that trip is under way, and adds attribution to Mathews in 35th paragraph.)

Oct. 29 (Bloomberg) — Images of the charred U.S. mission in Benghazi, Libya, flashed around the world as U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton entered the Treaty Room in Washington and spoke about the deaths of four Americans there.

"Today, many Americans are asking, indeed I asked myself, how could this happen?" Clinton said. "How could this happen in a country we helped liberate in a city we helped save from destruction? This question reflects just how complicated and at times how confounding the world can be."

As she visits Algeria and the Balkans on what may be one of her last overseas trips as the nation's top diplomat, Clinton is also confronting her legacy, and whether it will be framed by the Benghazi tragedy or her vision that American foreign policy in the 21st Century must utilize social media, coalition-building and export promotion as well as military power.

"It's no longer enough to be strong," Clinton wrote in July in the New Statesman. "Great powers also have to be savvy and persuasive. To do that, we need to expand our foreign policy toolbox, integrate every asset and partner, and fundamentally change the way we do business."

She has been one of the world's most recognizable figures for more than 20 years. She turned 65 on Oct. 26, and the end of this phase of her public life is prompting questions about whether the next one might include a longer stay at the State Department or another run for the White House.

While her energy and endurance — more than 918,000 miles to 112 countries over 384 travel days counting her current trip — in the face of

personal and political trials have made her one of the nation's most admired figures, her tenure now will be examined for lasting accomplishments.

'Disturbing Events'

Her longer view, though, is obscured by the short attention span and limited peripheral vision of the Internet Age, and by the partisan politics of the presidential campaign.

"With the Arab Spring came a great deal of hope that there would be a change towards more moderation, an opportunity for greater participation on the part of women in public life and in economic life in the Middle East," said Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney in the Oct. 22 debate with President Barack Obama. "But instead we've seen in nation after nation a number of disturbing events."

Clinton critics, such as Hoover Institution senior fellow Fouad Ajami, don't see how Clinton's extensive travels have advanced U.S. interests. Clyde Prestowitz, president of the Economic Strategy Institute in Washington, questions her shift of resources to Asia and a trans-Pacific free-trade accord she promotes. Others say a control-conscious White House has shut her out of some top-drawer policy decisions on Iraq, Afghanistan and the war on terror.

Rebuilding Ties

Clinton admirers, such as Leslie Gelb, a former State Department and Pentagon official, say the negative reviews ignore more than 717 White House meetings, her push for military intervention in Libya and how she has handled the strained U.S. relationship with Pakistan. They say the miles she travels — more than 30,000 to Russia and the South Pacific in September alone — are an investment in rebuilding ties essential to U.S. interests.

The debate reflects a fundamental division in Washington and beyond over what constitutes American power in the 21st Century, how it's evolving and how it should be wielded as other countries grow stronger and new players arise.

New players include state-backed hedge funds along with cybercrime and cyberespionage,

transnational threats such as piracy and climate change and the unpredictable "hive-mind" of restive populations linked by social media.

'Power Drivers'

Clinton thinks the "real power drivers" now go beyond military strength to include social media such as Menlo Park, California-based Facebook Inc., said Jake Sullivan, the State Department's director of policy planning. They also include managing the resentments of millions of unemployed young people worldwide, using aid to help stabilize shaky nuclear powers such as Pakistan and building coalitions, he said.

Clinton and her advisers say that through new partnerships, old alliances, and innovative tools, not just military might, they aim to shape U.S. foreign policy for many years.

Those represent "major changes in the way State does business," Sullivan said. "The results of that will be measured over a generation. They won't be measured over four years."

The new global dynamics, Clinton says, require that U.S. power be used in more creative ways. That vision will shape her legacy long after news cycles cease to be dominated by the Benghazi attack, her aides say. Clinton's longer view is shared by Richard Armitage, who was deputy secretary of State under President George W. Bush.

'Smart Power'

"When Mrs. Clinton came into office, it had been quite clear that the U.S. had been overly dependent on our hard power and neglected other aspects of our power, whether it's sports, trade, education exchanges," Armitage said in an interview.

Clinton understands that "smart power" means "we've got to be active not just with servicemen and women, but we've got to be active with our ideas and values," Armitage said.

If persuasion is one of Clinton's yardsticks for success, though, it's been a tough three and a half years.

Iran continues to pursue a suspected nuclear weapons program in the face of U.S.-led sanctions, heightening tensions between the White House and Israeli leaders, who say the window for diplomacy and sanctions is closing.

Longstanding efforts to induce North Korea to renounce its nuclear program have failed so far. The 2009 attempt to "reset" relations with Russia

hasn't dispelled persistent friction over issues such as missile defense and the conflict in Syria.

Modest Progress

In Pakistan, billions of dollars in aid and three years of pushing leaders to crack down on the militants who target NATO troops in Afghanistan have produced only modest progress.

Afghanistan remains bedeviled by the Taliban, and State Department efforts to curb corruption, improve governance and better the lot of women have moved slowly, officials acknowledge.

The Middle East peace process between Israel and the Palestinians is moribund. In Iraq, ethnic and sectarian violence and Iran's new influence undermine administration claims that the U.S. has left the country stable enough to thrive on its estimated 143 billion barrels of oil reserves.

There's no clear administration strategy for coping with unrest in nations such as Syria, Libya, Egypt and Tunisia. Traditional allies such as Saudi Arabia and Jordan are deeply unsettled by the U.S. backing for Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak's ouster.

'Highly Centralized'

"I've seen plenty of Gulf Arabs nervous, but never more so when we were perceived to have thrown Mubarak under the bus," said veteran diplomat Strobe Talbott, a member of Clinton's advisory board. "It was not a thing of beauty diplomatically."

Clinton is working within an administration that Gelb calls "highly centralized" in its decision-making. National Security Council spokesman Tommy Vietor's e-mailed description is that "foreign policy decisions are ultimately made by the president, but this is very much a team sport."

Gelb and others say Clinton has great freedom abroad and within her agency. She's reorganized the State Department and forged closer ties to the Pentagon by adding more personnel exchanges. She's had State work closely with the Treasury Department and the U.S. Trade Representative, including on China policy and boosting American exports.

Promoting Trade

Continuing a trend that the first Bush administration started at the end of the Cold War, she has pushed U.S. embassies to make trade and promoting American business a greater part of diplomacy, taken over some tasks that used to be

Commerce Department business and hired a chief economist.

Because Clinton sees social media as a way for the U.S. to bypass leaders and speak directly to people overseas, she has stressed the importance of new media and information technology. Her department and its embassies now have 195 accounts with San Francisco-based Twitter Inc. and 290 Facebook pages with 15 million subscribers and tens of millions more visitors.

Her department has spent \$75 million on training and technology contracts for entrepreneurs to help activists in repressive countries communicate and avoid detection. In August, the department challenged the public to submit ideas on how smart phones can support arms-control efforts.

Complex Reality

Zbigniew Brzezinski, U.S. national security adviser under President Jimmy Carter, credits Clinton for her focus on the "new and very difficult, complex dispersed reality of power," which he said differs from "the previous century, where the enemy was clearly defined and the challenge was self-evident."

Many of Clinton's themes came together in a January 2011 address to the Arab world in Qatar, where she told leaders they had to heed the frustrations of unemployed youth and the calls for greater political freedom, opportunity and economic reform.

"In too many places, in too many ways, the region's foundations are sinking into the sand," she said. It was less than a month after a Tunisian fruit vendor had set himself on fire, and a day before the country's president was ousted. Two weeks later, protests in Egypt erupted.

Even supporters such as Jessica Mathews, president of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace in Washington, acknowledge that Clinton has no major foreign policy achievements — no deal with Iran or North Korea, no Mideast peace agreement.

Still, said State Department official Sullivan: "When people look back 10 or 15 years from now, they'll say, OK, she saw the trends coming and she did something about them."

Black Swans

Some of Clinton's foreign policy challenges have erupted unexpectedly — so-called Black Swans in financial slang. At times, veteran diplomat Talbott said, there have been so many that they have seemed more "like a black cloud."

Clinton applies an intense work ethic to this cloud, using long hours on flights to work through encyclopedia-thick briefing binders or confer with Washington and other capitals. One former aide confessed he often found reasons to fly to foreign events early to get a respite from the nonstop work on the secretary's plane.

The relentless travel is about "building personal relationships," said Anne-Marie Slaughter, Clinton's former director of policy planning, now a professor at Princeton University in New Jersey.

Retail Politics

That attitude is the legacy of more than 40 years in retail politics with her husband, former President Bill Clinton, also a master at creating networks, showing up and showing you care.

The secretary of state's investment of time and energy in Southeast Asia has "made a difference," particularly in the opening of Myanmar, where former political prisoner Aung San Suu Kyi now sits in parliament, said Mathews.

After the crisis over blind Chinese dissident Chen Guangcheng, Clinton told Bloomberg Radio that a resolution was possible because of work she and others had done with China to "create a level of personal relationships and understandings between individuals and our government institutions."

Personal ties don't always yield benefits, though. Clinton has known Hamid Karzai since her days as a senator from New York, yet the Afghan president has sometimes been a prickly partner, at one point accusing the West of fraud in his country's elections and threatening to join the Taliban.

Still, Clinton sees value in dialogues she created with India, Brazil and China, and in forming an alliance of small Southeast Asian countries along the lower Mekong River.

Those networks will last long after Clinton is gone, her aides say. "These are the types of things it will now take an affirmative decision to turn off," said Andrew Shapiro, the State Department's assistant secretary for political-military affairs. "And why would you?"

--With assistance from Indira A.R. Lakshmanan in Washington. Editors: Mark McQuillan, John Walcott, Terry Atlas.

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US Tries To Coordinate Anti-Militant Push In Mali

Tuesday, October 30, 2012

New York Times

By Michael R. Gordon

ALGIERS — Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton arrived in Algeria on Monday as the United States sought to coordinate support for an emerging international effort to push Islamic militants out of northern Mali.

"One of the things that the secretary wants to talk about is how we would see this working," a senior State Department official said before a scheduled meeting between Mrs. Clinton and the Algerian president, Abdelaziz Bouteflika.

An array of Islamist militant groups have seized control of northern Mali, including Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb. Northern Mali has emerged as a haven for terrorists.

Earlier this month, the United Nations Security Council adopted a resolution underscoring its "readiness" to send an international force to evict the militants in response to a request from the Mali government.

While a military plan has yet to be drafted, the basic idea is for forces from Nigeria and other West Africa countries to help Mali's military mount a campaign against the militants. France, the United States and other countries would help with training, intelligence and logistics.

American and French officials have met in Paris to discuss how to cope with the security situation in Mali, and Mrs. Clinton's trip to Algeria follows a similar visit by France's foreign minister.

American officials indicated that they were not asking Algeria to send troops to Mali but wanted to discuss the role it might play while West Africans and Mali's military provide the "boots on the ground." Algeria is a regional power and Mali's neighbor to the north, and its political support for such a campaign is essential, diplomats say.

Algeria, which waged a brutal war against militants in its own country, also has one of the strongest militaries in the region, as well as an active intelligence service. It includes an intelligence center in the southern city of Tamanrasset that Algeria, Niger, Mali and Mauritania have set up to coordinate efforts against Al Qaeda and other regional threats.

"There is a strong recognition that Algeria has to be a central part of the solution," said a second American official, who added that the situation in northern Mali would be a "central focus" of Mrs. Clinton's talks.

Algeria has not always been supportive of an international effort in Mali, particularly since the prospect of a military campaign in Mali risked pushing the militants north into Algerian territory. But as security in Mali continued to deteriorate, the Algerians dropped their objections.

"There is a Malian institutional crisis," the Algerian foreign minister, Mourad Medelci, said in an Oct. 19 interview at an international meeting on Mali in Bamako. "The Algerians are ready to help."

The worsening situation in Mali is the result of a number of factors. As Algeria pressed its fight against militants on its own territory, many of the Qaeda-affiliated fighters headed to the lightly policed region in northern Mali.

Meanwhile, the fall of Col. Muammar el-Qaddafi of Libya prompted ethnic Tuareg rebels from Mali, who had been fighting alongside Colonel Qaddafi's forces, to return to northern Mali with weapons they had taken from Libya's arsenals. Together with their Islamist allies, they easily chased out the Malian Army, weakened by a coup d'état in the capital, from the country's north in late March and early April. The Islamists then chased out the Tuaregs and seized control in May and June.

After Algeria, Mrs. Clinton will visit Bosnia, Serbia, Kosovo, Croatia and Albania.

Adam Nossiter contributed reporting from Dakar, Senegal.

US Pushes Algeria To Support Military Intervention In Mali

Tuesday, October 30, 2012

Washington Post

By Anne Gearan

ALGIERS — The United States joined France in a diplomatic lobbying campaign Monday to win key Algerian support for an emergency military intervention in northern Mali, where al-Qaeda-linked militants are waging a terror campaign that the Obama administration warns could threaten other nations.

Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton could not persuade Algeria's longtime authoritarian leader to quickly back plans for an international military intervention that he fears would backfire.

"I very much appreciate the president's analysis, based on his long experience as to the many complicated factors that have to be addressed to deal with the internal insecurity in Mali and the terrorist and drug-trafficking threat that is posed for the region and beyond," Clinton said after a lengthy meeting with President Abdelaziz Bouteflika.

Clinton said the United States and Algeria agreed to keep talking, along with potential sponsors of the antiterrorism force, including the United Nations.

Clinton was seeking agreement from Bouteflika at the start of an unrelated diplomatic trip to the Balkans. French President Francois Hollande is expected to visit Algeria in December, with a goal of finalizing regional support for a military mission early next year.

A proposed international force to confront the militants is considered impossible without Algerian support. But Algeria has been reluctant to agree to the creation of such a coalition, whose troops could push extremists out of Mali and back across its own borders.

"They're beginning to warm to the idea, to talk through how it might work," a State Department official said before the meetings.

Algeria is the strongest country in the North African region known as the Sahel, with unmatched military and intelligence resources. Many of the Islamist militant groups in the region originated in Algeria, where secular government forces fought Islamic militias in a civil war in the 1990s.

The spreading terrorism campaign and humanitarian crisis in Mali has drawn unusual attention in Washington over the past month. Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney mentioned the Mali conflict at the start of last week's foreign policy debate with President Obama, and several Cabinet officials are involved in planning for an African intervention force.

Officials have linked a group called al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb to the attack at the U.S. diplomatic mission in Benghazi, Libya, last month. AQIM's leaders are based in northern Mali, where they seized territory following a military coup that shattered Mali's government last spring.

Many Western powers fear that the Sahara desert nation could become like Afghanistan before the 2001 terrorist attacks: a base for radical Islamist fighters to train, impose hard-line Islamic law and plot terrorist attacks in the region or beyond. The

Islamists in Mali have access to a flood of weapons from bordering Libya.

Defense Secretary Leon E. Panetta said last week that the Pentagon is working with allies on a plan to deal with al-Qaeda-linked militants in Mali and elsewhere in the North Africa region, with U.S. assistance likely to center on intelligence and logistical support.

No American troops are expected to participate in ground combat. About a dozen members of a U.S. military team are in Mali as part of the normal embassy staff and security operation.

The Obama administration is contemplating broad military, political and humanitarian intervention in Mali, using the model of the largely successful stabilization effort in Somalia. Since 2007, the United States has spent more than \$550 million to help train and supply an African proxy force of about 18,000 soldiers in Somalia, which has brought a measure of order to Somalia for the first time in two decades.

Senior U.S. defense and diplomatic officials were in Paris last week for planning talks about the Mali force. France, a former colonial power in the region, has been the leader in rallying U.S. and European support for what is being called a stabilization or intervention force. The combat force would be made up of Malian soldiers and a large contingent from other African nations.

Algeria has a long, porous border with Mali and a shared internal ethnic conflict with the Tuareg minority.

Algeria initially opposed the international force as unnecessary, but has since said that although mediation talks are the best solution, Algeria would not automatically reject a military intervention. The Algerian military has dealt with the same militant leaders, many of whom are Algerian, for decades.

Clinton's visit is an acknowledgment that despite long counterterrorism cooperation with the United States, Algeria remains wary of a campaign that could stir unrest among the approximately 50,000 Tuaregs in the country.

The Economic Community of West African States has said it is willing to send about 3,300 troops to Mali to wrest control of the north back from the militants, if it gets the backing of the United Nations and Western countries.

The African Union on Wednesday pledged to write a final operational plan for the African-led force by the end of the month, and to call for arms and

equipment to be provided for Mali's army from members and international partners.

The possible timetable, composition and mission of any European Union support for Mali will be discussed Nov. 19 by E.U. foreign ministers. Under a U.N. Security Council resolution, Secretary General Ban Ki-moon has until the end of November to help Mali develop a plan.

U.S. Seeks Algeria Help In Mali

Monday, October 29, 2012

Wall Street Journal

By Jay Solomon And Drew Hinshaw

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

Clinton Meets Algerian Leader As US, Europe, African Nations Intensify Mali Intervention Plan

Tuesday, October 30, 2012

Associated Press

ALGEIRS, Algeria — U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton sought Algeria's assistance on Monday for any future military intervention in Mali, pressing the North African nation to provide intelligence — if not boots on the ground — to help rout the al-Qaida-linked militants across its southern border.

Clinton, on the first stop of a five-day trip overseas, met with Algerian President Abdelaziz Bouteflika as the United States and its allies ramped up preparations to fight northern Mali's breakaway Islamist republic.

When Mali's democratically elected leader was ousted in a military coup in March, Tuareg rebels seized on the power vacuum and within weeks took control of the north, aided by an Islamist faction. The Islamists then quickly ousted the Tuaregs and took control of half the country.

The U.N. Security Council has unanimously approved the idea of an African-led military force to help the Malian army oust Islamic militants, but its details are still unclear.

One plan would see Mali's embattled government in the south and its West African neighbors taking the military lead to battle with the militants, with the United States and European countries in support.

Any military intervention would likely require Algeria, whose reforms have headed off the Arab Spring tumult experienced by neighbors such as

Libya and Tunisia and left it with the strongest military and best intelligence in the region.

Clinton said she and Bouteflika spoke at length about Mali, with the Algerian leader appearing to caution against any rash action.

"I very much appreciated the president's analysis based on his long experience as to the many complicated factors that have to be addressed to deal with the internal insecurity in Mali and the terrorist and drug trafficking threat that is posed to the region and beyond," Clinton told reporters.

She said they agreed to continue discussions with the U.N. and African nations "to determine the most effective approaches that we should be taking."

Washington is keen to eliminate northern Mali as a haven for al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb, which may have been involved in September's attack on the U.S. Consulate in the Libyan city of Benghazi. Mali even came up in the U.S. election campaign, with Republican challenger Mitt Romney citing the African nation's instability in a foreign policy debate with President Barack Obama.

As further evidence of the U.S. intensifying its diplomatic work in Mali, Maria Otero, an undersecretary of state for civilian security, democracy and human rights, was to travel to Mali on Monday. She is the highest-ranking Obama administration official to visit since the coup. She'll meet with Mali's prime minister, human rights activists and internal refugees.

The 15-nation West African regional bloc, the Economic Community of West African States, or ECOWAS, has discussed sending 3,000 troops to help oust the Islamist militants from the north. Many, though, question how Mali's weak military could take the lead on such an intervention and analysts believe more ECOWAS soldiers would be needed to take and hold the France-sized desert area now controlled by the militants.

While the U.S. wants to see the rebels routed, it has no interest in active involvement in the military mission, unless Mali and West African states explicitly ask for such assistance, a senior American diplomat in Africa said. The official demanded anonymity because he wasn't authorized to speak publicly on the matter.

From Algeria, Clinton left for three days of talks in the Balkans, arriving Monday night in the Bosnian capital of Sarajevo.

She plans to join the European Union's top diplomat in meetings with the leaders of Bosnia,

Serbia and Kosovo, urging those nations to make the necessary reforms to join the EU and NATO. She'll finish with meetings in Croatia and Albania, NATO's two newest members.

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US Seeks Algeria's Support In Possible Mali Move

Tuesday, October 30, 2012

Associated Press

By Bradley Klapper, Associated Press

ALGEIRS, Algeria (AP) — U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton sought Algeria's assistance on Monday for any future military intervention in Mali, pressing the North African nation to provide intelligence — if not boots on the ground — to help rout the al-Qaida-linked militants across its southern border.

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Clinton Presses Algeria On Mali, Qaeda
Tuesday, October 30, 2012

AFP

By Nicolas Revise And Beatrice Khadige

ALGIERS — US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton Monday pressed Algerian President Abdelaziz Bouteflika to support possible military action in neighbouring Mali, where Islamists control large areas of the north.

Algeria, with its powerful army and intelligence services after years of battling Islamist extremism, is seen by Washington as a key player although it is opposed to having direct military involvement in any intervention.

"We had a in-depth discussion of the region and particularly the situation in Mali," including the "terrorist and drug trafficking threat that is posed to the region and beyond," Clinton told reporters after her talks in Algiers.

She said they agreed to continue contacts and join regional states, the United Nations, African Union and the Economic Community of West Africa States (ECOWAS) "to determine the most effective approaches we should be taking."

The United States and France have launched a diplomatic offensive to secure Algerian backing for action in Mali after the UN Security Council urged ECOWAS to prepare a military force against Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) which is tightening its grip on the north.

The Security Council called on West African nations to step up such preparations to reconquer territory held by AQIM and other jihadist groups.

A US State Department official travelling with Clinton told reporters that Algeria, which shares a long border with Mali, had a "central" role to play in any intervention, noting its "intelligence-gathering" capability.

"Algeria being the strongest Sahel state became a critical partner in dealing with AQIM," since the Islamists spread their control over large swathes of northern Mali following a coup in March, the official said.

"Algeria has unique capabilities that no one else in the region really has... The strength of its military forces, its intelligence-gathering capability... So Algeria's central role in leading the fight against the AQIM is really central."

The official also noted that "counterterrorism has been a critical prism through which the Algerian-US bilateral relationship has been developing for some time."

Since April, AQIM and Tuareg allies Ansar Dine and the Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO) have imposed Islamist sharia law in parts of Mali that they have effectively partitioned.

Algeria and Mauritania have both called for dialogue in a bid to reach a political solution.

The common influence among the fundamentalist armed groups ruling northern Mali is AQIM, which originated in Algeria and is active regionally, including in Mauritania.

At first Algeria staunchly opposed any military intervention in Mali, fearing a destabilisation of its territory, inhabited by 50,000 Tuaregs, but now it appears it could back an operation as long as it is African in nature and only if its own army is not directly involved.

The Security Council on October 12 approved a resolution urging ECOWAS to speed up preparations for a force of up to 3,000 troops that would attempt to recapture northern Mali.

It gave ECOWAS until November 26 to clarify its plans.

Another State Department official travelling with Clinton said Algeria has been "warming to the idea" of intervention led by West African states.

"One of the things that we'll be talking about is... the role that Algeria could play if ECOWAS provides the boots on the ground... in coordination with the forces of Mali," said the official.

But US sources said that Bouteflika did not give a "concrete yes" or "no" to military intervention by ECOWAS.

An Algerian Tuareg chief, MP Mahmud Guemama, meanwhile spelled out why he opposed military intervention, in an interview with Elkhobar newspaper published on Monday.

"What the United States and France are asking will cause a lot of problems," he said, warning that such action had "colonial objectives."

"We are more concerned about Algerian towns in the Sahara than northern Mali," he said. "We know how military intention starts but never know the end. Libya was a good example."

Clinton In Algeria Urges Crackdown On Mali Islamists

Tuesday, October 30, 2012

Bloomberg News

By Nicole Gaouette

Secretary of State Hillary Clinton urged Algeria's president today to back regional action aimed at routing Islamist extremists based in northern Mali.

Clinton, on an 11-hour stop in Algiers, is the latest U.S. official to visit North Africa's most stable and prosperous country to urge backing for a move against al-Qaeda's African affiliate, al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, or AQIM.

"We had an in-depth discussion of the region, particularly the situation in Mali," Clinton said today after meeting with President Abdelaziz Bouteflika.

The U.S., France and other West African countries are discussing the outline of a regional intervention in Mali, led by troops from the Economic Community of West African States and the African Union. Since gaining control of much of northern Mali after a March coup that distracted the military and getting access to weapons from post-revolutionary Libya, AQIM has grown in strength.

Clinton said she and Bouteflika had "agreed to continue with in-depth, expert discussions, to work together bilaterally and with the region, along with the United Nations and the African Union and ECOWAS to determine the most effective approaches that we should be taking."

Army General Carter Ham, the departing commander of the U.S. Africa Command, has said kidnapping and smuggling have turned AQIM into al-Qaeda's "best-funded, wealthiest" offshoot. Ham recently visited Algeria to make the case for support of regional intervention as well. Central Role

Algeria's role in that effort would be central, said a State Department official, who wasn't authorized to be identified.

Surrounding countries look to Algeria, the region's military and economic strongman, for leadership, the official said. Algeria, which shares a 1,242-mile border with Mali, has been wary that chaos caused by foreign intervention in Mali could spill over into its territory.

Clinton said that Bouteflika had outlined for her "the many complicated factors that have to be addressed to deal with the internal insecurity in Mali and the terrorist and drug trafficking threat that is posed to the region and beyond."

The U.S. official said that, even with Algeria's wariness, its leaders increasingly have been speaking out against the dangers of regional

terrorism and are warming to the idea of intervention. Benghazi Ties

U.S. officials have been looking for any ties between Mali Islamists and Libyan militants who were involved in the deaths of four Americans in the U.S. consulate attack in Benghazi on Sept. 11.

U.S. intelligence officials have said that some members of Ansar al-Sharia, the group they have concluded carried out the attack in Benghazi, have ties to al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb or al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula. They said there is no clear evidence that either group helped plan, finance, order to execute the assault.

On the contrary, three officials said, intercepted phone calls indicate that a mid-level Ansar leader who is the main link between the Libyan group and groups loosely affiliated with al-Qaeda learned of the attack on the U.S. mission only after it had begun or had ended.

Moreover, the groups in Yemen and northern Africa are self-financed, have their own agendas, and are only loosely connected to the remnants of the core al-Qaeda group in Pakistan led by Ayman al-Zawahiri, the Egyptian who is Osama bin Laden's successor, according to the officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity because the intelligence is classified. U.S. Military

The U.S. has expanded aerial surveillance operations across Africa, including in Mali, as part of an effort to conduct gather intelligence on Islamist groups such as AQIM, Nigeria's Boko Haram and other militant groups in Yemen, Somalia and northern Africa, the U.S. intelligence officials said.

The Obama administration also has increased military aid to nations in the region and conducted joint military exercises in July with West African nations and France. The U.S. military also recently completed a two-week war-game exercise looking at the terrorist threat and ways to combat it in West Africa and the Maghreb, according to two defense officials. The exercise, they said, suggested that the tactics that have been effective against militants in Somalia may not be applicable elsewhere in Africa.

**Clinton In Algeria For Talks On Mali
Monday, October 29, 2012**

Voice of America
By Scott Stearns, RFE/RL

U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton visited Algeria for talks on fighting terrorism in Africa's Sahel region. The Obama administration is looking

for Algerian cooperation against Muslim extremists in northern Mali.

Secretary Clinton talked with Algerian President Abdelaziz Bouteflika about backing West African efforts against Islamic extremists in northern Mali.

When a March coup toppled the government in Bamako, militant groups in the north imposed a strict version of Islamic law. The terrorist group al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb, known as AQIM, expanded its operations in northern Mali, moving to extend its reach throughout the Sahel.

Clinton said AQIM is working with other extremists to undermine democratic transitions in North Africa, and played a role in the September attack on the U.S. mission in the Libyan city of Benghazi that killed Ambassador Chris Stevens and three other Americans.

Speaking in Algiers, following her talks with Mr. Bouteflika, Secretary Clinton said the United States and Algeria agreed to continue working together along with the United Nations, the African Union, and the Economic Community of West African States to determine the most effective approach to Mali.

"I very much appreciated the president's analysis, based on his long experience, as to the many complicated factors that have to be addressed to deal with the internal insecurity in Mali and the terrorist and drug-trafficking threat that is posed to the region and beyond," said Clinton.

The Economic Community of West African States is working with Mali's transitional leaders on plans for a regional force that would help Mali's military retake northern areas controlled by Islamic militia and ethnic-Tuareg rebels.

The model for that West African force is an East African force in Somalia, an African-led mission backed by the international community in training, intelligence, and logistics.

Secretary Clinton went to Algiers to discuss how Algeria might join the United States, France, and other countries in supporting a West African force for Mali.

A senior U.S. official traveling with the secretary of state said "a whole range of countries in the region really look to Algeria for leadership on this. They know Algeria has unique capability that no one else in the region really has, including the strength of their military and intelligence gathering."

What Mali's Crisis Means For The Future Of Western Military Intervention

Monday, October 29, 2012

Time

By Vivienne Walt

Why should Americans care about Mali? Many probably asked themselves that question during the last presidential debate, when Mitt Romney twice mentioned the northwest African nation, a place most Americans might be hard-pressed to locate on a map. Yet seven months after Islamic militant groups seized control of northern Mali, the Western-designed military strategy to push them out could have real consequences for future antiterrorist operations, including for the U.S., according to some analysts. As the pieces steadily fall into place for a military assault on northern Mali, the intervention could serve as a model for future conflicts, at a time when Americans and Europeans have no appetite to fight another war. "We're moving to a form of intervention which is much more typical of the post-Afghanistan era than anything we have seen before," says Francois Heisbourg, a special advisor to the Foundation for Strategic Research in Paris. "If you are looking at future military interventions, it will not be like Iraq and Afghanistan."

The objective is clear: to seize back control of northern Mali — an area the size of Texas — and crush the Islamic militants who have controlled it since last April. As a measure of how urgent the West believes the situation is, U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton landed in Algiers on Monday to try to lock in President Abdelaziz Bouteflika's support for a military assault across his border, with an aide telling reporters on the plane headed to Algeria's capital that the country was "a critical partner" in dealing with al-Qaeda in North Africa. And last Wednesday U.S. Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta told reporters in Washington that the U.S. had to "ensure that al-Qaeda has no place to hide and that we have to continue to go after them."

That will not be easy — especially since no Western troops will be deployed on the ground. The plan, crafted in a frenzy of diplomatic activity in Africa during the past two weeks, will instead rely on about 3,200 West African troops, together with 3,000 Malian troops trained by the E.U. Many of the West African troops are Nigerian, who have little experience in fighting across the remote, vast desert that characterizes northern Mali. In a French-led resolution at the U.N. on Oct. 12, African countries have until late November to craft a plan to get the Islamic groups out of northern

Mali. Behind the scenes, U.S. and French Special Forces are increasingly involved in training and advising African militaries, according to Heisbourg, in advance of the attack, which could come early next year. And French officials have said they would likely deploy unarmed surveillance drones of the kind the U.S. already has at hand in the area.

But all that leaves out the region's biggest military player: Algeria. Until now, Bouteflika has vowed to sit out the conflict, just as he did in last year's war against Muammar Gaddafi in next-door Libya. The Algerian leader has good reason to fear getting involved: an all-out war by Algeria against al-Qaeda could spark conflict at home, in a country that is still recovering from a bitter, bloody civil war during the 1990s that claimed at least 150,000 lives. Algerian officials last week announced they were deploying more troops along their 1,200-mile border with Mali, but only in order to stop Islamic militants from escaping to Algeria once a military assault begins.

With no Algerian forces deployed, that assault force will be far weaker. A recent report on Mali's crisis by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace found that Algeria was "in a unique position to influence events in Mali." Others agree. "There is no other country which has the military strength of Algeria," says Riccardo Fabiani, North Africa analyst for the Eurasia Group in London. "It has the biggest military in the region. It could commit troops and fight the Islamist — no one else can do it. But it does not want to."

There are other challenges to victory too: since a coup in Mali last March, the government in Bamako, the capital, has been held together by a fragile coalition of civilians and military. It was in the midst of that turmoil that Islamic extremists aligned to al-Qaeda in the Maghreb joined with Tuareg tribesmen, who have long held grievances against Mali's government, to seize the country's northern half.

Armed with sophisticated weaponry from Gaddafi's massive arsenals, and flush with cash from hostage-ransom deals and drug smuggling, the Islamists have extended their grip on the area — and now pose a real threat to the rest of North Africa, and potentially also to Europe, a short distance away. About 300,000 people have fled the area, bringing reports of harsh Shari'a law, where women are banned from walking in public without male companions and musicians have been threatened with amputation if they continue playing instruments. Among the patchwork of

groups are some with clear ambitions to impose Shari'a in the rest of North Africa — an alarming prospect to the U.S. and Europe, as well as to Algeria, whose Western military cooperation makes them a prime target for jihadist groups.

To U.S. and European officials, the true danger is that northern Mali might become another Afghanistan before September 2001 — a wild, tribal area where fundamentalist outfits and terrorist groups have free rein to train for operations abroad. French officials — with extensive business interests in the area — have been particularly alarmed at the situation. Six French hostages are currently being held in northern Mali, and Islamist leaders have threatened to kill them if an international military intervention begins.

One major challenge for both the West and African countries will be to distinguish which groups in northern Mali they will want to crush and which might possibly be won over. "It's not like in Pakistan where you know who is who," Heisbourg says. "Some who look like baddies are not. Some of these guys you want to talk over, and others you want to kill." He says that although both U.S. and French drones could prove valuable aids in a military assault, neither will be of much help in the actual attacks. "Making that distinction about who is who is something you probably cannot do from 10,000 ft. up in the air," he says. Instead the West will have to hope that African troops will be able to do the job.

Algeria Pilot Asks Clinton To Lift 9/11 Warrant

Tuesday, October 30, 2012

[Lebanon Daily Star](#)

ALGIERS: An Algerian pilot cleared in Britain of any role in the 9/11 attacks appealed to visiting US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton on Monday to help lift a US arrest warrant that has grounded him for a decade.

"I've written a book to tell my story. Your Justice Department has huge volumes of files that are of no use because they find me innocent," Lotfi Raissi wrote in an open letter, published in *Liberte* newspaper.

"Even by winning all the cases against my accusers across the world, the United States remains deaf to the truth," wrote the pilot, who lived near Heathrow airport in London at the time of the September 11, 2001 attacks.

Raissi was arrested together with an Air France hostess and his brother 10 days after the attacks

when Islamist extremists hijacked four planes, slamming two into the World Trade Center in New York, one into the Pentagon in Washington, and downing one in Pennsylvania.

He was accused of having trained the 19 Islamist militants who carried out the attacks.

The two others were released while Raissi was interrogated for four-and-a-half months before being cleared in Britain, but the case has remained open in the United States.

In the letter, he explains he has a wish "to be like you. To take a plane. To be free to travel around the world."

Clinton Arrives In Bosnia At Start Of Her Balkans Tour

Monday, October 29, 2012

AFP

SARAJEVO: US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton arrived in Bosnia on Monday to kick off a five-nation Balkans tour during which she will push for greater integration of the volatile region into the EU and NATO.

Clinton, who will on Tuesday be joined by European Union foreign policy chief Catherine Ashton, was expected to call on Bosnia to speed up reforms in the country still deeply divided along ethnic lines 17 years after the 1992-1995 war there.

"I think the message from Secretary Clinton and High Representative Ashton will be that... we would like to see (Bosnia) becoming a member of European Union/NATO, but we really need the necessary reforms," a State Department spokesman, asking to remain anonymous, said ahead of the trip.

Clinton and Ashton are due to meet with Bosnia's three-man presidency and top international officials.

Following the US-brokered 1995 Dayton peace deal, Bosnia consists of two semi-independent entities — the Serbs's Republika Srpska and the Muslim-Croat Federation. Each of the two halves, which are linked by weak central institutions, has its own government.

The ethnic rift in Bosnia is deeper than ever with Serbs rejecting any boosting of central institutions, sought by Muslims and the international community, and regularly warning that their entity could break away and should negotiate separately on EU entry.

Sarajevo lags behind its neighbours in their EU path. Bosnia is the only Balkans country that has yet to apply for EU membership, which it will probably do by the end of this year.

Bosnian Foreign Minister Zlatko Lagumdžija said Clinton's visit was a "strong message showing that the US is standing by Bosnia and wants its success as a state and as a society.

"We count on getting support for accession to the EU and NATO but also a clear call to all political actors in Bosnia that the process of reforms has no alternative and that it has be accelerated," Lagumdžija told AFP.

Clinton, who arrived here from Algeria — where she held talks to press for a possible military intervention in neighbouring Mali, large swathes of which have been overrun by Islamists — will travel from Sarajevo to Belgrade and Pristina on Tuesday.

There, Clinton and Ashton will "reiterate US-EU resolve for Serbia and Kosovo to build on previous agreements and advance their dialogue, as well as to encourage concrete steps that will allow those countries to progress on their respective paths to EU membership," the State Department said.

Serbia rejects Kosovo's unilateral 2008 proclamation of independence, which is recognised by some 90 states including 22 of the EU's 27 members and the United States.

Talks between Belgrade and Pristina, launched in March 2011 under EU auspices, were suspended before May's elections in Serbia, won by nationalists.

Serbia is an EU candidate, and Kosovo hopes to formalise ties, but the bloc has made clear to both that they must re-start talks and show concrete results.

Clinton will end her tour in Croatia and Albania, which joined the NATO transatlantic military alliance in 2009.

Clinton last visited Bosnia, as well as Serbia and Kosovo — which emerged from the 1990s break-up of the former Yugoslavia — in 2010.

Of the six former Yugoslav republics, only Slovenia is an EU member, having joined in 2004. Croatia is set to become the 27-nation's bloc newest member next July.

Clinton On Balkan Tour To Promote Reforms

Monday, October 29, 2012

Voice of America

By Scott Stearns, RFE/RL

U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton is in the Balkans to encourage continued economic and political reforms in the region.

U.S. officials say the trip is about "unfinished business" in Europe — helping to encourage democracy, stability and prosperity throughout the Balkans.

European Union membership has been a strong incentive for countries to reform economies, advance democracies and make peace with neighbors — goals that U.S. officials say they support in the Balkans as much as they have in Central and Eastern Europe.

EU foreign policy chief Catherine Ashton is scheduled to join Secretary Clinton in Bosnia, Serbia and Kosovo, where a senior State Department official says the United States and European Union have a common interest in strengthening the rule of law, democracy and respect for human rights along with free markets.

Obama administration officials say they have not been shy about expressing their disappointment that the leaders of Bosnia and Herzegovina have promoted narrow ethnic, personal or party agendas over the interests of their country.

The United States would like Bosnia and Herzegovina to become a member of the European Union and NATO. But U.S. officials say there must first be the resolution of longstanding issues of governance and budgeting, and the disposition of state property.

On Tuesday, Clinton is expected to start work in Sarajevo, where she and Ashton meet with the three collective heads of state of the Bosnian presidency. They then travel to Belgrade for talks with Serbian leaders about normalizing relations with Kosovo, including on issues of land records and freedom of movement.

The United States opposes the presence of parallel institutions in Serbian parts of Kosovo, including hospitals, schools and courts financed by Serbia.

In Pristina, Clinton and Ashton are expected to meet with Kosovar leaders as well as members of the local Serb community about the importance of Kosovo being a multiethnic democracy, where Serb-majority municipalities elect their own leaders.

In Zagreb, Clinton will welcome Croatia's accession to the European Union next year as an example for other Balkan states. She then flies to Tirana where she will help mark the 100th anniversary of Albanian independence from

Ottoman rule, while calling for greater political cooperation and rule of law.

In Other News: Clintons Celebrate Hillary's 65th In Connecticut; Lil Wayne Grounded By Illness

Monday, October 29, 2012

Washington Post

By The Reliable Source

The Clintons stroll the grounds at the grounds at the Mayflower Inn in Connecticut. Intriguing coat, huh? See sharper detail below. (Maureen Edwards) • An unsuspecting wedding party in Connecticut encountered some VIP crashers this weekend — Bill and Hillary Clinton, who happened to be celebrating her 65th birthday at the same resort, the Mayflower Inn in the town of Washington. The ex-POTUS naturally made a point of greeting the bride, groom and all their guests, and the Clintons were seen lingering late in the lobby, listening to a jazz combo and playing cards. Chelsea and Marc Mezvinsky also joined for part of the weekend.

Hillary Clinton And Michelle Obama: The Queens Of Washington

Michelle Obama is the most popular woman in America, and Hillary Clinton's standing has never been higher. So with the Democrats' lead among female voters beginning to falter, should the party be exploiting its two greatest assets, asks Zoe Brennan.

Monday, October 29, 2012

Daily Telegraph (UK)

By Zoe Brennan

Her long hair drawn back into a soignée French knot, the Secretary of State is tackling questions on Libya at the State Department in Washington DC. Dressed in a sharp navy suit, she speaks with authority, displaying an absolute command of the facts. At 65 — it was her birthday on Friday — Hillary Rodham Clinton is a woman on the crest of a wave: confident, tough, respected — and for the first time in her public life, liked. A recent poll showed her favourability rating reach new heights at 66 per cent.

Polls consistently find her to be the most popular national politician in America. She has left behind her drab Lady Macbeth role as Bill Clinton's steely sidekick, to emerge as an astute political operator and stateswoman on the world stage, with a glamour and assurance that her younger self so lacked.

Across the country, in Los Angeles, Michelle Obama is busy on the campaign trail. Last Thursday, she spoke at a fundraiser lunch at the

home of actors Will and Jada Pinkett Smith. Her fluent speech captivated supporters, as she described her husband Barack Obama's appeal. A poised Michelle told her audience: "I saw the tenderness that he felt for his grandmother. I saw how grateful he was that long after this woman should have retired, she was still catching that bus to her job at the community bank, doing whatever she could to support her family."

The donations rolled in, and aides applauded another job well done. Later, resplendent in royal blue, she appeared on an ABC late-night talk show to chat about the challenges of "being a mom in the White House".

"She is the Queen of Washington," says one veteran observer of life in DC. "She has everyone eating out of her hand. Who'd have thought when she first arrived at the White House that she would blossom to such a degree? Michelle has metamorphosed into a First Lady extraordinaire. America adores her."

President Obama and his Republican challenger Mitt Romney are neck and neck as the countdown begins to the US election on November 6 - but there are two winners already declared. While his administration and 2012 election campaign has been accused of being lacklustre, Hillary Clinton and Michelle Obama are the surprise triumphs of Obama's White House tenure. At times he has seemed almost overshadowed by the two women who have so excelled during his presidency. There is even a Twitter campaign for Hillary and Michelle to run on a joint ticket as President and Vice President in 2016.

As the Democrats' huge lead among female voters crumbles - Obama's team is thought to have placed too much emphasis on "women's issues", such as abortion, rape and reproductive rights, when it is jobs and the economy that preoccupy women more - aides are urging greater deployment of what they see as the party's two greatest assets in refreshing its appeal to women.

How very different it was four years ago. Then Hillary was challenging Obama for the Democratic presidential nomination. The New York Times columnist Jodi Kantor, author of *The Obamas*, says: "[She] was made fun of for exaggerating her influence on foreign policy. It turned out she had only visited places as First Lady when Bill Clinton was President."

Critics had seized on her startling claim that: "I helped to bring peace to Northern Ireland." Lord Trimble, former first minister of Northern Ireland, described her comments as "silly". It was later

revealed that she attended Belfast City Hall - where she said she went to high-level meetings - only to help her husband turn on the Christmas tree lights.

She was parodied as dreary and calculated. She looked stale compared with a young and vigorous Barack Obama, and an energetic Sarah Palin. She was also, of course, tarnished by the scandals of the Clinton administration.

"She was known for being the very opposite of diplomatic, always putting her foot in her mouth," says Kantor. "Now, she is the picture of a serious stateswoman. It is a huge accomplishment, and a big surprise. Who would have thought it?"

Professor Kathleen Dolan, from the Department of Politics at the University of Wisconsin, says that after she ran for President in 2008 "some people thought Hillary had been appointed Secretary of State as a consolation prize. But that underestimated her pretty significant abilities."

Hillary has long insisted that she would leave her office at the end of Obama's first term and has not played any significant role in the 2012 campaign to date. Then, last week, she hinted to the Wall Street Journal that she could continue into a second term, saying coyly: "A lot of people have talked to me about staying."

The influential New York Times commentator David Brooks thinks that is unlikely but that does not mean she's thinking of retirement. He expects the Democrats to swing behind Hillary as a candidate in 2016, explaining: "There will be a big Draft Hillary movement. I don't think, from what I understand of people that know her, that she's of a mind to do that right now. She's tired. But after a few years of resting, I think the opportunity will be there."

Meanwhile, her image is being honed still further. Howard Kurtz of CNN recently wrote an article entitled: "How Hillary Clinton Got Hot After Years of Being Stuck with a Cold Image." The Secretary of State also did a glamorous photo-shoot for *Elle* magazine, accompanied by a glowing write-up, gushing that she has "finally hit her personal-style groove".

New York Magazine's John Heilemann agrees with Brooks. He writes: "To date, Hillary has been adamant, privately and publicly, in her refusal to broach the topic. She isn't planning, isn't deliberating, isn't so much as contemplating another run for the White House - though some of her former aides scoff at that. ('It's a lie,' says one. 'It's always a lie.')

"The operating premise among most Democrats is that if Hillary does choose to dive in, the nomination will be handed to her on a silver salver. Now that we've nominated and elected an African-American, goes the thinking in the party, the time is ripe for a woman."

And so what of Michelle, now the most popular woman in America, scoring 69 per cent in approval polls (compared to her husband's 50 per cent)?

"It is almost impossible to find words to tell you how powerful Michelle Obama's antipathy to political life was," says Kantor. "She had serious philosophical and temperamental objections. She was an unusually frank and blunt person, not at all suited to that life. She had fled the elite institutions of Princeton and Harvard where she was educated, returning to her roots on Chicago South Side."

There, her life revolved around work, community and family. "When her husband was elected President, she was a stranger in a strange land," says Kantor. "Everything she did, everything she wore, was under a microscope. Her life was so restricted, she couldn't even take her kids to school in the morning. She had no obligations except to switch on the White House Christmas tree lights and organise the Easter egg hunt.

"I sometimes wondered if her time as First Lady would end in disaster. She was the total antithesis of the blow-dried political wife, and yet she has mastered that world. She has become an incredibly successful First Lady. She has rewritten the job, is widely admired, and is seen as a groundbreaking figure."

Another commentator notes that the weight of expectation on Michelle's ultra-toned shoulders – she is known to hit the gym as early as 4.30am – cannot be over emphasised. "If Obama was a Martin Luther King figure, [Michelle] carried every black woman's aspirations in her hands. She could so easily have failed, and yet she has become an enormous source of pride. Her grace and sincerity shine through."

Mrs Obama has certainly silenced her early critics. Take her vegetable garden – a project that initially horrified White House staff, as it involved digging up an area of prized Presidential lawn. Now, it is key to her lauded campaign against childhood obesity. Accompanied by the family dog, Bo, Michelle regularly rolls up her sleeves to garden with visiting schoolchildren.

She does not take herself too seriously, either, happy to be photographed setting a personal best with 142 hula-hoop rotations on the South Lawn. A truly modern First Lady, she Tweets supporters from the White House, signing the messages "MO". On an official visit to South Africa last year, she dropped to the floor to do push-ups with Archbishop Desmond Tutu. Nor should anyone forget the "Michelle signature hug" when, according to one witness, this "nearly six-foot-tall First Lady envelops her target, her long arms often wrapping all the way around the recipient's back. She leans in close..."

So as Barack Obama limbers up for the sprint to the finishing line, he and his team could do worse than to exploit the "Hillary and Michelle" factor. As they (almost) say in America: they've come a long way, baby.

American Women Will Carry The Day

GOP's gender problem

Monday, October 29, 2012

New York Daily News

By Crouch Stanley

Republican Richard Mourdock, candidate for Indiana's U.S. Senate seat, who has recently made controversial comments about rape.

As we move closer and closer to Election Day, American women are about to teach radical Republicans what can happen when you take an entire demographic for no more than easily-manipulated fools.

Keep in mind what pimps used to say about avoiding grown women in favor of little girls who could be pushed around without consequence: "Grown women too slick." They were not grammatical, but they were right.

It has always been too easy for corrupt men to distrust women who thought about things too long and too deeply. Such women understood modern life and how they had more choices than earlier generations of women did, completely held back as those had been by legalized sexism.

Those prejudices lingered for at least the first half of the 20th century. But the whole edifice keeping women down finally went down like the huge, monstrous pigs little Hushpuppy stares down at the end of "Beasts of the Southern Wild."

Legalized prejudice against women was the evil twin of both legalized racism and legalized religious hatred. All of these have largely receded from the face of American society. That is cause for optimism.

The advancement of women — from Hillary Clinton in Washington to Marissa Mayer in Silicon Valley — is ample proof of what can be done when this nation decides to put bigotry right where it belongs.

Of course, we can never forget the existence of prejudice. It is a living thing, a clever disease, and it will remake itself to survive and fight the dishonorable battle on another day.

That's why, next Tuesday, radical Republicans will be surprised if they think American women will let them get away with what they have said and what they believe: about rape, contraception, equal pay. They can deny all they want, but it is all on the public record, the crazy statements of Todd Akin, Richard Mourdock and all the rest.

Hiding behind their faith, these zealots have sought to take away the very rights women fought for throughout the long, hard decades of the 20th century.

In this camp are also Mitt Romney and Paul Ryan — no matter how much they deny it. They intend to lead a party of the 19th century, or maybe even the 18th, but certainly not a modern, broad coalition. There is no room for that on the right.

American women are not going to be intimidated by Rush Limbaugh calling them "femi-nazis" or branding them "sluts." They know that if anyone sounds like a demagogue, then it is old Rush himself.

Nor will women standing up for themselves and for their own health and careers swallow the poison pies 'hurled with repulsive obnoxiousness by Ann Coulter. These women are far too slick to fall for that.

The moose-shooting Sarah Palin and the muck-selling Coulter are not modern-day examples of the women who historically helped this nation become so remarkable.

Those exemplary women of ages past led brave escapes in the time of slavery, took civilization westward in the wagon trains, survived bloody battles and demanded something honorable and right from the men who were comfortable with the vicious and violent Wild West.

They got the vote — and now they are quite sure there was a reason for claiming that kind of power and influence on the national scale.

Palin and Coulter are just Akin and Mourdock with better hair. They are not Eleanor Roosevelt or Susan B. Anthony.

Those women stood up for things. They were intelligent and understood how the country needed to fuse the souls of men and women for the betterment of both. They imparted a radiance to the term "all-American."

Come next Tuesday's election, we will see that radiance rise again. American women are too slick to be hustled by an obvious game — just watch.

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Bill Clinton To Stump For Obama In Minnesota On Tuesday
Monday, October 29, 2012

Washington Post

By Sean Sullivan

WHAT YOU MIGHT HAVE MISSED:

* President Obama and Mitt Romney each canceled campaign events due to Hurricane Sandy's impact on the East Coast. Obama canceled a Tuesday campaign trip to Wisconsin so he could stay in Washington to keep an eye on the storm, while Romney canceled his Monday night and Tuesday events (he kept up his schedule during the day on Monday). Vice President Biden canceled campaign events in Ohio and Pennsylvania slated for Tuesday and Thursday while Republican vice presidential nominee Rep. Paul Ryan's (Wis.) Monday night and Tuesday events have also been scrapped.

* Obama said he is not worried about the storm's impact on the election, and that the "number one priority is to make sure we are saving lives." When asked on Air Force One whether Obama had the authority to delay the election if power is still out next Tuesday, White House Press Secretary Jay Carney said "I don't know." Meanwhile, FEMA Administrator Craig Fugate said he is anticipating that some of the storm's impact may be felt next week, meaning FEMA may be called upon to help with the cleanup process so that voters can get to the polls next Tuesday.

* The Romney campaign is considering whether to send the Republican presidential nominee to New Jersey this week to survey storm damage with Gov. Chris Christie (R).

* Obama's campaign released a new TV ad in Ohio that pushes back against a controversial spot from Romney that implied Chrysler is moving Jeep production from Ohio to China. "Mitt Romney on Ohio jobs? Wrong then .. dishonest now," says the narrator of the Obama ad. Bill Clinton said at a campaign stop in Ohio Monday that Jeep "put out a statement today saying that it was the biggest

load of bull in the world that they would consider shutting down their American operation."

* The pro-Romney super PAC Restore Our Future is spending \$2.1 million on a new ad buy in Pennsylvania. This doesn't necessarily suggest the group thinks the Keystone State - where polls have shown Obama leading - is very much in play. The group has money to spend, and with the airwaves packed in just about every major battleground, can afford to make buys on the periphery of competitive states.

* Rep. Martin Heinrich (D-N.M.) leads former congresswoman Heather Wilson 50 percent to 42 percent, an Albuquerque Journal poll of likely New Mexico voters conducted Oct. 23-25 shows. Wilson's campaign released an internal poll showing her at 44 percent and Heinrich at 43 percent. That poll - conducted by Public Opinion Strategies Oct. 21-22 - stands in contrast to the Albuquerque Journal poll and most other recent surveys, which have consistently shown Heinrich up comfortably.

WHAT YOU SHOULDN'T MISS:

* Clinton will campaign for Obama in seven states this week, including a Tuesday stop in Minnesota, which is looking more competitive for Romney. Clinton will also campaign in Iowa, Colorado, Ohio, Virginia, New Hampshire, and Wisconsin. Down the ballot, the former president cut a radio ad for North Dakota Democratic Senate candidate Heidi Heitkamp (D), and will campaign for her Monday night.

* Sen. Scott Brown (R-Mass.) and Elizabeth Warren (D) agree that Tuesday's debate should not go forward due to concerns about Hurricane Sandy. "It is simply not appropriate to go forward with a political debate when a disaster strikes," said Brown spokesman Colin Reed in a statement. Warren campaign manager Mindy Myers said: "Elizabeth believes the focus now must be on public safety and ensuring people get the help they need during the storm and in its aftermath. With the concern for public safety and cleanup paramount, Elizabeth believes the debate should not be held tomorrow."

* The Labor Department hasn't ruled out delaying the release of the September jobs report because of Hurricane Sandy, though it says it currently intends to stay on schedule. "The employees at the Bureau of Labor Statistics are working hard to ensure the timely release of employment data on Friday, November 2," the BLS said in a statement. "It is our intention that Friday will be business as

usual regarding the October Employment Situation Report."

* Rep. Jeff Flake (R-Ariz.) released a new TV ad featuring Republicans Sens. John McCain and Jon Kyl. In the ad, the two push back against a spot from Democratic Senate nominee Richard Carmona which shows them praising him 10 years ago during his confirmation as surgeon general.

Bill Clinton, Biden Slam Romney Claim About Jeep In Ohio As 'Load Of Bull' And 'Bizarre' Monday, October 29, 2012

Associated Press

YOUNGSTOWN, Ohio - Vice President Joe Biden and former President Bill Clinton have criticized Mitt Romney for saying that Chrysler is shifting production of its Jeep brand autos from Ohio to China.

Jeep, a major employer in Ohio, has said it is adding jobs in China to meet growing demand there but is not halting production in North America.

Campaigning together in the crucial swing state, Clinton called Romney's claim "the biggest load of bull in the world."

Biden said it was "bizarre."

Clinton, who had been scheduled to appear with President Barack Obama, said Obama was personally offended by Romney's claim. Clinton says Obama's first car was a Jeep.

Obama canceled scheduled appearances with Clinton in Florida and Ohio on Monday, citing Hurricane Sandy.

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Former President Clinton To Campaign Across Midwest, Including Minnesota, In Final Week Tuesday, October 30, 2012

Associated Press

By Brian Bakst

ST. PAUL, Minn. - Former President Bill Clinton is headed for the Midwest this week to campaign for Democratic President Barack Obama in a swing that will take him to Minnesota, Iowa and Wisconsin.

The Clinton campaign events will partially fill a void for Obama, who has taken himself off the road temporarily to deal with Hurricane Sandy.

Clinton's travel itinerary will also take him to Colorado, Ohio, Virginia and New Hampshire.

Minnesota has been getting increasing attention as both Obama and Republican challenger Mitt Romney launch late TV commercials. But Obama is still favored to collect the 10 electoral college votes. Clinton was expected to hold two rallies in the state Tuesday.

All of the other states have been hotly contested throughout the presidential campaign.

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Clinton Touts Obama's Economic Record

Monday, October 29, 2012

Los Angeles Times

By David Lauter

ORLANDO — Saying that Mitt Romney's economic plan boils down to hoping to "get credit for the 12 million jobs Barack Obama has laid the foundation for," former President Bill Clinton exhorted Floridians to re-elect the incumbent as Democrats seek to close the gap in the country's largest swing state.

Romney has made his promise of 12 million new jobs over the next four years a centerpiece of his campaign, but Clinton derided the goal, saying the economy is on track already to hit that goal "if they just don't mess it up." Obama should get credit for getting the country to this point, where signs of recovery are increasing, he added.

"I say, let's give the job to the man who's done the job so he can finish the job," the former president told a crowd estimated at 7,600 gathered on a sunny but chilly morning on the campus of the University of Central Florida.

PHOTOS: Hurricane Sandy

Clinton was originally scheduled to introduce Obama, but early Monday morning, as storm conditions from Hurricane Sandy worsened along the Mid-Atlantic coast, White House officials decided to get the president back to Washington, leaving his Democratic predecessor to appear solo.

For just over a half hour, Clinton reprised portions of his highly praised speech from last month's Democratic convention, centered on his argument that an economic strategy built around the idea that "we're all in this together" will bring more prosperity than what he characterized as the Republican idea of "you're on your own."

"I hope I have some credibility on this," he said, referring to his own record of having been president during the country's most prosperous recent stretch.

"Budgets based on arithmetic work better than those based on illusion," he said, accusing Romney of trying to "hide the numbers" on his own plan.

The campus here, with its focus on technology and innovation, is a favorite of Clinton's, who campaigned here for Obama four years ago. He quipped at one point that "I ought to be on the payroll" for having attracted favorable publicity to the school. He used the college's program to illustrate the dangers of Republican budget plans that he said would "gut" government support for research and development of future technologies.

The Orlando area is key for Democratic hopes here in a state where Romney has held a small, but persistent, lead in most polls. The Republican campaigned in the area over the weekend.

Orlando and surrounding Orange and Osceola counties are home to large and growing black and Puerto Rican populations who turned out heavily for Obama in 2008. In the four years since, those populations have continued to grow while traditionally Republican areas of north Florida have not.

INTERACTIVE: Battleground states map

Monday's event, like most Obama campaign rallies in the closing weeks of the election, doubled as a get-out-the-vote operation. A large Vote Early sign dominated the central campus area where the rally took place, and speakers before and after the event urged those present to take advantage of buses available to take people to the polls.

Clinton stressed two issues that Democrats hope will be particularly attractive to Latino voters — Obama's healthcare law and his reforms of the student loan program.

He reminded the crowd, which included a large percentage of students, that under the healthcare law, people up to age 26 can stay on their parents' insurance plans. Romney says he supports that part of the law but argues the private sector would maintain the coverage if the law is repealed.

Clinton's description of the health law brought applause, but the loudest cheers came when he talked about Obama's expansion of the government's Pell grant program and lowered interest rates on subsidized student loans.

Changes taking effect this year will allow graduates to pay back a fixed portion of their incomes each year and have the balance of their loans forgiven eventually if they take relatively lower paying jobs, he reminded them.

As a result, Clinton said, a student who goes to medical school and wants to work in an inner-city clinic will be able to do so without having to worry about loan repayments.

Romney "wants to make college loans more expensive and harder to repay," he said, drawing boos from the crowd. "On this issue alone, every person within the sound of my voice should vote for Barack Obama."

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**Bill Clinton To Campaign For Obama In NH
Monday, October 29, 2012**
Associated Press

CONCORD, N.H. (AP) — Former President Bill Clinton is planning a visit to New Hampshire this week to campaign for President Barack Obama.

New Hampshire is on a list of battleground states he plans to visit. Other stops are Minnesota, Iowa, Colorado, Ohio and Virginia.

The exact date and time haven't been announced yet.

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**Bill Clinton Obama's Florida Stand-In
Monday, October 29, 2012**
Bloomberg News
By Mark Silva

President Barack Obama may have left Florida before an Orlando campus rally today.

But the Sandy-occupied president left former President Bill Clinton as a stand-in.

Clinton addressed a crowd of more than 7,000 at the University of Central Florida.

And he went for 33 minutes, as the Orlando Sentinel's man on the scene notes, with a speech that "belittled Republican presidential nominee Mitt Romney for not addressing 21st century problems ranging from global warming to higher education costs."

"Clinton connected with the university student-heavy crowd by describing Obama's plans for higher education, including the student loan reform that ties payments to income while saving \$60 billion on costs then using that savings for Pell grants and research," Scott Powers writes. "Romney, he charged, wants to repeal the student loan bill Obama pushed through Congress this past summer."

"On this issue alone, every person within the sound of my voice should vote for Barack Obama for president of the United States," Clinton said.

"I'm not mad at anybody. I don't blame Gov. Romney for wanting to be president. I did too," Clinton said. "But this is not about the candidates. It's about you and your future... I say let's give the job to the man who has done the job so he can finish the job."

Former Florida Gov. Charlie Crist, who served as a Republican and ran for Senate as an independent, opened the rally. Crist spoke for Obama on stage at the Democratic National Convention in Charlotte in September and sat behind first lady Michelle Obama at the final presidential debate in Florida.

"In this campaign, optimism is up!" Crist told the crowd. "Pessimism is down! Jobs now are up! Unemployment, down! Equal pay, up! Discrimination, down! Home sales, up! Interest rates, down! Domestic energy, up! Foreign dependency, down! Auto industry, up! Plant closings, down! Troops home, up! Wars, down! Improving education, up! Blaming teachers, down! Barack Obama, up! Mitt Romney, down!"

**Biden, Clinton Campaign In Ohio As Obama
Monitors Hurricane Sandy
Monday, October 29, 2012**
ABC News
By Arlette Saenz

YOUNGSTOWN, Ohio — While Hurricane Sandy punished the East Coast, Vice President Joe Biden and former President Bill Clinton stayed on the campaign trail Monday, speaking at the Covelli Center in Youngstown, Ohio Monday afternoon. President Obama canceled his campaign appearances for Monday and Tuesday to monitor the hurricane from Washington.

"Folks, I know you were expecting the real president, the present president. Reverend, I just want you to know he asked me to express his regrets for not being able to be here, but you know, he's doing the job a president should be

doing," Biden told the crowd of 4,800 at the Covelli Center.

"I want to thank all the first responders throughout this country," he said. They're coming from all over. There's folks from Ohio heading east. There's a whole lot of folks all over the country. And it's further evidence, further evidence that when America stands together we're all better off."

The campaign later announced that Biden's two events in Ohio Tuesday and a rally in his hometown of Scranton, Pa. were canceled, bringing the number of events canceled for Hurricane Sandy to 30.

Clinton, in Ohio, apologized on Obama's behalf.

"We went to Florida last night, and he got up this morning and called me and said, 'I got to go back right now. This storm's getting out of hand. I got to handle it.' And I said, 'Mr. President, that is the right call,'" Clinton said. "I spoke in Orlando and then I got on a plane and flew through the edges of that storm to come here and be with Vice President Biden, who came to join us."

Biden and Clinton, campaigning together for the first time this election cycle, did not let up on their attacks on the GOP ticket, furthering the criticism of Mitt Romney for a misleading campaign ad suggesting President Obama allowed Jeep operations to move to China. President Clinton called Romney's ad "the biggest load of bull."

"I saw the reports of Governor Romney's latest ad saying that the president had allowed Jeep to move to China. And so this morning, before he left Florida and went back to Washington, he said, 'You know, of all the things Governor Romney has said, that probably hurts my feelings the most,'" Clinton said. "He said, you know, I never had any money when I was a kid and the first new car I ever owned, I was 30 years old, and it was a Jeep. I would never move Jeep to China."

"Now it turns out, Jeep is reopening in China because they've made so much money here, they can afford to do it and they are going on with their plans here. They put out a statement today saying it was the biggest load of bull in the world that they would ever consider shutting down their American operations. They are roaring in America, thanks to people like the people of Ohio."

"This guy is — pirouettes more than a ballerina," Biden said. "It's an absolutely, patently false assertion."

"Ladies and gentlemen, have they no shame? I mean, what? Romney will say anything, absolutely anything to win, it seems. But he can't run from the truth. He said in that article entitled, that he wrote, 'Let Detroit Go Bankrupt.' Only the head of Bain Capital could think that liquidating an industry is the same thing as saving it. Because that's what he did at Bain Capital," Biden said. "Well look, we didn't take Gov. Romney's advice."

Ryan Williams, spokesman for the Romney campaign, said in a statement, "It appears the Obama campaign is less concerned with engaging in a meaningful conversation about President Obama's failed policies and more concerned with arguing against facts about their record they dislike. The American people will see their desperate arguments for what they are."

Clinton has served as one of the Obama campaign's top surrogates in the campaign, but the former president joked with the crowd about his frequent appearances on the trail, saying it's only because his wife, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, is barred from campaigning.

"You're only stuck with me because Hillary has one of the two jobs in the government that doesn't permit you to campaign," Clinton said. "But when you reach a certain point in your life you realize elections come and go but the only thing that really matters when all is said and done is whether people are better off from when you started, whether our children have a brighter future, and whether things are coming together instead of being torn apart."

Clinton Raps Romney On Bailout: 'Load Of Bull'

Monday, October 29, 2012

Politico

By Maggie Haberman

The Obama campaign is highlighting comments from Bill Clinton on the bailout issue from his stop in Ohio to stump for the president in which he picked up the campaign's pushback on Mitt Romney's claims about Chrysler moving Jeep production out of the U.S. to China: "Now it turns out that Jeep is reopening in China because they made so much money here they can afford to do it, and they are going on with their plans here. They put out a statement today saying that it was the biggest load of bull in the world that they would consider shutting down their American operation. They are roaring in America thanks to people like the people of Ohio."

If you thought all politics were suspended amid the storm ...

UPDATE: Via First Read, Joe Biden buttressed the attack at the same event. As Alex and I report tonight on the home page, Democrats view the auto bailout and Bain as the two most potent lines of attack on Romney in places like Ohio and are using them heavily in the closing days, after polls have shown Obama's support with white male voters fading.

Romney's team clearly sees a vulnerability for their candidate on the auto bailout — the fact that the Obama ad on the issue uses the term "auto bailout" tells you how well it message-tests in Ohio — and by raising it in the last week, he has unleashed a fresh round of free, local media reminding voters that he opposed it.

Bill Clinton At UCF: Clinton, Left Alone By Obama, Revs Up UCF Crowd

Monday, October 29, 2012

Orlando (FL) Sentinel

By Scott Powers

Laying out a more traditional liberal policy case than President Barack Obama normally offers on the campaign trail, former president Bill Clinton urged 7,600 people at the University of Central Florida Monday to re-elect Obama based on his education, energy, environmental, health care and economic record.

Clinton was the lone headliner at what has been scheduled as a two-presidents rally. But Obama canceled early Monday morning and flew back to Washington to prepare disaster response for Hurricane Sandy.

The crowd, perhaps less than the Obama campaign hoped when planning Obama and Clinton together, nevertheless cheered Clinton's 33-minute speech enthusiastically.

Clinton connected with the student-heavy crowd by describing Obama's higher-education policies, including the student-loan reform that tied payments to income and saved \$60 billion that was then used for Pell grants and research. Republican presidential nominee Mitt Romney, he charged, wants to repeal the student-loan reforms.

"On this issue alone, every person within the sound of my voice should vote for Barack Obama for president of the United States," Clinton said.

Those votes are looking increasingly critical to Obama's re-election prospects. Recent polls have varied but generally show the Florida race tight. A

CNN poll released Monday showed Romney up by one point, 50-49, while a Public Policy Polling survey gave Obama a one-percentage point lead. U.S. Sen. Bill Nelson, opening for Clinton Monday, said his internal polling showed Obama up.

Clinton also urged reduction in carbon-based fuels and concerns for long-term climate change.

"America is the only major country in the world where any major political party is denying climate change instead of arguing about what to do about it," he said. "Barack Obama is doing something about it."

Clinton also accused Romney of intending to gut everything from health-care reform to science and technology research.

"I'm not mad at anybody. Shucks. I don't blame Gov. Romney for wanting to be president. I did, too," Clinton said. "But this is not about the candidates. It's about you and your future."

The rally opened with speeches from Nelson and former Florida Gov. Charlie Crist, the ex-Republican whose split with the GOP began when he enthusiastically welcomed Obama to Florida with a hug in 2009.

Crist, who many think is positioning himself to run for governor in 2014 as a Democrat, worked up the crowd by declaring the election was about "optimism" and calling Obama "our great president."

"In this campaign, optimism is up!" he said. "Pessimism is down! ... Barack Obama, up! Mitt Romney, down!"

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Former President Bill Clinton Makes Case For President Barack Obama In Orlando

Monday, October 29, 2012

Tampa Bay (FL) Times

By Molly Moorhead, Times Staff Writer

ORLANDO — Former President Bill Clinton talked up education, energy, the economy and health care Monday in making the re-election case for President Barack Obama, who missed their planned double-bill rally to monitor Hurricane Sandy from Washington.

Clinton, who spoke for about 30 minutes at the University of Central Florida, said Obama would strengthen the middle class and give the poor a chance to work their way into it — a rare mention of poverty this campaign. He took a few jabs at Republican Mitt Romney, saying even the more

moderate Romney of late would undo the best of what Obama has done.

"Shucks, I don't mind Gov. Romney wanting to be president. I did, too," Clinton joked. "But this isn't about the candidates."

Then the 42nd president displayed his trademark style of discussing substance-heavy themes with an easy-going delivery to show voters why the election is about them.

On student loans, Clinton told the crowd peppered with students that Obama has reformed the program, eliminating the fear of having to drop out of school because of costs and making it possible for graduates to pay back their debt on a manageable scale based on their salary.

On clean energy, he said Obama is proving that green jobs can be created, climate change can be addressed, and the economy will still grow. He joked about the "awful" health care law Obama pushed that requires insurance providers to spend the bulk of premiums on health care, adds years to Medicare's solvency and sustains Medicaid.

Former Republican Gov. Charlie Crist introduced (and hugged) Clinton, who also shared the stage with Sen. Bill Nelson, who is fighting for his own re-election. The crowd appeared smaller — 7,600 by most reports — and a notch less energetic than if Obama himself had appeared.

Julia Tracy, a 76-year-old retiree, said she had been eager to cheer on the president but was still happy to get a glimpse of Clinton.

"As an old lady, I want to see the opportunities I had growing up be around for the next generation. I think (Obama's) the one to do it," Tracy said.

How Obama's Best-Known Surrogate Can Steal The Show.

Monday, October 29, 2012

Slate Magazine

By Josh Voorhees

With Act 1 of Hurricane Sandy wrapping up, let's take quick look at the campaign trail, which for the next few days at least is about to miss one key ingredient: the candidates.

Mitt Romney ... scrambled his schedule in response to Sandy, announcing he was shelving campaign events across the country "out of sensitivity" for millions in the path of the storm.

Romney was still going forward with an event Monday afternoon in Davenport, Iowa, which the campaign decided not to cancel because setup had begun and doors had opened. But he will no

longer appear in Ohio on Monday night and on Tuesday, and his running mate Paul Ryan will shelve campaigning in Florida later Monday and Colorado on Tuesday, Romney communications director Gail Gitcho wrote to reporters in an email.

Obama, assuming the role of commander-in-chief, abruptly canceled an appearance at a rally in Orlando, Fla., with former president Bill Clinton, and returned to Washington to get back ahead of the advancing storm. After Air Force One landed at Andrews Air Force Base at 10:29 a.m., the president convened a storm briefing in the White House situation room and then addressed the nation. ...

The president's statement did not address the election, but in response to the one question he took from reporters, he said: "I am not worrying at this point about the impact on elections . . . the election will take care of itself next week. Right now, our number one priority is to make sure we are saving lives."

While it's too early to know just how long Obama and Romney will stay sidelined by the storm, it looks like a safe bet that both men will lose at least two days on the campaign trail. That creates a remarkable vacuum on the stump with only a little more than a week to go before voters head to the polls. Enter Bill Clinton, who carried on by himself in Orlando this morning in Obama's absence.

Former President Bill Clinton is planning a visit to New Hampshire this week to campaign for President Barack Obama. New Hampshire is on a list of battleground states he plans to visit. Other stops are Minnesota, Iowa, Colorado, Ohio and Virginia.

While Romney can—and likely will—tap his own surrogates to carry the load in the coming days if he chooses to remain on the shelf because of Sandy, he lacks a bold-faced name of the caliber of the former president (in terms of drumming up excitement among party faithful and/or the media). During this summer's conventions, after all, Clinton delivered such a crowd-pleasing speech that he somewhat overshadowed Obama. Romney, meanwhile, was left with the unenviable task of following Clint Eastwood and an empty chair onstage.

To be clear, the storm could easily hurt the president's campaign in a variety of other ways, but if the hurricane turns the election's home stretch into a battle of surrogates, Team Obama likely feels pretty relieved it has Clinton to deploy where it needs.

Clinton: Obama's Feelings Most Hurt Over Jeep Ad

Monday, October 29, 2012

Weekly Standard

By Daniel Halper

Bill Clinton revealed at a campaign rally today that President Barack Obama's feelings were hurt over Mitt Romney's ad suggesting Jeep might move some of its production facilities overseas:

"I saw the reports of Governor Romney's latest ad saying that the president had allowed Jeep to move to China," said Clinton. "And so this morning, before he left Florida and went back to Washington, he said, 'You know, of all the things Governor Romney has said that probably hurts my feelings the most.' He said, 'You know, I never had any money when I was a kid. and the first new car I ever owned I was 30 years old it was a Jeep.'"

As an aside, it's interesting that, according to an old USA Today report, Obama's first (used) car was a Ford Granada.

Like many men, President Obama has fond memories of his first car — even if it was a Ford Granada.

"I have to confess; my first car was my grandfather's car," Obama told AAA in an interview. "Which was a Ford Granada."

Then, it appears, Obama owned a red Fiat. "Before returning to Hawaii, Stan bought his grandson a present: a beat-up old red Fiat that they found at a Los Angeles used car lot," writes David Maraniss in Barack Obama: The Story.

Then, Maraniss details Obama had a Honda Civic. "Before leaving New York, Obama spent two thousand dollars on a blue Honda Civic that he would drive into the heartland to start his new life."

And then a Nissan Datsun. "The old blue Honda Civic was gone; he had sold it before departing for Europe and Africa. Now he had another car, a used yellow Datsun that cost five hundred dollars."

Obama's first new car was a Jeep Grand Cherokee, but was 39 years old when he bought the 2000 model, not 30, as Clinton stated earlier today.

As Presidential Race Tightens, President Clinton Plans A Minnesota Visit

Monday, October 29, 2012

Minneapolis Star Tribune

By Rachel E. Stassen-Berger

As the presidential race narrows in Minnesota, former President Bill Clinton is planning to visit here this week to shore up support for President Barack Obama.

Details of the Tuesday visit are still being worked out. The former president's visit is part of a Midwest swing that includes Minnesota, Iowa, Colorado, Ohio, Virginia, New Hampshire and Wisconsin, the Obama campaign said. All year, the six other states have been considered battleground areas in the presidential race.

Minnesota has not been on that swing state list but a Star Tribune Minnesota Poll, published Sunday, shows a newly tight race between Obama and Republican Mitt Romney. The poll found Obama with a 3 percentage point lead over Romney, an advantage that is within the poll's margin of error of plus or minus 3.5 percentage points.

The state may also see a visit from Romney or his running mate Paul Ryan, the Associated Press reported.

The sudden attention comes as both campaigns have started buying advertising time in Minnesota, which had been lacking until last week.

Although Minnesota has given its 10 electoral college votes to the Democratic candidate for president since 1972, those victories were narrow in 2000 and 2004.

Bill Clinton To Campaign In Minnesota On Tuesday

Monday, October 29, 2012

Minneapolis Public Radio

By Tom Scheck

Former President Bill Clinton will campaign in Minneapolis and Duluth on Tuesday.

Clinton is scheduled to hold campaign rallies for President Obama, Senator Amy Klobuchar and other DFL candidates. The visit was confirmed by several Democratic officials in Minnesota. No other details of the visit have been released yet.

The Clinton visit comes at a time when polls show the race for president getting close in Minnesota. A Star Tribune poll released over the weekend showed Obama with a three percentage point lead over Mitt Romney. Clinton's visit to Duluth could help Democrat Rick Nolan's efforts to unseat Republican Congressman Chip Cravaack.

Meanwhile, a senior GOP official in Minnesota says Mitt Romney's campaign is seriously discussing

whether Romney, Paul Ryan or both candidates will make a campaign stop in Minnesota before Election Day.

Minnesota has not backed a Republican for president since 1972.

UPDATE: Officials from the Obama campaign have confirmed Clinton's Tuesday visit to Minnesota. It's part of a broader swing through battleground states that includes Iowa, Colorado, Ohio, Virginia, New Hampshire and Wisconsin.

Clinton's visits will likely include stops on campuses in Minneapolis and Duluth.

Former President Bill Clinton Will Visit Duluth Tuesday, Officials Say
Monday, October 29, 2012

NBC News

Former President Bill Clinton will be coming to Duluth Tuesday to campaign for President Obama, Senator Amy Klobuchar and Rick Nolan who is challenging Congressman Chip Cravaack in the 8th Congressional District.

The Obama Campaign in Minneapolis says that it's probable that Clinton will be stopping at UMD.

We have no other details as yet on where Clinton will be while stopping.

The Clinton visit comes at a time when polls show the race for president is getting close in Minnesota.

A Star Tribune poll released over the weekend showed Obama with a three percentage point lead over Mitt Romney.

Meanwhile, MPR reports, a senior GOP official in Minnesota says Mitt Romney's campaign is seriously discussing whether Romney, Paul Ryan or both candidates will make a campaign stop in Minnesota before Election Day.

Posted to the web by Jenna Vogt

Bill Clinton To Campaign In Virginia Later This Week

Monday, October 29, 2012

Richmond (VA) Times-Dispatch

By Olympia Meola

Virginia will see former President Bill Clinton this week after all.

Clinton was scheduled to campaign today in Prince William County with President Barack Obama but the event was canceled ahead of Hurricane Sandy.

The campaign announced today that Clinton will campaign in this key swing state this week, as well as in Minnesota, Iowa, Colorado, Ohio, New Hampshire and Wisconsin.

He will appear at an event with Vice President Joe Biden in Ohio today before heading to Minnesota for campaign rallies on Tuesday, according to the campaign. Details of the trip were not yet released.

Bill Clinton Headed To Colorado
Monday, October 29, 2012

Associated Press

DENVER (AP) The Big Dog is coming to the Front Range.

An official with President Barack Obama's campaign says Bill Clinton is scheduled to campaign for Obama in Denver and Aurora on Tuesday. The president cancelled a Colorado Springs event Tuesday due to Hurricane Sandy.

The storm has thrown the nail-biter of an election into even greater turmoil. Obama is grounded in Washington, D.C., he will be relying on the former president, known in political circles as "The Big Dog," to carry his message.

Republican vice presidential candidate Paul Ryan also cancelled his Colorado trip on Tuesday because of the storm. He had been due to speak in Greeley, Castle Rock and Canon City.

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Bill Clinton In Final Week Sprint For Obama
Monday, October 29, 2012

Chicago Sun-Times

By Lynn Sweet

WASHINGTON--Former President Bill Clinton is on final week sprint for President Barack Obama--who will be losing campaign days due to Hurricane Sandy. Clinton is stumping for Obama in Florida and Ohio on Monday--here is the rest of his schedule:

From the campaign:

Obama for America announced today that former President Bill Clinton will campaign this week in Minnesota, Iowa, Colorado, Ohio, Virginia, New Hampshire and Wisconsin. After joining Vice President Biden for a grassroots event in Youngstown Ohio today, President Clinton will travel to Minnesota for campaign rallies on Tuesday.

President Clinton's trip will include both a mix of battleground states, where he will continue to lay out the choice for the American people in this election, and states with strong Democratic bases, where he will fire up supporters and urge them to help get out the vote for President Obama.

Bill Clinton Campaigns For Congressional Candidate Sean Patrick Maloney

Monday, October 29, 2012

Hudson Valley Your News Now

By John Wagner

WESTCHESTER COUNTY, N.Y. — Aligning himself with ultra-popular former president Bill Clinton, Sean Patrick Maloney's campaign got a boost when his former boss gives him big props.

"Sean Maloney's got a better jobs plan, he's got a better budget plan, he's got a better education plan, he's got a better plan for the future," said Bill Clinton.

"President Clinton and I worked side by side on the White House senior staff," said Sean Maloney, 18th district Congressional candidate. "He was my mentor. If you look at what he did in the 90s, we can do that again, and we can balance the budget the right way."

Maloney worked for the president between 1997 and 2000. He now faces incumbent Republican Nan Hayworth and he says the options are simple.

"This is not a choice between a Democrat and a Republican, this is a choice between what works and what doesn't," said Maloney.

"This is not a complicated decision, go out and win it for him," said Clinton.

Republican Nan Hayworth disagrees, releasing a statement saying, "President Clinton lowered taxes, Sean Maloney wants to raise your taxes. At least one aspect of Mr. Maloney's background is clear: he's not a Bill Clinton Democrat, he's a Nancy Pelosi Democrat."

Recent polls show Hayworth ahead of Maloney, but analysts say it's a shrinking lead.

"Hopefully this will energize a lot of people and get more people out to help get the vote out, because if we can get the vote out, we can win the election," said Warwick resident Gerard Finn.

Former President Bill Clinton Endorses Michigan's Renewable Energy Proposal

Monday, October 29, 2012

Associated Press

TRAVERSE CITY, Mich. — Former President Bill Clinton has endorsed a Michigan ballot initiative that would require the state's electricity providers to generate 25 percent of their power from renewable sources by the year 2025.

Clinton's endorsement was announced Monday by Michigan Energy Michigan Jobs, the group campaigning for approval of the ballot initiative known as Proposal 3.

Clinton says in a statement the proposal is the best opportunity this year to boost the state's economy and create jobs.

He says Michigan can't afford to fall behind other states that have more ambitious requirements for producing energy from the sun, wind and other renewable sources.

Opponents say Proposal 3 makes unrealistic demands and doesn't belong in the state constitution. The two sides dispute whether it would boost electricity bills for consumers.

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Bill Clinton Endorses Proposal 3's Renewable Energy Mandate

Monday, October 29, 2012

MLive

By Melissa Anders

LANSING, MI — Former President Bill Clinton has thrown his support behind Proposal 3's renewable energy mandate.

The Democrat joins former Michigan Gov. William Milliken, a Republican, as high-ranking officials who have endorsed the proposal that would amend the constitution to require utilities to derive at least 25 percent of their energy from clean renewable sources by 2025.

"Proposal 3 is Michigan's best opportunity this year to jumpstart the state's economy by creating 94,000 jobs and increasing the use of renewable energy," Clinton said in a statement. "Proposal 3 invests in Michigan's future so that it won't get left behind by the 30 other states that are already creating new clean energy jobs and lowering consumers' electricity costs. That's why I'm so proud to endorse Proposal 3."

Opponents have challenged the 94,000 jobs figure, which comes in part from a Michigan State University study claiming the proposal would add 74,000 jobs in construction, operation and maintenance. The study has been criticized

because it measures the number of job years, meaning one person working for 10 years would be listed as 10 job years.

Proposal backer Michigan Energy Michigan Jobs reached the 94,000 figure by adding an estimate for Michigan's share of renewable energy manufacturing jobs created by the proposal.

MEMJ spokesman Mark Fisk said he's "extremely proud" to have the former president's support.

"He is a huge champion of renewable energy initiatives in the United States and across the globe," Fisk said. "Proposal 3 caught his attention and the attention of his team and he felt it important to weigh in on this proposal."

Clinton came to Michigan earlier this month to help raise money for Sen. Debbie Stabenow, who also supports the renewable energy mandate.

The Michigan Democratic Party platform supports "using a strong state renewable energy standard" but it has not taken any stance on Proposal 3.

The national Democratic Party's platform includes a goal to generate 80 percent renewable energy by 2035.

Proposal opponents include Gov. Rick Snyder, Attorney General Bill Schuette, former attorney general Mike Cox, former attorney general Frank Kelley and former Michigan Supreme Court Chief Justice Conrad Mallett Jr. They say the measure is too costly and doesn't belong in the state constitution.

Email Melissa Anders at manders@mlive.com. Follow her on Twitter: @MelissaDAnders.

Bill Clinton To Rally Support For Heitkamp At Fargo Civic Center Today

FARGO – Former President Bill Clinton is coming to Fargo today to rally support for U.S. Senate candidate Heidi Heitkamp.

Monday, October 29, 2012

[Detroit Lakes \(MN\) Tribune](#)

By Helmut Schmidt

FARGO – Former President Bill Clinton is coming to Fargo today to rally support for U.S. Senate candidate Heidi Heitkamp.

Former President Bill Clinton is coming to Fargo today to rally support for U.S. Senate candidate Heidi Heitkamp.

The rally will be held at the Fargo Civic Center.

However, the event in support of the North Dakota Democrat is supposed to begin at 7 p.m. today, a news release from the Heitkamp campaign said.

The event will be free and open to the public.

"President Clinton knows how important it is to elect individuals who put partisanship aside and fight for the middle class. I am proud to have his support," Heitkamp said in the news release.

Heitkamp served as North Dakota's attorney general while Clinton was president.

"When President Clinton was in office, we had a budget surplus and were on track to pay off our federal debt. I am running for the Senate to help get our fiscal house back in order," Heitkamp said in the release.

Clinton's visit comes at a critical time in the race for the open U.S. Senate seat.

A recent Rasmussen poll showed Republican U.S. Rep. Rick Berg leading Heitkamp 50 percent to 45 percent in the Senate race.

The poll has a margin of error of plus or minus 4 percent.

Heitkamp campaign spokesman Brandon Lorenz said that Clinton's appearance is a sign of the importance of the race.

"Heidi is running a very aggressive and competitive campaign," Lorenz said.

Clinton last visited North Dakota in the spring, when he went to Grand Forks to give the keynote address at the Democratic-NPL state convention.

Pittsford Teenager Honored At Ceremony With Former President Bill Clinton

Student's Letter Read At Event

Monday, October 29, 2012

[Rochester \(NY\) Democrat & Chronicle](#)

By Megan DeMarco, Staff writer

A Pittsford teenager was in impressive company earlier this month when he was honored at a ceremony attended by former President Bill Clinton, Gov. Andrew Cuomo and New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg.

Salvador Barragan-Santana, a junior at McQuaid Jesuit High School, was invited to the ceremonial opening of the Franklin D. Roosevelt Four Freedoms Park in Manhattan on Oct. 17. A letter he wrote two years ago was read aloud, and Barragan-Santana was applauded.

Barragan-Santana, a Mexican immigrant, wrote a letter to former U.S. Ambassador William vanden

Heuvel about the four freedoms FDR made famous — freedom of speech, freedom of worship, freedom from want and freedom from fear.

"Being an immigrant gives me that extra push to succeed and I don't take the freedoms I have for granted," Barragan wrote. "I believe that FDR's Four Freedoms park will be a great way to remind my generation of the freedoms they have and how hard our forefathers had to fight to get them."

Vanden Heuvel advocated for the building of the park and helped raise money to pay for its construction.

Barragan-Santana wrote the letter to vanden Heuvel, who was born in Rochester, after seeing him give an interview about the four freedoms on the Charlie Rose show.

"It struck a chord with him," said his father, Salvador Barragan.

Former NBC News anchor Tom Brokaw, who moderated the ceremony, read Barragan-Santana's letter and asked him to stand to be acknowledged.

After the ceremony and ribbon cutting, Barragan-Santana was approached by Clinton.

"President Clinton saw my son, he gave him a hug," Barragan said. "It was a nice experience for my son."

LIBYA

Libya Warnings Were Plentiful, But Unspecific Tuesday, October 30, 2012

New York Times

By Michael R. Gordon, Eric Schmitt And Michael S. Schmidt

WASHINGTON — In the months leading up to the Sept. 11 attacks on the American diplomatic mission in Benghazi, the Obama administration received intelligence reports that Islamic extremist groups were operating training camps in the mountains near the Libyan city and that some of the fighters were "Al Qaeda-leaning," according to American and European officials.

The warning about the camps was part of a stream of diplomatic and intelligence reports that indicated that the security situation throughout the country, and particularly in eastern Libya, had deteriorated sharply since the United States reopened its embassy in Tripoli after the fall of Col. Muammar el-Qaddafi's government in September 2011.

By June, Benghazi had experienced a string of assassinations as well as attacks on the Red Cross and a British envoy's motorcade. Ambassador J. Christopher Stevens, who was killed in the September attack, e-mailed his superiors in Washington in August alerting them to "a security vacuum" in the city. A week before Mr. Stevens died, the American Embassy warned that Libyan officials had declared a "state of maximum alert" in Benghazi after a car bombing and thwarted bank robbery.

In the closing weeks of the presidential campaign, the circumstances surrounding the attack on the Benghazi compound have emerged as a major political issue, as Republicans, led by their presidential candidate, Mitt Romney, have sought to lay blame for the attack on President Obama, who they argued had insufficiently protected American lives there.

Interviews with American officials and an examination of State Department documents do not reveal the kind of smoking gun Republicans have suggested would emerge in the attack's aftermath such as a warning that the diplomatic compound would be targeted and that was overlooked by administration officials.

What is clear is that even as the State Department responded to the June attacks, crowning the Benghazi compound walls with concertina wire and setting up concrete barriers to thwart car bombs, it remained committed to a security strategy formulated in a very different environment a year earlier.

In the heady early days after the fall of Colonel Qaddafi's government, the administration's plan was to deploy a modest American security force and then increasingly rely on trained Libyan personnel to protect American diplomats — a policy that reflected White House apprehensions about putting combat troops on the ground as well as Libyan sensitivities about an obtrusive American security presence.

In the following months, the State Department proceeded with this plan. In one instance, State Department security officials replaced the American military team in Tripoli with trained Libyan bodyguards, while it also maintained the number of State Department security personnel members at the Benghazi compound around the minimum recommended level.

Questions at Home

But the question on the minds of some lawmakers is why the declining security situation did not

prompt a fundamental rethinking of the security needs by the State Department and the White House. Three Congressional investigations and a State Department inquiry are now examining the attack, which American officials said included participants from Ansar al-Shariah, Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb and the Muhammad Jamal network, a militant group in Egypt.

"Given the large number of attacks that had occurred in Benghazi that were aimed at Western targets, it is inexplicable to me that security wasn't increased," said Senator Susan Collins of Maine, the senior Republican on the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, one of the panels holding inquiries.

Defending their preparations, State Department officials have asserted that there was no specific intelligence that warned of a large-scale attack on the diplomatic compound in Benghazi, which they asserted was unprecedented. The department said it was careful to weigh security with diplomats' need to meet with Libyan officials and citizens.

"The lethality of an armed, masked attack by dozens of individuals is something greater than we've ever seen in Libya over the last period that we've been there," Patrick F. Kennedy, the State Department's under secretary for management, told reporters at a news conference on Oct. 10.

But David Oliveira, a State Department security officer who was stationed in Benghazi from June 2 to July 5, said he told members and staff of the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform that he recalled thinking that if 100 or more assailants sought to breach the mission's walls, "there was nothing that we could do about it because we just didn't have the manpower, we just didn't have the facilities."

In developing a strategy to bring about the fall of Colonel Qaddafi, Mr. Obama walked a fine line between critics of any American involvement in Libya and those like Senator John McCain, Republican of Arizona, who advocated a stronger American leadership role. Mr. Obama's approach — a NATO air campaign supported by the United States — was a success.

After Colonel Qaddafi's fall, Mr. Obama proceeded with equal caution. He approved a plan to send to Tripoli a 16-member Site Security Team, a military unit that included explosive-ordnance personnel, medics and other specialists. "Day-to-day diplomatic security decisions were managed by career State Department professional staff," said Tommy Vietor, a spokesman for the National Security Council.

A Temporary Stay

From the start, the State Department's Bureau of Diplomatic Security advised the embassy's security officer, Eric A. Nordstrom, that he needed to develop an "exit strategy" so that the Tripoli-based team could be replaced by Libyan guards and American civilian officials.

Charlene Lamb, one of the department's senior diplomatic security officials, told members of the House oversight committee last month that by June, one of her aides and Mr. Nordstrom had identified a need for 21 security positions and that 16 of them were to be filled by Libyan bodyguards. Americans were to fill the remaining slots, and two assistant regional security officers were also to be sent.

The security arrangements in Benghazi appeared to receive little scrutiny in Washington. During the Qaddafi government there had not been a mission there, and in December 2011 Mr. Kennedy issued a memo to keep the Benghazi mission open for only a year.

Housed in a rented compound, the mission and a nearby annex used by the Central Intelligence Agency enabled the United States to interact with Libyans in the eastern part of the country from a city that had been the cradle of their revolution.

But eastern Libya also had another face. Though the region had been a wellspring for the uprising against Colonel Qaddafi's government, it was also known as one of the major sources of militants who traveled to Iraq in 2007 to join the main terrorist group there, Al Qaeda in Mesopotamia.

The number of State Department security agents at the compound in Benghazi fluctuated, sometimes dipping to as few as two. Five American security agents were at the compound on Sept. 11 — three stationed there and two traveling with Mr. Stevens.

In addition to the Americans, there were several armed Libyans who served as a quick-reaction force. The Americans were also able to call on the February 17 Martyrs Brigade, a militia supportive of the Libyan government. Yet another small group of Libyan guards stood watch at the gates and perimeter of the compound, but this group was unarmed and equipped with only whistles and batons.

When it came to weapons, the American security team was outgunned. The Americans were equipped with M4 rifles and side arms. But Libya was rife with rocket-propelled grenades, machine guns, mortars and AK-47s.

Much of the security depended on maintaining a low profile. When venturing into town, the Americans drove a Toyota Land Cruiser, from which they removed the diplomatic plates and which they intentionally did not wash. At one point, Mr. Nordstrom, the regional security officer, proposed establishing guard towers, but the State Department rejected that on the grounds that it would make the compound more conspicuous.

There was no doubt, however, that there were many in Benghazi who knew the compound's location. On June 6, a bomb was planted near the American Mission's outer wall, blowing out a 12-foot-wide hole. No one was injured.

On June 11, the lead vehicle of the British ambassador's convoy was hit by an armor-piercing rocket-propelled grenade, wounding a British medic and driver. The British envoy left Benghazi the next day, and the British post in the city was closed on June 17.

About the same time, the Red Cross in the city pulled out after it was attacked a second time. "When that occurred, it was apparent to me that we were the last flag flying in Benghazi; we were the last thing on their target list to remove," said Lt. Col. Andrew Wood, the head of the military security team in Tripoli.

In the event of a significant attack, Mr. Oliveira noted, the Americans were counting on the February 17th Brigade to rush to their aid, as it had during the June 6 bombing. The embassy had also established a series of "trip wires," classified benchmarks about intelligence on attack preparations or escalating unrest that would prompt the United States to evacuate the Benghazi compound. But the trip wires were not set off.

New security cameras with night vision capability were shipped to the Benghazi compound but were still sitting in crates when the September attack occurred.

More Troubling Signs

The situation in eastern Libya, meanwhile, remained perilous. Small-scale camps grew out of training areas created last year by militias fighting Libyan government security forces. After the government fell, these compounds continued to churn out fighters trained in marksmanship and explosives, American officials said.

Ansar al-Shariah, a local militant group some of whose members had ties to Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, a local Qaeda affiliate, operated a militant training camp whose location was well

known to Benghazi residents. On the Friday after the attack, demonstrators overran it.

American intelligence agencies had provided the administration with reports for much of the past year warning that the Libyan government was weakening and had little control over the militias, including Ansar al-Shariah.

By early September, some Libyan officials in Benghazi were echoing the same security warnings as Mr. Stevens was relaying to Washington.

American officials continue to investigate the militants who carried out the attack. A Tunisian, who was apprehended by Turkish officials on a flight from Benghazi to Turkey and repatriated to Tunisia, was also involved, American officials said. It is not yet clear if the attackers who participated in the assault were trained in the camps.

Looking back, Mr. Nordstrom told a House hearing last month that a major question was the inability of the administration to react to the worsening environment on the ground.

"I was extremely pleased with the planning to get us into Libya," Mr. Nordstrom said. But after the initial security teams began rotating out of Libya months later, he said, "there was a complete and total absence of planning."

David D. Kirkpatrick and Suliman Ali Zway contributed reporting from Benghazi, Libya.

McGurn: The Fog Of Obama's Non-War
Seven weeks after a U.S. ambassador was murdered and there are still no answers.

Tuesday, October 30, 2012

Wall Street Journal

By William McGurn

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

Evidence Hillary Answered The 3:00 A.m. Call While Obama Hung Up

Monday, October 29, 2012

National Review

By David French

This weekend, while pondering the recent revelations that explicit calls for military help may have been rejected, I realized the media has been misunderstanding the basic lines of authority that were likely in place in Benghazi on September 11, 2012. If those lines of authority were conventional, then on that night it is highly likely that Hillary Clinton did all she could while Barack

Obama — who controlled vastly more resources — did nothing effective.

Now, I'm not at all excusing State Department decision-making that left the Benghazi compound ridiculously vulnerable or the State Department's spin after the attack. Instead, I'm focusing on the events of that night — the subject of the most recent revelations that someone rejected urgent calls for military help.

To fully understand the various accounts of the battle, one has to understand the concept of "assets," "responsibility," and "command authority." For example, a military commander may be responsible for a particular battle space, but only has command authority over very specific military assets. In Iraq, my squadron commander was responsible for a 17,000 square kilometer section of Diyala Province, but only had command authority over a specific set of assets — a "squadron minus" of armored cavalry (we left a tank company up in Mosul) plus various attached soldiers and teams. If these assets were insufficient, he had to specifically appeal to higher headquarters for help, and higher headquarters would approve or reject the request.

In a mixed civilian/military environment, the situation becomes more complex. For example, at various points in our deployment, U.N. negotiating teams would arrive to try to broker peace agreements between competing tribes. They had their own security, and the head of that security team was responsible for the safety of the U.N. negotiators, but if his team was overmatched, he'd appeal for help to my commander — as the on-scene military commander responsible for the battle space and with command authority over necessary assets to respond to a crisis.

Clear as mud? Thankfully, in our case the U.N. never had to make the call for help — in large part because we escorted the negotiators with heavy armor. The insurgents never launched an attack.

With that framework in place, let's go back to Benghazi. While the State Department Bureau of Diplomatic Security assumes responsibility for "providing a safe and secure environment for the conduct of U.S. foreign policy," that does not mean that it necessarily has command authority over the necessary assets to accomplish its mission. In other words, if an embassy is under attack, the State Department doesn't suddenly command aircraft carriers, fighter groups, or infantry battalions. The military chain of command doesn't suddenly become a State Department chain of command. Instead, if an embassy or

diplomatic compound is under attack, and State Department forces are insufficient to repel the attack or secure embassy personnel, then the State Department has to appeal to a separate command structure and ask that it deploy those assets under its command authority to assist — such as the host country's military or our own.

International law assigns primary responsibility for diplomatic security to the host country, but Libya was not capable of meeting that responsibility. So — if current reports can be believed — we appealed to our own military for help. Here's the critical point: The decision to proactively use military force in a sovereign country that we are not at war with or in is typically a decision reserved to the National Command Authority alone. (The National Command Authority is the president acting in concert with — but in command of — the Secretary of Defense). Unless this decision has been delegated to a lower command, this is the president's call to make. Period.

So far we have been provided with a fairly precise accounting of how the State Department deployed its very limited assets to respond to the Benghazi attack, and that account makes for harrowing reading. In short, while there were too few assets in place to help, the State Department threw everyone into the breach — even sending small teams to engage the terrorists without air cover and without heavy weapons. Those men — American and Libyan — by all accounts exhibited bravery most Americans can scarcely comprehend. It wasn't quite the Alamo or Little Big Horn (thankfully), but they exhibited bravery against overwhelming odds in keeping with the best of American martial traditions. The call came, and the State Department answered with what little it had. It was not enough.

But where is the Department of Defense's corresponding account of that night? There is little doubt it has already compiled an account at least as comprehensive as the State Department's — and this account details (a) when the military learned of the attack; (b) the military's state of situational awareness hour by hour; (c) whether it received any requests for help; (d) what assets — if any — were available to render aid in time; (e) what recommendations were made; (f) whether any definitive orders were given; and (g) who gave them. Make no mistake: That information is currently available, already compiled, and can be released (even if in heavily redacted form to protect classified assets).

Yet here's our Secretary of Defense's incomplete and unsatisfactory response:

"(The) basic principle is that you don't deploy forces into harm's way without knowing what's going on; without having some real-time information about what's taking place," Panetta told Pentagon reporters. "And as a result of not having that kind of information, the commander who was on the ground in that area, Gen. Ham, Gen. Dempsey and I felt very strongly that we could not put forces at risk in that situation."

His "basic principle" is simply false. We deploy forces all the time in our theaters of war without good real-time information. All. The. Time. If we didn't, far more men would die. The fog of war never fully clears, and our solution has been to typically go in with sufficient force to deal with virtually any reasonable contingency. But the truly revealing part of the response is here: "General Ham, General Dempsey and I felt very strongly that we could not put forces at risk in that situation." To military ears those are not the words of a man who made a decision; those are the words of a man who made a recommendation. A decision-maker follows his strong feeling with an order: to stand down or decline the request for help. A recommender passes his feeling up the chain of command — in this case, to the president of the United States.

The State Department answered the call with what force it had. The military did not. Either we did not have assets to answer (and that would be a different kind of scandal) or someone made the decision to — in effect — hang up on the 3:00 a.m. caller. Who made that call and why? The military already knows. So should the American people.

LEADING INTERNATIONAL AND GLOBAL ISSUES

In Syria, Failed Truce And No Lull In Violence Tuesday, October 30, 2012

New York Times

By Neil MacFarquhar

BEIRUT, Lebanon — The declared four-day holiday truce between the warring factions in Syria ended on Monday much as it had begun — with airstrikes, artillery barrages and other firefights around the country that made a mockery of the cease-fire.

Even to the last, citizens caught up in violence held out hope for a brief lull.

"I told myself I should take advantage of this truce to go visit some relatives," said a woman willing to be identified only by her nickname, Um Samer, 32. Instead, as she described via Skype, a walk down the street from her house in the Damascus suburb of Hajar al-Aswad was interrupted on Monday when a government missile slammed into a minibus about 200 yards away from her.

"I saw kids cut in pieces and a driver with half his body gone," she said, horrified. "How is it that we don't have any value? Are we not human like other people?"

That was just one of the attacks Monday in what activists called one of the worst days of air raids against the suburbs of the capital since the uprising began as a peaceful protest movement in March 2011. The strikes against Hajar al-Aswad left at least 10 people dead, 8 of them in a minibus collective taxi, and many wounded, according to the Local Coordinating Committee and other opposition activists.

The government also accused the opposition of violating the cease-fire in multiple places, including exploding a car bomb in Jaramana, a Damascus neighborhood that is home to various minorities who still back the government. At least 6 people were killed and 50 wounded by the bomb, said SANA, the official news agency.

They were among scores of new victims of the violence during the putative lull. Clashes were reported scattered throughout the country from Deraa in the south to Deir ez-Zour in the east to the embattled northern city of Aleppo. Among other firefights in that city, Kurdish fighters in the neighborhood of Ashrafiyah continued to battle to prevent opposition militiamen from taking over their quarter.

Lakhdar Brahimi, the envoy for the United Nations and the Arab League who tried to negotiate the truce, expressed disappointment that it had collapsed virtually from the start, although the fighting seemed to slow Friday. "I am terribly sorry," Mr. Brahimi said at a news conference in Moscow, "that this appeal has not been heard at the level we hoped it would." He will continue working to try to reduce the level of violence, he said, demanding greater international pressure on both sides in Syria.

Mr. Brahimi was visiting Moscow and Beijing, the main international backers of President Bashar al-Assad, ahead of presenting a plan to the Security Council next month toward a negotiated settlement. It will be based on an agreement that

all five permanent members of the Security Council reached in Geneva last June.

But as the lack of the cease-fire indicated, both sides seem convinced that they can still defeat the other militarily, which made any kind of lull unlikely. The Syrian government had announced on Thursday that it would halt military operations for four days at the start of Id al-Fitr, or the feast of sacrifice, which started Friday. The bulk of the opposition said it would respect the truce if the government did, although the extremist jihadist brigades who have gained a more visible role in recent months declared that they would not.

"The collapse of Mr. Brahimi's truce — or, rather, the failure to abide by it — was only to be expected, especially since both sides did not have pure intentions," Al-Quds al-Arabi, an Arabic daily published in London, wrote in an editorial Monday. "The regime wants to pursue its military solutions, and all the armed opposition factions believe that continuing to fight until the regime falls is the only way of achieving their aims."

Hania Mourtada and Hwalda Saad contributed reporting.

Syrian Regime Launches Nationwide Airstrikes

Tuesday, October 30, 2012

Associated Press

By Ben Hubbard

BEIRUT (AP) — Syrian fighter jets pounded rebel areas across the country on Monday with scores of airstrikes that anti-regime activists called the most widespread bombing in a single day since Syria's troubles started 19 months ago.

The death toll for what was supposed to be a four-day cease-fire between the regime of President Bashar Assad and rebels seeking his overthrow exceeded 500, and activists guessed the government's heavy reliance on air power reflected its inability to roll back rebel gains.

"The army is no longer able to make any progress on the ground so it is resorting to this style," said activist Hisham Nijim via Skype from the northern town of Khan Sheikhoun.

Activists said more than 80 people were killed nationwide Monday while videos posted online showed fighter jets screaming over Syrian towns, mushroom clouds rising from neighborhoods and residents searching the remains of damaged and collapsed buildings for bodies. One video from Maaret al-Numan in the north showed residents trying to save a boy who was buried up to his

shoulders in rubble. Another showed the dead bodies of a young boy and girl laid out on a tile floor.

The airstrikes focused on rebel areas in the northern provinces of Aleppo and Idlib, as well as on restive areas in and around the capital Damascus. The regime has been bombing rebel areas in the north for months, but had sparingly used its air force near the capital, presumably to avoid isolating its supporters there.

But analysts say that rampant defections and rising rebel capabilities have lessened the regime's ability to take back and hold rebel areas, making air strikes its most effective way to fight back.

Monday was supposed to be the fourth and final day of an internationally sanctioned cease-fire to coincide with the Muslim holiday of Eid al-Adha, one of the holiest periods of the Muslim calendar. But violence marred the truce almost immediately after it was to go into effect on Friday and continued apace through the weekend.

U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said Monday he was "deeply disappointed" that the warring parties didn't respect the cease-fire and called on the divided international community to unite to stop the bloodshed.

"As long as the international community remains at odds, the needs, attacks and suffering will only grow," he told reporters in South Korea.

Envoy Lakhdar Brahimi, who represents the U.N. and the Arab League and presented the plan, told reporters in Moscow that he'd keep trying to lessen the violence and "put an end to it."

World powers remain divided on how to stop Syria's crisis, with the U.S. and many Arab and European nations calling for Assad to step down while Russia, China and Iran continue to back the regime. But with the sides largely stalemated on the battlefield and little international appetite for military intervention, few expect the war to end soon.

Anti-regime activists say more than 35,000 people have been killed since the anti-Assad uprising started in March 2011.

The holiday cease-fire was the first international effort in months to try to stop the violence, and it accomplished little.

The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, which compiles daily death tolls based on contacts inside Syria, said more than 500 people had been killed during the four-day holiday. It said more than 80 people were killed Monday and that

the number was likely to rise further. Prior to the holiday, about 150 people were reported dead each day.

But in a change, Rami Abdul-Rahman, head of the Observatory, said the number of airstrikes spiked on Monday.

"Today has seen the most intense air raids across Syria since the start of the uprising," he said, estimating there were more than 60 airstrikes nationwide by early afternoon.

He said the airstrikes sought to compensate for recent regime losses on the ground.

Muhieddine Lathkani, a London-based member of the Syrian National Council opposition group, said the air attacks were a result of the regime's "total despair" and reflected the military's inability to recapture rebel areas.

Among the hardest hit areas was the northern town of Maaret al-Numan, which rebels seized earlier this month only to face heavy retaliation from the military. Amateur videos posted online Monday showed dozens of men combing through huge swaths of rubble, occasionally finding wounded people covered in cement dust and carrying them off for treatment.

Other videos showed fighter jets screaming through the sky and dropping bombs over Damascus suburbs including Yabroud, Hazza and Harasta.

Videos from the poor neighborhood of Hajar al-Aswad in south Damascus showed what activists said were people killed by regime shelling. One video showed a dead family of five, all wrapped in blankets. Others showed three dead bodies in a small bus and the bodies of two young children laid out on a floor.

Activist videos could not be independently verified due to reporting restrictions in Syria, but they appeared genuine and corresponded to other AP reporting on the events depicted.

Also Monday, a car bomb exploded in the Damascus suburb of Jarmana, knocking balconies off of residential buildings and sending firemen rushing to fight the blaze, according to TV footage. The state news agency SANA said 11 people were killed and 67 wounded. The Observatory said five people were killed.

SANA also reported a second car bomb in the area later Monday but did not give a number of the dead and wounded.

In Turkey, about 150 members of the Syrian opposition met Monday to discuss how to manage rebel-held areas and plan for a post-Assad future.

Abdelbaset Sieda, president of the Syrian National Council, said the Syrian regime was losing its grip on power and that the opposition must be prepared to rebuild the devastated country.

Since the start of the uprising, the Syrian opposition has failed to come up with a united leadership and has been riddled by disagreements between numerous factions over the role of Islam in the uprising, the best way to topple Assad and other issues.

Exile opposition leaders also have no control over and limited communication with many rebel brigades fighting inside the country.

Associated Press writers Bassem Mroue in Beirut, Christopher Torchia in Istanbul contributed reporting.

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Air Raids, Bombs Rock Damascus After Truce Failure
Tuesday, October 30, 2012
AFP

DAMASCUS — Explosions shook Syria's capital on Monday as warplanes launched their heaviest air raids yet and two car bombs struck, with the UN-Arab League peace envoy saying the conflict was going from bad to worse.

The air raid blasts, heard coming from several outlying districts, rattled windows in the city centre and were among the most intense in Damascus since the beginning of Syria's 19-month conflict, an AFP correspondent said.

They were followed by two car bombings in and around the capital.

The first struck the predominantly Christian and Druze area of Jarmana, just outside Damascus, killing 11 people, according to state news agency SANA.

The second hit several hours later in the southern Al-Hajar Al-Aswad district, which has seen heavy fighting, causing an unknown number of casualties, state television reported.

The violence came as world powers looked to pick up the pieces of a failed effort for a Muslim holiday ceasefire, with envoy Lakhdar Brahimi in Moscow

and due in China on Tuesday as he prepares to present new ideas to the UN Security Council.

"I have said and it bears repeating again and again that the Syrian crisis is very very dangerous, the situation is bad and getting worse," Brahimi said after talks with Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov.

On Monday, the final day of the four-day Eid al-Adha holiday, the Syrian military launched more than 60 air strikes around the country, said the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights.

"These are the heaviest air strikes since warplanes were first deployed over the summer," the watchdog's director, Rami Abdel Rahman, told AFP.

"The regime is looking to make real gains. There are battles in all of these areas being hit," he said.

Warplanes struck targets around Damascus, the Observatory said, with attacks focused on rebel positions in a northeastern belt where President Bashar al-Assad's regime has been battling to take opposition strongholds.

Dozens of soldiers were wounded and 11 killed in fighting in the area, it said.

The Observatory reported other air raids on villages and towns across the northwestern province of Idlib, where regime forces and rebels have been locked in fierce fighting over the Wadi Deif military base.

The army's general command in a statement blamed "terrorists" for violating the failed Eid truce.

"On the fourth and last day of the declared truce, armed terrorist groups continued to launch attacks on unarmed citizens, and targeted army and security checkpoints," it said.

The truce proposed by Brahimi for Eid, which started on Friday, fell apart amid clashes, shelling and car bombings only hours after it had been due to take effect.

More than 400 people have died since the start of Eid, according to the Observatory, including at least 80 on Monday.

The Britain-based group relies on a countrywide network of activists, lawyers and medics in civilian and military hospitals, and says its tolls take into account civilian, military and rebel casualties.

UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon said on Monday he was "deeply disappointed" by the

collapse of the truce and urged all sides "to live up to their obligations and promote a ceasefire."

UN diplomats say Brahimi was realistic about the ceasefire's chances and is now looking ahead to new efforts to tackle the crisis.

Diplomats told AFP that he will go back to the Security Council with fresh proposals in November after the visits to Russia and China — which have repeatedly vetoed resolutions threatening action against Assad's regime.

In a statement Monday, Syria's foreign ministry partly blamed the Security Council for the ceasefire's failure, saying it should have condemned a car bomb in Damascus Friday that killed at least eight people and wounded more than 30.

"The Council's inability to condemn this attack encouraged the terrorists to continue their crimes," it said.

The Syrian uprising, which began in March 2011 as a peaceful movement, has steadily militarised after being met with brutal state repression and has left more than 35,000 people dead, according to rights groups.

Most rebels, like the population, are Sunni Muslims in a country dominated by a minority regime of Alawites, an offshoot of Shiite Islam.

Car Bomb In Damascus Suburb Kills 10 Monday, October 29, 2012

Associated Press

By Bassem Mroue, Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — A Syrian government official says a car bomb in a Damascus suburb has killed 10 people.

The official said the blast on Monday in Jaramana also wounded 41 people and caused heavy damage. He spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak to the media.

The U.N. tried to broker a cease-fire over the four-day Eid al-Adha Muslim holiday, which ends on Monday. But the truce collapsed almost immediately after it was supposed to take effect.

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Neither Side Honors Syria Cease-fire On Last Day

Tuesday, October 30, 2012

McClatchy

By David Enders

Fighting appeared to have returned to its former pace Monday on the final day of Syria's four-day holiday cease-fire, underscoring the difficulties of finding a negotiated end to the country's civil war.

Anti-government activists who'd reported a drop in violence Friday, when the cease-fire began, said Monday that shelling, clashes and airstrikes had resumed their previous intensity, and they claimed that government forces had launched the heaviest airstrikes in the capital, Damascus, since fighting began there three months ago.

The four-day cease-fire, proposed by Lakhdar Brahimi, the United Nations special envoy to Syria, coincided with the Muslim holiday of Eid al Adha. The Syrian government had agreed to the cease-fire with conditions, along with some of the rebel groups that are fighting the government, while other rebel groups rejected the idea outright.

Violations came from both sides, including rebel car bombs and government aerial bombing.

"There was no desire from either side to stop fighting," said Mousab al Hamadee, an anti-government activist near the city of Hama. The rebels "didn't want this cease-fire to succeed because it would be a chance for the regime to redistribute forces in different areas."

One key area where that dynamic played out was in Maaret al Numan, a city located strategically on the country's main north-south highway that connects Damascus to the country's commercial hub and largest city, Aleppo. Two weeks ago, rebels claimed to have taken control of Maaret al Numan and were threatening to overrun Wadi al Deif, a nearby military base.

Ahmed Zaki al Assi, an anti-government activist from the nearby city of Idlib, said the Syrian army took advantage of the cease-fire to move troops in Maaret al Numan and reinforce positions at Wadi al Deif. The rebels responded by attacking government positions. "There was no reason to continue complying with the cease-fire, so the clashes began again."

"The shelling is just as bad as it was before," said Abu Rami, a spokesman for the Syrian Revolution General Command of Homs, one of many rebel factions in Homs, the country's third largest city and the site of the longest ongoing siege by the Syrian military.

At least four groups regularly claim to speak for the rebels in Homs and the surrounding

countryside, none of them part of the network led by Riad al Assad, the defected colonel who lives in a refugee camp in Turkey and has claimed to be the leader of the Free Syrian Army, the umbrella group for the rebels.

The intensely fractured nature of the rebellion has made negotiating with the rebels as a whole impossible, something Brahimi admitted Monday at a news conference in which he lamented that the situation in the country was worsening.

Despite that assessment, the average number of daily deaths in October has been lower than that of recent months: so far, about 100 rebel and civilian deaths a day, compared with 150 on average in September and 180 in August. It's difficult to determine why deaths are declining, though one likelihood is that more and more civilians have simply fled the areas where combat is taking place. There are no similar figures available for government forces and their supporters.

Brahimi's call for a cease-fire was his first major overture to both sides since he took over in August from Kofi Annan. Annan had presided over a U.N. monitoring mission that began with a cease-fire agreement in mid-April that reduced the death toll significantly from its peak in March before it skyrocketed in June and July. As they did again this weekend, each side accused the other of using the April cease-fire to rearm and reinforce.

More than 35,000 civilians and rebels have been killed since the uprising in Syria began last year, and the number of casualties on the government's side probably brings the tally to well over 40,000.

UN Chief Disappointed Over Failed Syria Cease-Fire
Monday, October 29, 2012
Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon is expressing deep disappointment at the collapse of a cease-fire in Syria and urging more unity from the international community.

Ban said Monday during prepared remarks in South Korea that the U.N. is trying to ease Syria's humanitarian woes and find a political solution to the crisis.

He says fighting in Syria must stop immediately and other countries and the United Nations need to do more to help.

Ban's remarks follow attacks between Syrian and opposition fighters that destroyed a U.N.-backed cease-fire that was supposed to quiet fighting during a four-day holiday.

The international community has been unable to ease 19 months of bloodshed in Syria.

Ban says "suffering will only grow" as long as international divisions remain.

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**Syria Conflict "Bad And Getting Worse":
Envoy Brahimi**
Tuesday, October 30, 2012

AFP

By Anna Malpas

MOSCOW — Syria's conflict is going from bad to worse, the UN-Arab League peace envoy said Monday after key talks in Moscow on finding a solution, expressing disappointment that his four-day truce plan had failed.

"I have said and it bears repeating again and again that the Syrian crisis is very very dangerous, the situation is bad and getting worse," envoy Lakhdar Brahimi said after talks with Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov.

"If it's not a civil war, I don't know what it is," Brahimi said after describing a Syrian woman whose two sons were fighting in opposing armies in the conflict. "This civil war must end," he said.

Russia had thrown its support behind Brahimi's call for Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's army and the rebels to lay down arms during the Eid al-Adha holiday.

However shelling and car bombings resumed hours after the ceasefire had been due to take effect on Friday, with each side blaming the other for breaking it, and the envoy admitted that they may have been done by rogue groups.

Brahimi said that some bomb blasts "during the Eid period in the civilian population area are definitely terrorist acts by groups we have no contact with," calling them "definitely condemnable".

The envoy said the failed appeal will not discourage him from looking for a solution to the crisis in Syria, calling on the international community to "come together and help the people of Syria find a solution to their crisis."

Lavrov said that Moscow was also "disappointed" that the truce plan was not heard by the opposing sides but said there was no point disputing over who broke the ceasefire.

"They are fighting more and more in Syria, provocations and inadequate responses to them are daily occurrences," Lavrov said.

However he stressed Russia's position that the crisis will be resolved once Western powers and regional players like Turkey start negotiating with Assad, not just the opposition.

"Hardly anything will be accomplished without dialogue with the (Syrian) government, and that is the only problem that remains in the path towards a political process," he said.

Moscow has repeatedly criticised Western powers for what it says are obstructions of peace efforts in Syria and last week alleged that the United States was coordinating arms deliveries to the rebels, which the State Department has called "ludicrous".

Russia and China have repeatedly vetoed UN Security Council resolutions threatening action against the regime of Assad.

Moscow came under fire earlier this month for delivering radar systems to Damascus on a civilian plane, leading the US to declare its Syria policy "morally bankrupt".

President Vladimir Putin shot back with a declaration that Russia will trade weapons with whomever it wants, as long as deliveries do not defy UN sanctions.

Brahimi, who became the Syria envoy after his predecessor Kofi Annan quit when his five-point Syria peace plan fell through, is to go to the UN Security Council in November with new proposals to push for talks between Assad and the opposition.

He is also due to visit China.

He had hoped that the Eid truce might lead to a more permanent ceasefire and a political solution of the conflict that has already claimed 35,000 lives in Syria, according to rights groups.

**Experts Divided On Number Of Syrians In
Need Of Shelter, Food**

Tuesday, October 30, 2012

McClatchy

By Roy Gutman

Syria's humanitarian crisis is rapidly worsening and may be much larger than the United Nations.

and major governments are describing it, according to diplomats and officials of U.N. organizations.

The Office of the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees, the organization's refugee agency, estimated last week that 360,000 Syrians had fled the country, but a UNHCR official told McClatchy that the number may be double that, more than 700,000, including 150,000 Syrians who've sought refuge in Egypt, a nation that shares no borders with Syria.

After months in which international aid groups wondered why there were so few refugees, the numbers are increasing fast. As of Friday, 280,000 Syrians had completed the registration process with UNHCR, more than 10 times the number on April 1.

How many people are displaced in Syria remains uncertain, bedeviling efforts to plan to assist them. In addition to those who've fled the country, the U.N. estimates that 1.2 million Syrians are in camps or other people's homes, but still in the country. The Syrian government estimates the number at 3 million, and a respected Syrian opposition spokesman says it could be three times that.

The United States has offered no estimate of its own, saying it's taking its lead from the United Nations.

"The crisis in Syria in humanitarian terms is very, very serious, certainly one of the top humanitarian priorities we have in the world," Kelly Clements, a deputy assistant secretary of state, told McClatchy.

Clements said the administration hadn't asked U.S. intelligence agencies to come up with an independent assessment of the humanitarian crisis. Producing a U.S. estimate "would not be something we've done in any crisis over decades of experience," she said. "We back up the (U.N.) Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs."

Others question the U.N. estimate of internally displaced, noting that such people traditionally have been undercounted in conflicts because many stay in the homes of relatives and friends or in isolated areas. The U.N. now has a special rapporteur for internally displaced people and it makes use of assessments from a special monitoring group in Geneva. But with limited or no access, it can only make an educated guess.

"How can anyone come up with a figure in the country as it stands?" said Frank Smith, a

spokesman for the Internal Displacement Monitoring Center, the group that helps the U.N. count such populations.

"We looked at patterns of movement, at population densities, and extrapolated from that. It is a soft figure," he said. He called the U.N. figure of 1.2 million low and said his group now used 1.5 million. But that number, too, is likely to be inaccurate and a new assessment is under way, but it won't be complete until early next year.

He said his organization had asked the Syrian government how it reached its estimate of 3 million.

"Winter can be quite cruel in parts of Syria," he said. "People who have lost all their possessions, whose livelihoods are gone, will be increasingly beholden on humanitarian aid. The death toll from bombs and bullets is one thing. The death tolls from chronic diseases, child mortality, lack of prenatal and postnatal care, the old and the vulnerable, who won't have access to the necessary warmth - it is a terrible situation."

A prominent opposition spokesman, Mohammad Bassam Imadi, formerly the Syrian ambassador to Sweden, estimates the internally displaced as high as 10 million. Imadi, who stays in close touch with the rebel leadership in Syria, said he'd reached that figure by looking at the populations of major cities under bombardment and trying to guess how many residents remained.

In Aleppo, he said, only 500,000 of the city's former population of 4 million remain in their homes. He estimated that half of the 6 million residents of greater Damascus have fled and that the population of Homs had been reduced to 100,000 from 1 million. In many other cities, he said, no more than half the inhabitants remain.

Imadi launched a new organization early this month to funnel aid to municipal authorities, making a presentation Oct. 2 before senior U.S. and other diplomats in Istanbul. He and several colleagues described the situation as catastrophic.

Other respected Syrian human rights figures, such as Radwan Ziadeh, of the Syrian Center for Political and Strategic Studies, said Imadi's figure showed "some exaggeration." Ziadeh estimated the displaced at 2.5 million.

Clements said the number of internally displaced people was "very dynamic," and she preferred to focus on a U.N. estimate of the number of civilians it's trying to reach, some 2.5 million, both displaced and just those in need of assistance.

"We tend, for inside Syria, to use the U.N. figure as definitive for now. That doesn't mean it will not change," she said.

New UN "Atlas" Links Climate Change, Health Tuesday, October 30, 2012

Associated Press

GENEVA (AP) — Two U.N. agencies have mapped the intersection of health and climate in an age of global warming, showing that there are spikes in meningitis when dust storms hit and outbreaks of dengue fever when hard rains come.

Officials said Monday that their "Atlas of Health and Climate" is meant to be a tool for leaders to use to get early warning of disease outbreaks.

Though the data or conclusions aren't necessarily new, the way in which they are presented may sharpen governments' ability to respond to the threats posed by rising temperatures and changing climate.

Since 2005, for example, the atlas shows that the weekly number of cases of meningitis, which is spread by bacteria and germs, has risen when the dry season hits sub-Saharan Africa, where it has killed an estimated 25,000 people over the past 10 years. And since at least 1998, there has been a strong seasonal pattern of dengue fever, transmitted by mosquitoes, during periods of heavy rainfall in tropical and subtropical areas, killing about 15,000 people a year.

The joint project of the World Health Organization and World Meteorological Organization, both based in Geneva, says the likelihood of increasingly frequent heat waves hitting the planet is four to 10 times as often by 2050 — and they will probably most affect the fast-growing vulnerable populations of aging and urban people particularly in Africa, the Middle East and Asia.

"Many diseases including malaria, dengue, meningitis — just a few examples — these are what we call climate-sensitive diseases, because such climate dimensions for rainfall, humidity and temperature would influence the epidemics, the outbreaks, either directly influencing the parasites or the mosquitoes that carry them," said Dr. Margaret Chan, the director-general of the U.N. health agency.

Chan said the data could be used to better manage animals' habitat and ecosystems, which would also make a big difference to people's health because 80 percent of the infectious diseases currently found in humans have come from animals.

WMO Secretary-General Michel Jarraud said the atlas is meant to translate and map information buried in the agencies' technical documents "into something which can be used by the decision-makers directly."

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A Weak Spot In H.I.V.'s Armor Raises Hope For A Vaccine

Tuesday, October 30, 2012

New York Times

By Donald G. McNeil Jr.

The search for a vaccine against AIDS has been long and fruitless — mostly because the virus mutates so fast.

As is well known, flu vaccines have to be reformulated every year because influenza viruses mutate so steadily. But the human immunodeficiency virus, which causes AIDS, mutates as much in a single day as flu virus does in a year, presenting scientists with an almost insurmountable challenge.

This month, South African researchers announced that they had found a vulnerable spot on the virus's outer shell that might present a good vaccine target, and that they had also learned, for the first time, at what stage of an infection it develops. They found only two women whose virus had the vulnerability — and it wasn't the same virus that first infected them, but a mutant that developed a few months later.

The research, published by Nature Medicine on Oct. 21, was praised as "very interesting" by several AIDS experts.

"It's a combination of good science and 'Boy, did we get lucky,'" said Dr. Anthony S. Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases. "They had all these blood samples and virus samples."

The researchers, led by Dr. Salim Abdool Karim, president of South Africa's Medical Research Council and best known for pioneering work on vaginal microbicides, screened hundreds of blood samples given at regular intervals by 79 women who had been in earlier clinical trials at his Durban clinic and had become infected during the trials.

"What we have that's unique," Dr. Karim said, "is that for the first time, we understand how a person can make broadly neutralizing antibodies."

The virus's vulnerable spot — open to antibody attack — was created when a sugarlike surface compound called a glycan shifted positions.

Antibodies are Y-shaped proteins produced by the immune system that attach to a virus and block its outer receptors — sort of the way sweater fuzz attaches to Velcro and renders it unsticky.

There are many strains of H.I.V., and no known antibody incapacitates all of them. But in the last few years, several teams of scientists have isolated about a dozen that each can shut down up to 80 percent of all virus strains. These are said to be "broadly neutralizing."

Less than 20 percent of all patients naturally develop such antibodies in their blood, and even those who do aren't fully protected. One of the women whose blood was crucial to Dr. Karim's study has died of AIDS-related tuberculosis, and the other is on antiretroviral drugs.

Nonetheless, experts hope it will eventually be possible to manufacture cocktails with large doses of several kinds of antibodies to treat patients — or even to induce the immune system to make those particular antibodies, which would amount to a vaccine.

But that will take more work, and more luck.

Dr. John P. Moore, an AIDS researcher at Weill Cornell Medical School, called the South African paper "good solid science, but not enough to know if you have the right target."

"It's like looking at a castle and saying: 'I can see a weak point, but I don't know what kind of battering ram to get,'" he added.

Normally, H.I.V. repels antibodies by mutating its Velcro hooks into different shapes. But some spots on the viral shell don't change shape easily. Scientists from the National Institute for Communicable Diseases in South Africa and universities in KwaZulu/Natal, Cape Town and North Carolina, as well as from Harvard, screened multiple blood samples looking for previously known antibodies. They found them in the two women, and noted how long into their infections those antibodies appeared — around six months, it turned out, after their infections were first detected.

Then the scientists looked to see what exactly had changed in the virus circulating in their blood at that time.

They found that a sugarlike glycan had moved from Position 334 to Position 332 on one of the lumpy spikes that stud the virus. That tiny change

allows the antibody to attach and alert the body that the whole round virus is an invader, Dr. Karim said.

Antibodies neutralize viruses by blocking their receptors and by attracting white blood cells that will engulf the virus.

Most of the work was done by South Africans and paid for by the South African government, Dr. Karim said proudly, although additional money came from the United States National Institutes of Health and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

Dr. Karim, who also teaches at Columbia University in New York, particularly praised one local researcher, Penny L. Moore of the National Health Laboratory Service in Johannesburg.

"She's one of our up-and-coming stars," he said. "Old fogies like myself are quickly becoming redundant."

NATIONAL NEWS

The D.C. Area Braces For Sandy

Tuesday, October 30, 2012

Washington Post

By Editorial Board

WITH ITS DRENCHING RAIN and high winds still raging, the destruction caused by Hurricane Sandy has yet to be tallied. But as the massive storm slammed into the East Coast, the Washington area could take some comfort in knowing that — for once — it was pretty well-prepared for a hit.

Given plenty of notice by ominous but accurate weather forecasts, local, state and federal officials wisely decided to ready for the worst. School districts throughout D.C., Maryland and Virginia shut their doors, government workers at all levels were told to stay home and — underscoring that no one belonged outside when winds were expected to gust to as much as 90 mph — public transit, including Metro, ceased operations.

Power companies, braced for the electrical outages that result from downed lines and uprooted trees, reported having hundreds of crews on standby and, before even one light went out, were pleading for patience in the storm's aftermath. One official pointed out that, even with good preparation by Pepco and other utilities, long waits for power restoration might be inevitable: With utilities across the Northeast asking for mutual-assistance crews, there could be a shortage of about 15,000 workers in the affected zone. Fortunately, many residents seem to have readied for such trouble, taking advantage of the

weekend to stock up on emergency supplies and then mostly staying inside on Monday.

Just how seriously officials viewed the storm was underscored Monday when Maryland Gov. Martin O'Malley (D) and Virginia Gov. Robert F. McDonnell (R) issued strong warnings. Said Mr. O'Malley: "People will die in this storm." After a midday briefing in the White House Situation Room, President Obama said: "The public should anticipate that there are going to be a lot of power outages. Transportation is going to be tied up for a long time. . . . We anticipate that there are going to be a lot of trees down, a lot of water."

The regional response is a welcome contrast to past weather emergencies, when the inability of different jurisdictions to agree on a course of action (witness the 2011 earthquake) or communicate (the 2010 and 2011 snowstorms) caused chaotic traffic and dangerous conditions. Perhaps we're beginning to get more accustomed to such exceptional events; given the planet's changing climate, which scientists believe will lead to more extreme weather, we'll need to.

One other thing became clear as the region hunkered down: The divisions that seemed so raw and apparent just a few days before — between red and blue, Republican and Democratic, liberal and conservative — didn't seem so urgent with everyone looking into the eye of Hurricane Sandy. "The great thing about America is, when we go through tough times like this, we all pull together," Mr. Obama said. We trust that spirit will hold through the remainder of the storm — and what may be a difficult recovery afterward.

Manhattan Faces Record Storm Surge From Hurricane Sandy

Monday, October 29, 2012

[Bloomberg News](#)

Hurricane Sandy may push a life-threatening wall of water onto the Northeastern U.S., creating a record storm surge in Manhattan while whipping the region with high winds and rain.

The expected surge at New York's Battery Park at 8:30 p.m. today will be more than 2 feet higher than the water Hurricane Irene sent onto the shore last year and higher than the record set September 1960 by Hurricane Donna, according to Sean Potter, a National Weather Service spokesman in Upton, New York.

"That is assuming that it does occur with the high tide," Potter said yesterday by telephone.

Irene caused flooding in the Battery, at the southern tip of Manhattan, when it struck in August 2011. Normal high tides generally just top 5 feet, according to data from the U.S. Advanced Hydrologic Prediction Service. Flood stage is 6.7 feet.

"It couldn't be a worse scenario with the storm coming around with a full moon," said Mark Hoekzema, chief meteorologist at Earth Networks in Germantown, Maryland. "The full moon with the high tides are going to add another 1 to 2 feet and then there is wave action on top of that."

The system may also leave 3 feet of snow in the Appalachians, the weather service said. Storm's Spread

Sandy's punch may be felt from Virginia to Massachusetts, said Rick Knabb, director of the National Hurricane Center. High wind warnings and watches for gusts as strong as 70 miles (113 kilometers) per hour stretch from Maine to North Carolina and as far west as Ohio, according to the weather service. Flood watches and warnings cover most of the Northeast and mid-Atlantic coasts.

Hurricane-force winds of at least 74 mph are expected from Chincoteague, Virginia, to Chatham, Massachusetts, said the hurricane center in Miami.

Heavy rain and high winds are also expected across southern Ontario and Quebec, according to Environment Canada.

Sandy's maximum sustained winds increased to 85 mph, up from 75 mph earlier, the hurricane center said in an advisory at 5 a.m. New York time. It was centered about 285 miles east of Cape Hatteras, North Carolina, and about 385 miles south-southeast of New York City, moving north at 15 mph.

The storm has already killed at least 65 people throughout the Caribbean, according to the Associated Press.

Waves as high as 32.5 feet were reported from buoys off Cape Hatteras, said the National Data Buoy Center at Stennis Space Center in Mississippi. Near-Record Size

Hurricane-strength winds extend 175 miles from Sandy's core and tropical storm force winds reach 485 miles, according to the hurricane center. The storm is the second-largest in size since 1988, tied with Hurricane Lili in 1996, according to Angela Fritz at Weather Underground in Ann Arbor, Michigan. The largest was Hurricane Olga in 2001.

Sandy is expected to turn northwest and then north-northwest today, the hurricane center said. It will pass over the coast of the mid-Atlantic states this evening or tonight, according to the forecast.

Sandy is taking its unusual track into the East Coast because a number of weather systems have come together, according to Louis Uccellini, director of the National Centers for Environmental Prediction. 'Frankenstorm' Pattern

To Sandy's east, a phenomenon called the North Atlantic Oscillation is acting like a closed door, barring the storm from moving in that direction. To the west, a cold front and another storm are creating a pattern that will pull Sandy toward them as it evolves into the superstorm some in the Weather Service have dubbed "Frankenstorm."

The hurricane center predicts as much as 3 feet of snow may fall in the mountains of West Virginia and as much as 2 feet in the hills of Southwestern Virginia to the Kentucky border. As much as 12 to 18 inches may fall in the Appalachians in North Carolina and Tennessee.

The hurricane center's five-day outlook shows the system turning north over Pennsylvania at tropical-storm strength before weakening as it crosses into New York State, over Lake Ontario and into Canada.

As it passes, temperatures will drop in interior parts of West Virginia and the Appalachians to around 20 degrees Fahrenheit (minus 7 Celsius) and in the 30s and 40s throughout much of the rest of the Northeast and mid-Atlantic states, which could lead to problems for people without power, Knabb said.

Chris Christie On Hurricane Sandy: Holdouts Are 'Stupid And Selfish'

Monday, October 29, 2012

Politico

By Burgess Everett

New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie says people who ignore Hurricane Sandy warnings and evacuation orders are "both stupid and selfish."

Asked if he was worried about thousands of people ignoring his order for coastal areas to evacuate, Christie said he's "really concerned" about sending rescue personnel into those dangerous areas as the storm picks up. He said there are a handful of towns that have not reached the hoped-for 90 percent evacuation level

and it may be hard to get people out as conditions worsen.

"They are in harm's way, and I don't know if we can get them out," Christie said in a noontime press briefing. "These decisions are both stupid and selfish." Christie said he expects the storm to land around midnight in southern New Jersey and praised both President Barack Obama and Federal Emergency Management Agency Administrator Craig Fugate for their hard work in preparing for the storm. He said that his state, in the current bull's eye of the storm, is prepared, but that's not a reason for anyone to "be a hero."

"We want to avoid significant loss of life, but we could have that," Christie said, before reassuring: "The adults are taking care of business, so don't get scared."

Hurricane Sandy Unlikely To Spur Needed Economic Stimulus

Monday, October 29, 2012

Huffington Post

By Bonnie Kavoussi

As the government has chosen not to attack high unemployment with a second stimulus, some have speculated that Hurricane Sandy might give the economy a much-needed lift.

But that theory may not pan out. Experts say that like past hurricanes, Sandy will probably hurt — not help — the economy at the local level and have no discernible economic impact at the national level. The storm is predicted to cause economic losses of \$10 billion to \$20 billion, according to Eqecat, a disaster modeling firm. Though construction workers will be hired to rebuild some damaged property, that new work is unlikely to offset the hurricane's economic costs, according to economists.

"You're never going to get growth out of a hurricane," said Ariel Belasen, an economics professor at Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville, who has studied the economic impact of hurricanes.

Past hurricanes, including Hurricane Katrina, have not had a major impact on the national economy, said Eric Strobl, an economics professor at Ecole Polytechnique Paris, who also has studied the effects of hurricanes. He stressed that the economic impact even on directly affected areas will probably be temporary, lasting most likely a few months.

"Overall, I think the impact will be negative but relatively small," Strobl said.

The economic damage should be felt more intensely at the local level. Employment on average fell in areas directly hit by Florida hurricanes between 1988 and 2005, according to a 2008 study by Belasen and co-author Solomon Polachek. Belasen also found in a recent study that sales revenues plunge in afflicted areas after hurricanes.

There are two bright spots. Wages tend to rise modestly in areas directly hit by hurricanes, according to Belasen and Polachek's study. Construction employment also rises in afflicted counties by about 25 percent after a hurricane, according to a study by Strobl and co-author Frank Walsh. With so many people unemployed these days, said Cecilia Rouse, an economics professor at Princeton University, the post-Sandy construction work may help the economy more than it would have before the economic downturn.

But economists stressed that these two boosts probably will not be large enough to offset the damage done by Hurricane Sandy.

Polachek, an economics professor at New York's Binghamton University, said that Hurricane Sandy is likely to damage crops, airplanes, boats, other property and the environment while also displacing people and putting them temporarily out of work. The "brisk business" that some hardware stores and construction workers will experience is unlikely to balance those losses, he said.

Damage from Hurricane Sandy will likely force local businesses to shut down for repairs. As a result, Strobl said, their employees will not collect wages for a few weeks — money that otherwise would have circulated through the economy.

Though local economies often grow more quickly after a hurricane, Belasen explained that is because they are recuperating from the destruction. He said they still end up at a lower level than they would have experienced otherwise.

"As far as the recovery goes, it all is up to how much the government does," Belasen said. "If you're willing to really rebuild the areas, then you won't have any problem. ... I just don't think they [governments] are going to have the money."

Brunt Of Business Impact Yet To Come
Monday, October 29, 2012
New York Times
By Nelson D. Schwartz

From the mighty New York Stock Exchange to local restaurants and retailers, businesses up and

down the East Coast came to a halt Monday as the effects of Hurricane Sandy swept ashore.

Financial markets, department stores and many big companies on the East Coast announced plans to close Tuesday for the second day in a row. Unlike past hurricanes which blew through in a day or two, Hurricane Sandy's fallout will be felt for much of the week, broadening the economic fallout.

Overall, total economic losses from the storm could be \$10 billion to \$20 billion, according to an analysis by Eqecat, a firm that performs catastrophe risk modeling for the insurance industry and government.

"We think it's going to be big," said Tom Larsen, senior vice president and product architect at Eqecat, suggesting the toll could fall somewhere between that of Hurricane Ike in 2008 and Hurricane Irene last year.

Besides the halt in both electronic and floor trading in virtually all Wall Street financial markets Monday and Tuesday, several prominent companies also delayed scheduled announcements.

Pfizer, the big drug maker, put off its third-quarter earnings report until Thursday, while Thomson Reuters and NRG Energy delayed their reports until Friday.

Google was forced to cancel Monday's event to unveil a new smartphone, the Nexus 4, as well as several new tablets, all aimed at the holiday shopping season. Facebook also called off an event, showcasing its new Facebook Gifts platform, that had been set to take place at F. A. O. Schwarz in Manhattan on Thursday.

Major retailers began closing New York stores on Sunday afternoon. Saks Fifth Avenue boarded up its flagship store in Manhattan, a striking image for a retailer known for its high-fashion windows.

"We have taken the necessary precautions in each store to protect our property and limit damage," a spokeswoman, Julia Bentley, wrote in an e-mail. Saks closed stores in nine other locations from Maryland to Boston.

On Monday, about 130 of the 850 Macy's and Bloomingdale's stores nationwide were closed, said Jim Sluzewski, a spokesman.

"We're not selling generators or bottled water or any of those sorts of items, so given that much of what we sell is discretionary, it's not as big of an issue for our customers," he said.

Oliver Chen, an analyst for Citi, wrote in a research note that he expected traffic to retailers could be down as much as 40 percent for the week in impacted areas, and November comparable-store sales could be hit by as much as 2 percent to 3 percent. However, he said, stores that sell emergency supplies, food and other staples should see an uptick in traffic and sales.

The business effects of the storm only added to the uncertainty pervading markets, economists said, with investors and executives already worried by the impending "fiscal cliff" in Washington as well as continuing economic problems in Europe and slowing growth in Asia.

For now, economists were playing down the long-term impact from the storm, even if it results in billions of dollars in property damage from the high winds and lashing rain.

In the short term, however, powerful storms disrupt consumer spending and can cause sharp month-to-month swings in economic data, said Christopher D. Carroll, an economics professor at Johns Hopkins University who has analyzed the impact of weather events for the Federal Reserve.

"It is something that serious analysts pay attention to, and you can find evidence that it does have an impact on the monthly data," Mr. Carroll said.

Eventually, most spending or other activity is simply pushed forward, a phenomenon known in economics as Intertemporal substitution. For example, since the New York Stock Exchange is closed on Monday and, as seems likely, on Tuesday, volume will probably rise on Wednesday and Thursday when trading resumes.

The most powerful hurricanes that come along once or twice a decade — like Katrina or Andrew — can actually boost economic growth in the short-term, since the value of what is rebuilt is often more than that is replaced.

"It's a problematic aspect of economics," said Mr. Carroll. "If there's a lot of damage and stuff gets destroyed, like in Katrina, that doesn't show up in the calculation of gross domestic product. However, the rebuilt house does."

Dana Milbank: A Perfect Political Storm
Tuesday, October 30, 2012
Washington Post
By Dana Milbank

New Jersey piled sandbags. Delaware fortified its dunes. New York evacuated parts of Lower Manhattan.

And Washington prepared for Hurricane Sandy with its own brand of emergency response: gaming out which candidate would benefit.

Would the tracking polls be skewed when storm victims failed to answer their phones?

Would storm coverage crowd out political ads in battleground states?

Would power outages keep people from receiving the campaigns' messages?

Would Friday's all-important jobs report be delayed because the Labor Department was closed?

"Just the frenzy around the forecast could disrupt this week's early voting, which probably hurts President Obama," Politico speculated. "But he also has an opportunity to be seen as president — a commander-in-chief moment."

A good answer to all of these questions: Who knows?

An even better answer: Who cares?

It may be heresy to say so, just one week before a presidential election, but some things are bigger than politics.

The likely consequences of the hurricane would be millions without power, tens of millions unable to work or go to school, tens of thousands forced from their homes and lives inevitably lost. Certainly, the storm could alter the presidential contest; in a dead heat, almost anything could. But there is something ghoulish about finding political advantage in so much human misery.

The candidates did what they should have done: They suspended campaign appearances and appealed for contributions to the Red Cross. But the political industrial complex, already in motion for next Tuesday's election, could not demobilize so quickly.

On the left, the Huffington Post posted a headline saying Mitt Romney wanted to "Shut Down Federal Disaster Agency." This news bulletin, based on the candidate's comments in a debate in June 2011, was picked up by other outlets on the left and provoked a response from the Romney campaign, which said the Republican nominee would not abolish FEMA.

On the right, the Drudge Report went with the headline "Most Expensive Pizza Delivery in History," linking to a Washington Times report about Obama flying to Orlando on Sunday only to cancel his event and return to the White House on Monday morning before the storm's full impact.

The conspiracy contingent, meantime, found material in a statement from the Labor Department, reported by The Washington Post, the Wall Street Journal and others, that possible changes to the release of Friday's report on October employment would be announced "when the weather emergency is over."

Breitbart.com saw political mischief in this "unprecedented move on the Bureau of Labor Statistic's [sic] part." The conservative Web site said a delay would be "absolutely outrageous and only further erode trust in our public institutions."

A BLS spokesman, no doubt huddling in a dark basement with his computer on battery power, quickly clarified that the plan was still for a Friday report.

The Sunday-show roundtables switched seamlessly to meteorological punditry. NBC's David Gregory identified Hurricane Sandy as the "October Surprise." CNN's Candy Crowley quizzed David Axelrod on the political consequences of Virginia being "more or less paralyzed by weather." ABC's George Stephanopoulos grilled Stephanie Cutter on the same.

"The storm will throw havoc into the race," Sen. Mark Warner (D-Va.) disclosed to Chris Wallace on "Fox News Sunday." He noted the cancellation of Virginia's Obama's rally on Monday.

It took Sen. John McCain, of all people, to be the voice of calm, when CBS's Bob Schieffer asked "who gets hurt the most" by the storm.

"I'm not sure it will affect votes," the Arizona Republican speculated sagely.

There were limitless political possibilities to consider. The Huffington Post ran an exclusive about how the hurricane could disrupt pollsters' "ability to conduct interviews or to reach the millions of Americans who may soon be without electricity or telephone service" — thus playing havoc with the tracking polls. Writing for washingtonpost.com, Democratic strategist Carter Eskew predicted that the storm damage might make it "hard" for Obama "to be at rallies in Iowa or Colorado."

Nobody did more hurricane war-gaming than Politico, which examined every possible political permutation: It could help Obama in Virginia and Ohio; it could hurt Obama in Virginia and Ohio; it could blunt the impact of political ads; it could magnify the impact of political ads; it could make Obama look presidential; it could magnify any Obama mistake; it could stop Romney's momentum; it could complicate Obama's "ground

game"; it could help New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie's 2016 presidential bid.

In other words: Nobody had any idea.

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Sandy The Soothsayer

Tuesday, October 30, 2012

New York Times

By Frank Bruni

If you've watched whole sections of your home sail away, been stranded in a shelter or can't make contact with a loved one whose safety isn't certain, it's probably unsettling at best — and galling at worst — to hear Sandy referred to as an "October surprise," on a par with a bimbo eruption or corruption scandal, wreaking havoc on the presidential race above all else.

But there's no solipsism like political solipsism, and this election has addled people like few I've witnessed, with even the most peripheral developments and random polls scrutinized to smithereens for their outcome-auguring significance. Why should weather be exempt from such hyperventilation?

This week will be remembered as one when meteorology and punditry became strange bedfellows and a measure of perspective was gone with the wind.

I've read that Sandy will diminish the impact of homestretch advertising, because people whose electricity is out cannot watch TV.

I've also read that Sandy will intensify the impact of homestretch advertising, because people whose electricity is not out are raptly monitoring local stations, where such advertising is concentrated.

It has been opined that Sandy could hurt President Obama, disrupting early voting and depressing turnout. It has been opined that Sandy could help President Obama, affording him the opportunity to look presidential as he marshals federal resources and directs the emergency aid effort.

The wind-lashed tree outside my window is bending to the left, an omen clearly in the president's favor. But if I were looking at it from the building across the yard, it would be tilting right, an obvious nod for Mitt Romney.

Someone somewhere has no doubt produced a chart that breaks down storm categories and their electoral consequences.

Blizzards: pro-Romney. Snow evokes winter. Romney rescued the Winter Olympics. And one of his nicknames — Mittens — is an icy, slushy, flaky one.

Tsunamis: also pro-Romney. They affect coastlines, where cosmopolitan types cluster, and thus divert liberals' attention from the contest at hand, granting more power to the folks living in the flyover.

Tornados: pro-Obama. They distract the folks in the flyover, and are also known as twisters, which remind voters everywhere of Romney's pretzel of disparate positions over the course of his political career or, for that matter, the last five minutes.

And hurricanes?

From the Mother Jones Web site I learned that "all other things being equal, the incumbent party does less well when it's too wet or too dry," as opposed to when it's just right. This was the assessment of Larry Bartels, a professor of political science at Vanderbilt University who has apparently made a study of this.

But how does the incumbent party do when the moon is in the seventh house and Jupiter aligns with Mars? Who, pray tell, is making a study of that?

President Obama suspended campaigning in order to man command central in Washington. This meant that a rally in Orlando, Fla., that he was supposed to do with Bill Clinton had to be headlined by Clinton alone. The former president, needless to say, was devastated.

Joe Biden detoured from New Hampshire to Ohio, which is also where Clinton headed after Florida. Romney stumped there too. Will Ohioans ever know a moment's peace?

The Obama and Romney campaigns think that dropping in on a swing state over and over again will win them favor, but that's questionable. Given the traffic jams, flight delays and hordes of sarcastic columnists that candidates bring with them, I wouldn't want a personal visit. Maybe just a gift basket.

As Sandy churned, so did the political panic. Would the storm down enough phone lines to impede daily tracking polls? A column in The Huffington Post articulated this dark fear, which I'd characterize instead as a delightful reprieve.

Would the surge of tides end the surge of Mitt, his momentum washed away by the storm's domination of the news?

And would the Labor Department seize on Sandy and the shutdown of federal offices as an excuse not to release new unemployment figures on Friday, saying that work on them had been delayed? Republicans went into anticipatory convulsions, until officials with the department announced that there probably wouldn't be any lag.

Reality checks were imperative. The state whose cancellation of early voting was most often cited was Maryland. Obama doesn't need early voting to win Maryland. He almost doesn't need a pulse.

And climate change was brought up. "It's as if Mother Nature is sending yet another message to American voters: ignore me no longer," wrote Heather Taylor-Miesle, the director of the Natural Resources Defense Council Action Fund, in a blog post e-mailed to many journalists.

Of course Obama and Romney themselves ignored climate change in their three debates. So maybe Mother Nature isn't so much putting her thumb on the scale as showing both candidates the back of her hand.

What's Dragging Down The U.S. Economy?

Monday, October 29, 2012

Washington Post

By Neil Irwin

More than three years after the recovery began — in name, at least — the economy is still in a giant hole. But what, precisely, is still dragging it down? What sectors are the culprits? A simple model delivers some answers.

We can start by looking at the difference between what the U.S. economy is capable of producing and what it is actually producing, known as the output gap.

If almost all of the workers who wanted a job had one, factories were working at full speed and office buildings were full, economic activity would be \$973 billion higher (at an annual rate) than it actually was in the third quarter.

That is the value of what we are not producing every year because so many factories are idle and so many would-be workers are on the jobless rolls. To see what parts of the economy are responsible for that lost activity, we can look at what proportion of gross domestic product each sector is historically responsible for and gauge their performance in 2012 compared with what would be expected in a world of full employment. (I used the average from 1985 to 2005, but these numbers are fairly stable, so the exact years used

doesn't make much difference.) The result is a simple model that tells us what sectors are underperforming and by how much.

The biggest single sector responsible for the weak economy won't surprise anyone. Residential investment is a startling 49 percent below what would be expected historically, accounting for \$370 billion in "missing" economic activity. This is what one would expect given that housing was a major trigger for the economic crisis. Yet that offers some hope — if housing just returns to its normal role in the economy, 38 percent of the output gap would disappear.

The next-biggest drag on the economy also makes sense. Spending on durable goods — think automobiles, furniture and large appliances — is 18 percent below what it would be in a healthy economy, accounting for \$267 billion of the output gap. Americans are still dealing with debt and tighter credit; it is harder to get a car loan, for example, and people are more cautious about big-ticket spending because they are fearful about job prospects and paying down debts racked up in years past. The hole in spending on nondurable goods is substantial as well, at \$127 billion. Consumers are holding onto their wallets — a continuing burden for the weak economy.

That said, data out Monday suggest that trends are pointing in the right direction for consumer spending. Personal consumption expenditures rose 0.8 percent in September, the Commerce Department said, as personal income rose 0.4 percent.

The third major contributor to sluggish growth is the pullback in business investment. Corporate America is spending 13 percent less on equipment and software than it would in a healthy economy, accounting for \$174 billion in missing economic activity. Less investment in structures — think office buildings, factories and stores — accounts for an additional \$69 billion loss. One of the most worrisome signs in Friday's GDP report was that business spending on equipment and software, which had been improving for the past two years, stopped growing in the third quarter. That, combined with recent data on factory orders, means there's a risk that this part of the economic gap is poised to widen.

There are other drags on growth, but the big three — housing, consumption and business investment — are the largest culprits.

Trade has been hampering the economy more than history would suggest, but its overall role masks an interesting story. Exports are much

higher than historical numbers would suggest, overshooting what our model predicted by \$551 billion. But imports, which subtract from GDP, overshoot the model even more, by \$670 billion.

Those increases can be partly explained by the growing role of trade in economic activity. But they also reflect the steep run-up in prices for commodities since 2005: The prices of the oil that the United States imports and the agricultural and mined products that it exports have risen.

State and local government spending has been falling over the past three years, taking a toll on the job market. But that drop is not a major hindrance. State and local government spending is only 4.7 percent below where it would be expected in a healthy economy, accounting for \$92 billion in lost activity, or about 9 percent of the output gap.

Federal nondefense spending is actually 7 percent above the level that would be expected, contributing an extra \$28 billion to economic activity. National defense spending, however, is down 6 percent against forecasts, meaning that overall federal spending is widening the output gap by \$28 billion.

There is only one major sector that is outperforming what our model predicts. Although spending on physical goods is well below the forecast, spending on services is 4 percent above what might be expected, contributing an extra \$290 billion to the economy.

Part of this is likely due to longer-term shifts in consumer economic behavior, such as eating more restaurant meals and buying fewer groceries. Also, many service sector expenditures can't be postponed the way the purchase of an automobile can. And many big-ticket services, namely health care and education, have become steadily more expensive relative to cars, computers and other physical goods, and therefore take up a bigger portion of Americans' spending.

Despite our weak economy, an understanding of the nation's output gap offers reasons for hope. Housing and personal consumption seem to be recovering more quickly, and if that trend continues, most of the nation's economic problem will be solved.

Friday's Report On Unemployment Could Be Delayed By Storm
Monday, October 29, 2012
New York Times
By Annie Lowrey

WASHINGTON — Hurricane Sandy might force the Labor Department to delay the release of the monthly report on the nation's unemployment, due Friday morning, the most hotly anticipated piece of economic data to come out before the election.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics, the data and statistics division of the Labor Department, is scheduled to release the October jobs report at 8:30 a.m. on Friday. But the hurricane has shuttered government offices and closed public transportation in and around Washington, and that might lead the department to delay the release of the report.

"We will assess the situation when the weather emergency is over and notify the press and public of any changes at that time," a bureau spokesman, Gary Steinberg, wrote Monday in an e-mail.

Another Labor Department spokesman, Carl Fillichio, said in an e-mail that employees were "working hard to ensure the timely release of employment data" at the end of the week. "It is our intention that Friday will be business as usual regarding the October Employment Situation Report."

The Labor Department has already completed the monthly surveys of about 60,000 households and 140,000 businesses and government offices that provide the raw data for the jobs report. But bureau specialists need to translate that raw data into the jobs report every month.

Economists do not expect great surprises in October's jobs figures. The unemployment rate is expected to stay about where it is and the slow, steady pace of jobs growth to continue. In September, the unemployment rate dropped to 7.8 percent, the lowest rate since President Obama took office but still elevated because of the recession.

Even the possibility that the report might be delayed prompted online criticism on Monday, with some accusing the bureau of delaying the jobs numbers for President Obama's benefit.

The bureau came under similar criticism after the September employment numbers came out much stronger than many economists expected, with some partisans crying foul and accusing the bureau of cooking the books. "Labor Dept. says may release latest unemployment figures until after election," said Senator Charles E. Grassley, Republican of Iowa, in a Twitter message. "Par for

course. Why release something might hurt Obama elect?"

Labor Department employees and other experts from across the ideological spectrum dismissed the notion that the government would massage jobs figures for anyone's political benefit. And the department has not said it will delay the jobs numbers until after the election, or if it will need to delay them at all.

If the jobs report ends up getting postponed, which was first reported as a possibility by The Wall Street Journal on Monday, it would be just one more kink that the gigantic hurricane has thrown into the final days of the presidential and Congressional campaigns.

Emails: Obama Campaign Spokeswoman Jen Psaki Knew Treasury Edited GM Press Releases

Monday, October 29, 2012

Daily Caller

President Barack Obama's campaign spokeswoman Jen Psaki was aware Treasury Department officials crafted the press releases and public messaging for General Motors during the 2009 auto industry bailout, documents obtained by The Daily Caller show.

Psaki was a White House deputy press secretary at the time. She and fellow White House staffers Brian Deese and Amy Brundage show up on the emails in which the Treasury Department was rewriting press releases for GM.

TheDC obtained these internal Treasury Department documents in 2011 but an agreement with the source prevented their publication until now. The inclusion of Psaki, Deese and Brundage in these communications is reported here for the first time. (RELATED: Private emails detail Obama admin involvement in cutting non-union worker pensions post-GM bailout)

Psaki has since returned to Obama's political campaign as his traveling press secretary.

Obama campaign spokespersons haven't responded to TheDC's requests for comment. But in an interview with CBS News during her White House tenure, Psaki acknowledged that "anything we say can reflect on the president."

In one email message obtained by TheDC, the Treasury Department's Jenni Engebretsen wrote to General Motors officials on Friday, May 29, 2009. Engebretsen was reacting to a draft of a press release she received from GM, about the company ceasing operations at several factories.

"We would ask that you move the reference to Treasury down to the third paragraph, taking it out of the lede," she wrote. "Please let us know if this presents any issues."

"Lede" is a slang term for the opening paragraph of a news story or press release. Asking GM to remove the Treasury Department from the lede was a request to downplay its significance, and a sign that the Obama administration sought to minimize the public perception of its role in the GM bailout.

GM's director of policy and Washington communications director Greg Martin replied to Engebretsen: "No problems. Done."

Engebretsen then asked: "If there is an updated version at some point over the weekend we'd appreciate a final copy. Many thanks."

Despite the Treasury Department's desire to de-emphasize its role in bailing out GM, Obama is now citing it as a positive campaign issue and a success story for his administration.

Even so, the White House has refused to comply with congressional document requests related to the auto bailout — specifically those regarding the Delphi pension scandal.

House Ways and Means Committee Chairman Rep. Dave Camp has asked Obama to "either claim executive privilege and be prepared to defend it for each and every document or turn over the documents without further delay."

While White House spokesman Eric Schultz hasn't answered when asked if the president plans to assert executive privilege over the documents, White House counsel Kathryn Ruemmler suggested in an Oct. 12 letter to Camp that Obama could indeed invoke that presidential trump card as a way to sidestep congressional document requests.

"Your request for all EOP [Executive Office of the President] communications implicates longstanding and significant executive branch confidentiality interests," Ruemmler wrote, "an encroachment upon [sic] which is unnecessary at this time."

The Ethanol Election Delay

Why the U.S. burns 40% of its corn, despite a global food shortage.

Monday, October 29, 2012

Wall Street Journal

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

Ethanol Suit Hints At Climate Split Between States

Tuesday, October 30, 2012

Washington Post

By Editorial Board

SINCE THE SENATE failed to pass a climate bill in 2010, environmentalists have looked to the states to cut the country's greenhouse-gas emissions, and their gaze has been fixed most firmly on California. Continuing its tradition of pioneering green policies that others copy, the Golden State is implementing a landmark greenhouse-gas law that would do what Congress didn't — put a price on carbon-dioxide emissions through a cap-and-trade program, at least in California.

But in San Francisco this month, the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals considered one of a class of cases that could lead to severe limits on the ability of states to reduce their carbon footprint.

Among other things, California is demanding that certain liquid fuels sold in the state produce fewer carbon emissions. Chemically identical fuels can result in varying amounts of greenhouse gases, depending in part on how they are manufactured. A gallon of ethanol from a plant that uses carbon-heavy coal-fired electricity, for example, has higher emissions across its "life cycle" than does a gallon from a plant hooked into a cleaner grid. So officials decided to calculate the carbon intensity of identical fuels from different sources by considering their full life cycle — from corn field to gas tank, in the case of ethanol — and to penalize the dirtier ones more.

The problem is that ethanol manufacturers in the Midwest tend to use more coal-fired power than do those in California. The state's life-cycle analysis, then, makes Midwestern ethanol less competitive in the California market. Midwestern farmers and others in the ethanol industry contend that the Constitution's commerce clause prohibits California from discriminating against their products simply because they come from other states, and that the life-cycle rules are impermissibly discriminatory on their face.

But California is not really discriminating against other states. It is discriminating against carbon. If Midwestern ethanol producers discovered some way to slash their fuel's life-cycle carbon emissions, they would gain an advantage under the state's system. Failing to subject fuels to life-

cycle analysis, meanwhile, would artificially benefit dirtier operations. California might not have the right to decide how Oklahomans produce ethanol or how Utahns generate electricity. But it should be able to cut the carbon emissions for which it is responsible.

The case before the 9th Circuit involves only a small part of a very big California law, a piece that we would not favor on the policy merits. But, legally, it is a preview of much more to come, and not just in California. North Dakota is challenging an anti-coal measure in Minnesota on similar grounds. Renewable energy mandates in many more states might be next. And it seems impossible that the most ambitious state-level climate policy, California's new cap-and-trade program, won't also end up in court. All of these cases will test traditional notions of territory and state sovereignty.

Federal courts must work carefully, recognizing the unique challenges of cutting carbon and leaving environmentally-conscious states with some viable options to reduce their greenhouse emissions without rewarding dirtier neighbors.

'Concierge' Medicine, ObamaCare And The End Of Empathy

Traditional primary-care doctors are finding themselves, and their patients, squeezed by the government and the marketplace.

Monday, October 29, 2012

Wall Street Journal

By Jerald Winakur

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

Gasoline Futures Jump As Refineries Scale Back

Monday, October 29, 2012

Wall Street Journal

By John M. Biers And Ben Lefebvre

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

Former SEIU Organizer: I Was 'required' To Do 'political Work'

Monday, October 29, 2012

Daily Caller

By David Martosko

In a case that could have wide-ranging implications for the political future of the Service Employees International Union, a former SEIU

organizer told a right-to-work group and a best-selling author recently that the union forced him and other workers to volunteer their time for Democratic political campaigns.

On a video segment provided exclusively to The Daily Caller, the organizer says he and other SEIU staff "had to do some political work. We were required as staff to do that."

The National Right to Work Legal Defense Foundation and Mallory Factor, author of "Shadowbosses: Government Unions Control America and Rob Taxpayers Blind," obtained an hour-long videotaped statement from the organizer, who now works for a different union.

Factor and the right-to-work group protected the former SEIU organizer's anonymity by distorting his image and his voice because he fears reprisals from the union.

The SEIU did not respond to questions from TheDC about whether it routinely requires its organizers to devote their time to political campaigns.

But the union's leaders, the organizer said on the video, "would tell us, 'We need to go canvassing for this candidate, so we need you to sign this sheet to say that you are requesting a personal day today, so that you can go do this. We'll make it up to you later,'" he said in the interview.

"And I [thought], 'Is this really legal? Can you require me to volunteer for a candidate that I can't even vote for?'" he recalled thinking. "I don't live in that jurisdiction, that district that they are running from."

"And that happened a lot around election time. The staff was — it was — I called it 'mandatory volunteerism.' And that happened to everybody. We were all told that we had to volunteer for this candidate on this day."

National Right to Work Legal Defense Foundation spokesman Patrick Semmens said the interview, which took place less than a month ago, confirmed what his organization has long known.

"I wish it were surprising that the SEIU was coercing this organizer into supporting union boss politics, but these days that's standard operating procedure for Big Labor," Semmens said in an email to TheDC.

"Organized labor's mission has almost completely morphed from representing workers on the shop floor to pushing left-wing politics. The only difference between Big Labor and other political groups is that union officials get to force workers

to contribute, instead of relying on voluntary contributions."

Factor, too, was outraged. "It's FEC fraud," he told TheDC, referring to the Federal Election Commission. "Whatever it is, it's definitely not playing by the rules. Unions tend not to do that."

He said the former SEIU organizer featured in the video is "willing to testify in front of Congress as long as his identity is kept secret."

Allegations of union-mandated political activity are nothing new. In "Shadowbosses," Factor writes that unions' "grassroots organizing work" is often "performed by union members who can be paid to volunteer." (RELATED: Book: Obamacare law designed to unionize 21 million health care workers)

The FEC, he writes, "does not allow volunteers for federal candidates, including Presidential candidate[s], to be paid by third parties for volunteering, and state laws vary on the point. But the unions get around these rules by compensating volunteers to do general political organizing work and get-out-the vote efforts for the benefit of specific candidates."

Unions, he adds, "try to keep the fact that they pay their political volunteers a secret," offering "expense reimbursement and stipends to members who act as political volunteers."

He points to the Ohio Civil Service Employees Association, a union of state and government employees in the Buckeye State, whose website offered "a \$25 stipend" in 2004 for union members who helped with "GOTV [get out the vote] phone banks ... to ensure that we Take Back Ohio."

In 2006 the same union's website sought "volunteers" who would receive "a cell phone, money for mileage, and meals [and] ... a \$50 stipend" for Election Day work in conjunction with the AFL-CIO. "They are looking for members to visit precincts, talk to voters, and identify problems," the union said.

"AFSCME Ohio 8," Factor explained in his book's footnotes, "offered \$25 gift cards to people who got out the vote. Its website reported, 'Members of Local 1846 Athens Public School Employees, Local 1699 Ohio University Employees, and Local 1252 members from O'Bleness Hospital are doing their part get people to the polls—and receive a \$25 'Turkey' gift card.'"

At New Jersey's largest state university in 2010, the American Federation of Teachers paid its

members "\$50 stipends for labor walks and \$25 stipends for phone banks." The Committee on Political Education of the Union of Rutgers Administrators announced this incentive on its website.

Factor referred TheDC to a Web page from that Rutgers union offering a "\$50 stipend per walk" along with t-shirts and free raffle tickets for "a 42 [inch] flat screen TV and a Garmin [sic] GPS."

Last year the Union of Rutgers Administrators paid "a \$25 stipend for phone banking and \$50 for labor-to-labor walks" designed to persuade union members to vote for "our issues."

In another case of a union member supporting a political campaign as a condition of her membership, a delegate to the national convention of the National Education Association, the largest U.S. teachers union, said February in congressional testimony that the NEA required her to contribute money to Democratic candidates — and did so in her name on one occasion without her permission.

The House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform published statements from three union members who objected to seeing their union dues diverted to support political candidates they did not support.

Claire Waites, an eighth grade science teacher in Baldwin County, Alabama, told the committee that during the union's 2004 convention, the NEA instructed her to donate to a "Children's Fund," and directed her precisely how to contribute.

That fund, she later learned, contributed the funds toward the presidential campaign of Democratic Massachusetts Sen. John Kerry. (RELATED: Supreme Court rules 7-2 against SEIU on forced contributions)

"I felt a wave of illness come over me like none I had ever felt before," Waites, a Republican, testified. "These who were supposed to be my people duped me into donating to a candidate I was voting against."

Four years later, she learned during the 2008 NEA convention that Saaida Hunter, her county's union president, had contributed again to the same fund "using the money Hunter had withheld from our travel money provided by the local."

In a later conversation with Alabama state NEA president Peggy Mobley, she recalled in her testimony, she explained that "my Children's Fund contribution was made without my permission and I wanted my money back."

"She refused," Waite recalled, "and told me they did not do that."

Hunter, she said, later told her "that my contribution would go to the Obama campaign, another candidate I did not support, and that contributing in my name was probably illegal. ... Needless to say, I never got my money back."

Factor added in a subsequent interview that if President Obama is re-elected, "it will be because of the unions. Our first union-label president will owe them big-time. He'll be paying them back, and it sure won't be with more investigations and scrutiny. There will even be less."

Question For Justices: Do Aldo And Franky's Noses Always Know?

Monday, October 29, 2012

New York Times

By Adam Liptak

WASHINGTON — Every dog has its day, but not every dog has its day in court.

Aldo, a German shepherd, and Franky, a chocolate Labrador retriever, are exceptions. The Supreme Court plans to hear their cases on Wednesday.

The basic question in both cases, said Orin S. Kerr, a leading expert on the Fourth Amendment right against unreasonable search, is this: "What do you think of a dog's nose?"

It is surely a marvel. But is it also, as the Supreme Court has suggested in previous cases, essentially infallible?

The great thing about dogs trained to sniff out drugs and other contraband, the court has said, is that they cannot invade human privacy because their noses reveal, as Justice John Paul Stevens put it in 2005, "no information other than the location of a substance that no individual has any right to possess."

As the prosecutors in Franky's case wrote, "anything else that the dog smells remains private."

But there is reason to doubt that dogs are, as a brief for two groups of criminal defense lawyers put it, "binary contraband detectors."

Justice David H. Souter, in a dissent from the 2005 decision, cited a study showing "that dogs in artificial testing situations return false positives anywhere from 12.5 to 60 percent of the time."

"The infallible dog," he wrote, "is a creature of legal fiction."

There is a growing body of evidence to support that view. Last year, The Chicago Tribune analyzed three years of data from suburban police departments and found that alerts from dogs during roadside encounters led to drugs or paraphernalia just 44 percent of the time. For Hispanic drivers, the rate was 27 percent.

Prosecutors say that does not prove anything. The drugs may have been exceptionally well hidden, they say, or there may have been lingering odors from drugs no longer present.

"When you enter the kitchen and smell popcorn, the fact that some has already eaten all the popcorn and put the bag outside in the trash takes nothing away from the fact that you accurately smelled popcorn in the kitchen," they wrote in Aldo's case, Florida v. Harris, No. 11-817.

The case illustrates the difficulty of separating false signals from real ones. In 2006, Aldo alerted his human partner to the presence of chemicals used to make methamphetamines in the pickup truck of Clayton Harris, who had been pulled over near Bristol, Fla., for driving with an expired license plate.

A few weeks later, the same law enforcement team pulled Mr. Harris over again, this time for a faulty brake light. Aldo again signaled the presence of drugs. But this time, the police officer found no contraband. It may be, of course, that Aldo may still smelled an old smell.

But there are more problematic possibilities.

"Some dogs are more accurate than others, and, like people, dogs have good days and bad days," Mr. Harris's lawyers told the justices. Dogs sometimes issue false alerts when they smell other dogs, the brief said, or when they are prompted, perhaps subconsciously, by their handlers.

Most important, according to a brief by some 50 law professors specializing in the Fourth Amendment, dogs do not smell drugs as such but rather molecules that are also present in the odors of lawful substances.

Cocaine, for instance, shares a component with snapdragons and petunias. Heroin shares one with vinegar and old aspirin. Ecstasy has something in common with lice repellent.

The Florida Supreme Court was not convinced that Aldo was reliable and ordered that the evidence he found be suppressed.

The same court also threw out the evidence in Franky's case, Florida v. Jardines, No. 11-564. The

question there was whether police may use dogs to sniff for drugs outside of homes.

The sanctity of the home is at the core of what the Fourth Amendment protects. But there, too, the Supreme Court has drawn distinctions between methods that can only detect contraband and more general intrusions.

In 2001, for instance, the court limited the use of thermal-imaging devices to peer into homes. The problem, Justice Antonin Scalia wrote, was that the devices could detect not only heat lamps used to grow marijuana but also "at what hour each night the lady of the house takes her daily sauna and bath."

Perhaps dogs are different. Perhaps they really are binary contraband detectors capable of finding only illegal substances. Is that reason enough to let them sniff around our front doors?

In a 1984 dissent, Justice William J. Brennan Jr. foresaw a day when "canine cocaine connoisseurs" would "roam the streets at random, alerting the officers to people carrying cocaine."

The date of the dissent was fitting, and Justice Brennan's forecast was not fanciful. The authorities in Virginia and North Dakota have recently announced plans to sweep through housing complexes with dogs to sniff for drugs.

Justices Weigh Case On Imported Textbooks
Monday, October 29, 2012
New York Times
By Adam Liptak

WASHINGTON — The Supreme Court heard arguments on Monday in a copyright case about the sale of imported textbooks on eBay that has wide-ranging implications for many products made abroad and sold in the United States.

The case arose from the entrepreneurial impulses of Supap Kirtsaeng, a Thai student who attended Cornell University and the University of Southern California. He helped pay for his education by selling textbooks that his friends and relatives had bought abroad and shipped to him.

Publishers of textbooks, like other manufacturers, often charge different prices in different markets. One publisher, John Wiley & Sons, successfully sued Mr. Kirtsaeng for copyright infringement.

The general rule for products made in the United States is that the owners of particular copies can do what they like with them. If you buy a book or record made in the United States, for instance, you are free to lend it or sell it as you wish. The

question for the justices was whether that rule, called the first-sale doctrine, also applies when the works in question were made abroad.

The answer turns on a phrase in the Copyright Act, which appears to limit the first-sale doctrine to works "lawfully made under this title." The lower courts said that textbooks manufactured outside the United States cannot have been made under American law and so remained subject to the control of the owner of the copyright.

Much of the argument concerned what lawyers call the "parade of horrors" — the hypothetical problems that might follow a ruling in favor of one side or the other.

E. Joshua Rosencranz, a lawyer for Mr. Kirtsaeng, said the happenstance of where a record was made should not alter the rights of the person who buys it. Otherwise, he said, "the result is that a teacher can go and buy a Beethoven record and play it to her class if it was made in the United States," he said. "But if she flips one past it to the next Beethoven record that happens to have been made in Asia, she can't play that for her class."

Worse, he said, the ability to retain control of copyrighted works made abroad provides manufacturers with a powerful incentive to ship jobs overseas.

Justice Stephen G. Breyer asked a series of hypothetical questions, starting with whether he was permitted to buy a book abroad and give it to his wife.

"Imagine Toyota," he went on. "Millions sold in the United States. They have copyrighted sound systems. They have copyrighted GPS systems. When people buy them in America, they think they're going to be able to resell them."

He gave other examples: "libraries with three hundred million books bought from foreign publishers that they might sell, resell or use" and "museums that buy Picassos."

Theodore B. Olson, a lawyer for the publisher, said that none of those things were before the court. "When we talk about all the horrors that might apply in cases other than this — museums, used Toyotas, books and luggage, and that sort of thing — we're not talking about this case."

Justice Anthony M. Kennedy responded that "you have to look at those hypotheticals in order to decide this case" so that the justices understand the consequences of their ruling.

Mr. Olson said there might be provisions of the copyright laws that allowed some gifts and

resales. He gave the example of the fair use defense, which protects some reproductions of copyrighted works for criticism, research and similar purposes.

Chief Justice John G. Roberts Jr. said that defense would not carry much weight in many of the hypothetical cases.

"It seems unlikely to me that, if your position is right," the chief justice told Mr. Olson, "that a court would say, it's a fair use to resell the Toyota, it's a fair use to display the Picasso."

In 2010, the court considered essentially the same question in *Costco Wholesale Corp. v. Omega S.A.* But Justice Elena Kagan did not participate in that case — presumably because she worked on it when she was solicitor general — and the rest of the justices split 4-to-4, which upheld the decision. All nine justices heard the case argued Monday, *Kirtsaeng v. John Wiley & Sons*, No. 11-697.

Justice Kagan was an active questioner but did not indicate which way she was planning to cast her presumably decisive vote.

The Upside Of Opportunism

Tuesday, October 30, 2012

New York Times

By David Brooks

Let's try to imagine what the world would look like if President Obama is re-elected.

Washington over the next four years would probably look much as it has over the last two: Obama running the White House, Republicans controlling the House and Democrats managing the Senate. We'd have had a long slog of an election before a change-hungry electorate, and we'd end up with pretty much the same cast of characters as before.

Obama would probably try to enact the agenda he laid out most clearly in his recent interview with *The Des Moines Register*:

Obama said he would try to recreate the Obama-Boehner budget deal of two summers ago, with \$2.50 of spending cuts for every \$1 in tax increases. Then he'd try immigration reform. Then he'd cut corporate tax rates as part of corporate reform. Then he'd "weed out" unnecessary regulations. All the while, he would implement Obamacare and increase funds for infrastructure. This is a moderate and sensible agenda.

The first order of business would be the budget deal, averting the so-called fiscal cliff. Obama

would first go to Republicans in the Senate and say, "Look, we're stuck with each other. Let's cut a deal for the sake of the country." He would easily find 10 Republican senators willing to go along with a version of a Grand Bargain.

Then Obama would go to the House. He'd ask Eric Cantor, the majority leader, if there were votes for such a deal. The answer would probably be no. Republican House members still have more to fear from a primary challenge from the right than from a general election challenge from the left. Obama is tremendously unpopular in their districts. By running such a negative presidential campaign, Obama has won no mandate for a Grand Bargain. Obama himself is not going to suddenly turn into a master legislative craftsman on the order of Lyndon Johnson.

There'd probably be a barrage of recriminations from all sides. The left and right would be consumed with ire and accusations. Legislators would work out some set of fudges and gimmicks to kick the fiscal can down the road.

The ensuing bitterness would doom any hopes for bipartisan immigration reform. The rest of the Obama second term would be about reasonably small things: some new infrastructure programs; more math and science teachers; implementing Obamacare; mounting debt; a president increasingly turning to foreign affairs in search of legacy projects.

If you're a liberal Democrat, this is an acceptable outcome. Your party spent 80 years building the current welfare state. This outcome extends it.

Now let's try to imagine the world if Mitt Romney were to win. Republicans would begin with the premise that the status quo is unsustainable. The mounting debt is ruinous. The byzantine tax and regulatory regimes are stifling innovation and growth.

Republicans would like to take the reform agenda that Republican governors have pursued in places like Indiana and take it to the national level: structural entitlement reform; fundamental tax reform. These reforms wouldn't make government unrecognizable (we'd probably end up spending 21 percent of G.D.P. in Washington instead of about 24 percent), but they do represent a substantial shift to the right.

At the same time, Romney would probably be faced with a Democratic Senate. He would also observe the core lesson of this campaign: conservatism loses; moderation wins. Romney's prospects began to look decent only when he

shifted to the center. A President Romney would look at the way Tea Party extremism had cost the G.O.P. Senate seats in Delaware and Nevada — and possibly Missouri and Indiana.

To get re-elected in a country with a rising minority population and a shrinking Republican coalition, Romney's shape-shifting nature would induce him to govern as a center-right moderate. To get his tax and entitlement reforms through the Democratic Senate, Romney would have to make some serious concessions: increase taxes on the rich as part of an overall reform; abandon the most draconian spending cuts in Paul Ryan's budget; reduce the size of his lavish tax-cut promises.

As President Romney made these concessions, conservatives would be in uproar. Talk-radio hosts would be the ones accusing him of Romneysia, forgetting all the promises he made in the primary season. There'd probably be a primary challenge from the right in 2016.

But Republicans in Congress would probably go along. They wouldn't want to destroy a Republican president. Romney would champion enough conservative reforms to allow some Republicans to justify their votes.

The bottom line is this: If Obama wins, we'll probably get small-bore stasis; if Romney wins, we're more likely to get bipartisan reform. Romney is more of a flexible flip-flopper than Obama. He has more influence over the most intransigent element in the Washington equation House Republicans. He's more likely to get big stuff done.

Allysia Finley: Jerry Brown Vs. The 99%
To get a tax hike that will satisfy California's public unions, the governor pulls out the brass knuckles.

Monday, October 29, 2012

[Wall Street Journal](#)

By Allysia Finley

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

Editorial: Don't Legalize Pot Just For The High Of It

Monday, October 29, 2012

[USA Today](#)

By The Editorial Board

Legalize pot? The nation has flirted with the idea before: Jimmy Carter supported decriminalization in his 1976 campaign, but the idea died after his

chief drug adviser was reported to have used cocaine at a Washington, D.C., party.

OPPOSING VIEW: Legalize marijuana for adult users

Almost four decades later, though, a pot renaissance is sweeping parts of the USA: Seventeen states and the nation's capital now allow the use of medical marijuana with a doctor's order, which in some places is ludicrously easy to get. Thirteen states have decriminalized pot, which generally means that the punishment for first-time possession of small amounts is a fine with no jail time.

National opinion is shifting, as well. Gallup reported this month that, for the first time, 50% of Americans think marijuana should be legal; in 1970, just 12% were for legalization. While fewer than one-third of voters 65 and older favor legal pot, the number rises to almost two-thirds among voters 18 to 29.

Now three Western states could be taking the next step.

On Nov. 6, Colorado, Oregon and Washington will vote on whether to make pot legal for anyone 21 or older. Approval could mark a historic change — and the emergence of a huge new industry to rival those for cigarettes and alcohol.

But the fact that legal pot has growing momentum doesn't mean it's a good idea, or that it's inevitable:

Marijuana is still illegal under federal law. Those who can grow or sell pot legally under state law can be, and have been, busted by the feds. Although the Obama administration ordered a hands-off policy in 2009 for medical marijuana operations in compliance with state laws, there's no sign that federal drug enforcers would wink at full-blown legalization.

The Obama administration remains strongly opposed. Supporters of state legalization want this confrontation on the grounds that it will change federal law. Maybe, but a more likely scenario is that states will end up in costly litigation while pot users are left in legal limbo.

Modern marijuana can be very powerful, potent enough to make it dangerous to drive or operate other machinery under the influence. Backers of legal pot wisely advocate tough penalties for driving while stoned, but do we really want to add another widely available drug to roads where alcohol already causes mayhem? And do we want to worry (more than we already do) that pilots or

train engineers or others are high when they come to work? That would be more likely if pot were legal.

"Reefer madness" scare stories killed the credibility of anti-marijuana crusaders decades ago, but that doesn't mean marijuana is a benign drug, especially for children. A study by Duke University and King's College London found that kids who start smoking as teenagers and become "persistent users" — at least four times a week — typically lose 8 IQ points and never get them back. Beyond IQ points, many lose motivation to succeed in school.

Doctors have split over whether marijuana causes lung cancer the way smoking cigarettes does, though evidence seems to be accumulating that it could. A recent study at the University of Southern California found a link between recreational pot use and testicular cancer in men from their teens to the mid-30s.

Advocates of legalization make some good points, particularly about the waste of law enforcement resources in enforcing marijuana laws, and the way the illegal market enriches criminal gangs and drug cartels.

Their arguments demonstrate how imperfect the current legal regime is, but they downplay the risks of legalization. Making marijuana available for medical use is a humane and sensible policy, despite the likelihood of wider use and abuse. Doing the same thing simply to allow adults to get high legally isn't worth the inevitable cost.

Opposing View: Legalize Marijuana For Adult Users

Monday, October 29, 2012

USA Today

By John McKay

As a former chief federal prosecutor in Washington state, I observed firsthand our nation's dangerous marijuana policy. Decades of experience demonstrates marijuana prohibition has failed to reduce use by tens of millions of Americans.

OUR VIEW: Don't legalize pot just for the high of it

Instead, international drug cartels, violent gangs and street pushers control the trade and reap the profits. Our sworn officers and agents put themselves at risk every day to defend this flawed policy.

Public safety suffers under marijuana prohibition and so does public health. Marijuana use is not without risk, but these risks are nothing like those of heroin, cocaine or meth. Leaving marijuana in

the hands of black-market profiteers prevents us from regulating potency or purity, testing for adulterants or requiring accurate labeling.

Opponents of reform argue that legal access for adults will increase use by kids. Youth already have easy access to marijuana. Street dealers don't check ID, and they don't have to worry about losing their business license if they offer more dangerous drugs like heroin, cocaine and meth.

We don't need to arrest adults for using marijuana to discourage children from doing the same. Academic and scientific studies have shown that removing criminal penalties for marijuana use does not increase use among teenagers. In fact, peer-reviewed studies published in the *Annals of Epidemiology* have shown a decline in marijuana use after laws have been reformed.

We also have a proven track record of influencing youth decision-making about substance use through information campaigns, bans on advertising directed at our youth, and reshaping cultural and social norms.

We should legalize marijuana for adults, while tightly regulating and taxing its manufacture and sale. Some argue we should wait for federal law to change before changing state laws. Our experience with alcohol Prohibition suggests otherwise, and on Election Day, Washington state voters will lead the way toward much-needed change in federal law and policy.

John McKay, a professor at the Seattle University School of Law, served as the U.S. Attorney for the Western District of Washington from 2001 to 2007.

Goals That Blind Us To The Bigger Picture

Tuesday, October 30, 2012

Washington Post

By Charles Lane

President Obama is campaigning on a promise to recruit 100,000 new science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) teachers by 2022. That works out to roughly seven STEM teachers for each of the 14,561 public school systems in the United States.

Also, you should know that the California State University system reported in May that the Golden State alone will need 33,000 STEM teachers in the next decade — a third of the total Obama proposes to recruit.

Obama's idea is intuitively plausible: Economic growth depends on a skilled workforce; math and

science teachers provide those skills; yet many students get math and science lessons from teachers who lack specific training. Ergo, we need more credentialed STEM teachers.

Is this true? Yes and no. In 2010, 87.8 percent of the nation's public-school math teachers had either majored in the subject as undergraduates or received certification later, according to the Education Department; for science teachers, the figure was 95.5 percent. Not too shabby.

In majority-black or majority-Hispanic schools, however, the picture was much worse: Uncredentialed instructors made up 19 percent of math teachers in schools where white students were a small minority (10 percent or less of the student body). Yet this is not necessarily a uniquely STEM-related problem. English teachers in predominantly minority schools are also less likely to possess relevant certifications.

In short, training an extra 10,000 STEM teachers a year between now and 2022 might do some good. How much good, and where, and at what ultimate cost, is anyone's guess.

I don't necessarily mean to dismiss the president's idea but to make a different point — one that also applies to Republican challenger Mitt Romney's promise to set defense spending at 4 percent of gross domestic product.

Governmental inputs — dollars spent, teachers trained — are easy to quantify. So politicians promise more of them and claim success if they hit their targets.

Yet the true measure of any program or policy is how much the public gets out of it. And the "output" of public goods such as education and health — or national security — is notoriously difficult to measure with precision.

Beyond certain broad indicators, such as the literacy rate or infant mortality, the results that we can measure do not necessarily show that more input yields more output.

Consider school spending. Between 1975 and 2007, per-student education outlays doubled, from about \$5,000 to about \$10,000. Achievement test scores remained flat.

A recent report by the Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice suggests that the increased spending might have financed bureaucratic growth. Between 1992 and 2009, public-school enrollment grew 17 percent, while total school personnel increased 39 percent. Hiring of administrators and other staff, not teachers,

accounted for a disproportionate share of the growth.

Of course, it could be objected that test scores might have been even worse without all the additional spending and employees. And I suppose the president's STEM-teacher target and Romney's defense-budget goal may help galvanize public opinion on behalf of worthy goals.

Still, I worry that the pursuit of national numerical targets is a bad way to allocate scarce resources. In 1995, President Bill Clinton announced a goal of 8 million new homeowners by 2000. In 2002, President George W. Bush promised 5.5 million new minority homeowners by 2010.

Both men treated homeownership rates as a proxy for non-quantifiable social goods: economic opportunity, community stability, minority inclusion. They were less interested in how many new mortgages might ultimately foreclose.

The federal homeownership push probably contributed to the housing boom and its subsequent crash, which destroyed trillions in nominal household wealth and left many minorities worse off — not to mention the broader economic damage.

In his 1970 essay "Policy vs. Program," Daniel Patrick Moynihan decried the government efforts of his day, in which "ambitions are repeatedly proclaimed, and just as repeatedly frustrated." He blamed the tendency to devise separate federal "programs" in response to each perceived social deficit. Moynihan argued instead for "policies" that accounted for government's own sometimes unintended or counterproductive impact on society — and measured success holistically.

"The test of a program, when this program is part of a policy," Moynihan wrote, "is not input but output. It is interesting, and at times important, to know how much money is spent on schools in a particular neighborhood or city. But the crucial question is how much do the children learn. Programs are for people, not for bureaucracies."

Forty-two years later, we are still struggling to put the late senator's wisdom into practice.

lanec@washpost.com

School Reform On The Ballot
Unions try to block choice and merit pay in Washington and Idaho.

Monday, October 29, 2012

Wall Street Journal

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

MISCELLANEOUS NEWS (ADDED BY PIR)

Nate Silver: One-Term Celebrity?

Tuesday, October 30, 2012

Politico

By Dylan Byers

Nate Silver could be a one-term celebrity.

The New York Times's resident political predictor says President Barack Obama currently has a 74.6 percent chance of winning reelection. It's a prediction that liberals, whose heart rates continue to fluctuate with the release of every new poll, want to take solace in but somehow can't. Sure, this is the guy who correctly predicted the outcome of the 2008 election in 49 of 50 states, but this year's polls suggest a nailbiter.

"Romney, clearly, could still win," Silver told POLITICO today.

Prediction is the name of Silver's game, the basis for his celebrity. So should Mitt Romney win on Nov. 6, it's difficult to see how people can continue to put faith in the predictions of someone who has never given that candidate anything higher than a 41 percent chance of winning (way back on June 2) and — one week from the election — gives him a one-in-four chance, even as the polls have him almost neck-and-neck with the incumbent.

Silver cautions against confusing prediction with prophecy. "If the Giants lead the Redskins 24-21 in the fourth quarter, it's a close game that either team could win. But it's also not a "toss-up": The Giants are favored. It's the same principle here: Obama is ahead in the polling averages in states like Ohio that would suffice for him to win the Electoral College. Hence, he's the favorite," Silver said.

For all the confidence Silver puts in his predictions, he often gives the impression of hedging. Which, given all the variables involved in a presidential election, isn't surprising. For this reason and others — and this may shock the coffee-drinking NPR types of Seattle, San Francisco and Madison, Wis. — more than a few political pundits and reporters, including some of his own colleagues, believe Silver is highly overrated.

"If you tell me you think you can quantify an event that is about to happen that you don't

expect, like the 47 percent comment or a debate performance, I think you think you are a wizard. That's not possible," Times columnist David Brooks, a moderate conservative, said on PBS earlier this month. "The pollsters tell us what's happening now. When they start projecting, they're getting into silly land."

Brooks doubled down on this charge in a column last week: "I should treat polls as a fuzzy snapshot of a moment in time. I should not read them, and think I understand the future," he wrote. "If there's one thing we know, it's that even experts with fancy computer models are terrible at predicting human behavior."

On MSNBC's "Morning Joe" today, Joe Scarborough took a more direct shot, effectively calling Silver an ideologue and "a joke."

"Nate Silver says this is a 73.6 percent chance that the president is going to win? Nobody in that campaign thinks they have a 73 percent chance — they think they have a 50.1 percent chance of winning. And you talk to the Romney people, it's the same thing," Scarborough said. "Both sides understand that it is close, and it could go either way. And anybody that thinks that this race is anything but a tossup right now is such an ideologue, they should be kept away from typewriters, computers, laptops and microphones for the next 10 days, because they're jokes."

Silver's no stranger to doubt and criticism. He even doubts his own model sometimes. But he dismisses this criticism.

"We can debate how much of a favorite Obama is; Romney, clearly, could still win. But this is not wizardry or rocket science," Silver told POLITICO. "All you have to do is take an average, and count to 270. It's a pretty simple set of facts. I'm sorry that Joe is math-challenged."

Of course, it hardly matters what Brooks, Scarborough or any of Silver's critics or supporters think. What matters for Silver is that the president wins and that he ends up with a total number of electoral votes somewhere in the ballpark of whatever Silver predicts on the afternoon of Nov. 6. And even then, you won't know if he actually had a 50.1 percent chance or a 74.6 percent chance of getting there.

UPDATE (5:07 p.m.): BuzzFeed's Rosie Gray interviews Silver:

He acknowledges that his reputation, made as it was in the last election cycle when he correctly predicted 49 out of 50 states, could just as easily be tarnished this time.

"I'm sure that I have a lot riding on the outcome. I'm also sure I'll get too much credit if the prediction is right and too much blame if it is wrong," he said.

Anderson Cooper Talk Show Won't Return For A Third Season

Tuesday, October 30, 2012

New York Times

By Bill Carter

The syndication arm of the Warner Brothers studio has decided that there will not be a third season of "Anderson," the daily talk show hosted by Anderson Cooper.

Citing disappointing ratings, a studio executive, who insisted on not being identified because the studio had planned no official release on the decision, said on Monday that the entire talk television market has been struggling to build audiences. Mr. Cooper's show, which is produced by Telepictures, will end after the summer of 2013.

The executive spoke because some of the stations that have been carrying Mr. Cooper's show have begun making feelers about replacement shows, and the news was certain to leak out through one of them, the executive said.

The Warner Brothers syndication unit issued a statement on Monday:

"We are extremely proud of Anderson and the show that he and the entire production team have produced. While we made significant changes to the format, set and produced it live in its second season, the series will not be coming back for a third season in a marketplace that has become increasingly difficult to break through. We will continue to deliver top-quality shows throughout next summer."

Mr. Cooper released his own statement:

"I am very proud of the work that our terrific staff has put into launching and sustaining our show for two seasons. I am also grateful to Telepictures for giving me the opportunity, and indebted to viewers, who have responded so positively. I look forward to doing more great shows this season, and though I'm sorry we won't be continuing, I have truly enjoyed it."

The decision was not a reflection of any lack of faith in Mr. Cooper, the executive said, but an acknowledgement of the business realities in daytime talk television.

The studio "could have renewed the show but could not create a viable economic business model to move forward," the executive said.

Even Katie Couric's much anticipated new talk show has not yet emerged as a bona fide hit, the executive said. And new shows with other hosts, including Jeff Probst and Ricki Lake, have fared poorly.

But Mr. Cooper, who is also a mainstay in prime time on CNN, had been expected to be a star in daytime talk when his show started last fall. After one year with sub-par ratings, the studio and Mr. Cooper instituted a series of changes including stressing same-day tapings as often as possible to deal with breaking subjects, and a new location for the studio.

Mr Cooper was on assignment for CNN in New Jersey Monday, covering Hurricane Sandy.

Bill Carter writes about the television industry. Follow @wjcarter on Twitter.

What Works In A Campaign Commercial? Ad Executives Offer Their Take

Sunday, October 28, 2012

New York Times

By Jeremy W. Peters

Madison Avenue and Pennsylvania Avenue do not intersect. And often the kind of advertising that sells presidential candidates has almost nothing in common with the kind that makes consumers crave breakfast cereal or a certain kind of beer.

Campaigns do not rely on professional advertising executives as often as they used to, at least not in the same way they did when Doyle Dane Bernbach created the famous "Daisy" ad for Lyndon B. Johnson or Hal Rainey helped write Ronald Reagan's "Morning in America" campaign.

So in that spirit, The New York Times asked three leaders in advertising to rate their favorite commercials of this campaign. They were asked to make two picks: one pro-Obama ad and one pro-Romney ad.

Daryl Lee, McCann, chief strategy officer

Pro-Obama pick: "My Job" by the Obama campaign, which juxtaposes Mitt Romney's "47 percent" remarks about people on government assistance against pictures of veterans, families and blue-collar workers.

"Unlike the typical negative ad, peppered with newspaper headlines and pictures of the opponent grimacing or looking sinister, this ad creates a documentary approach, with a number of strong

storytelling tactics," Mr. Lee said. "After showing Barack Obama in rich colors at the White House, the screen turns dark with white script starkly stating, 'Mitt Romney's Own Words.' Everything that follows is black and white, stripped of color, reinforcing the bleak worldview that Romney's words suggest. The National Geographic-quality pictures evoke the perspective of the neutral observer, without an agenda, merely recording the world as it is. The shots of earnest, hardworking Americans in everyday pose contrast with Romney's words dismissing a group of Americans as 'victims.'

"The Obama team showed considerable restraint and discipline in this ad. They let the words speak for themselves."

Pro-Romney pick: "Olympics" by the Restore Our Future "super PAC," which features athletes like Kristi Yamaguchi praising Mr. Romney's leadership in saving the 2002 Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City.

"The ad team took a news story approach to a candidate testimonial and executed it with great craft," Mr. Lee said. "The ad works so well because the story line is simple and uplifting. It reads like a human-interest piece in the morning news shows. It is a story of crisis averted and hope rekindled.

"The authenticity of the story is communicated simply through real-life accounts from real athletes recounting the challenges the Olympics faced, and the actions from Romney that helped save the day. The background is plain and uncluttered. The ribbon effects that stream across the screen mimic the Olympic coverage TV visuals. Each of Romney's testimonial witnesses speaks from a different camera angle giving the appearance of diverse viewpoints that agree. And it clearly helps Mitt Romney to have respected, successful women like Kristi Yamaguchi endorsing him in an ad, considering the importance of the women vote in these elections."

Mark Simon, Campbell Ewald, chief creative officer

Pro-Obama pick: "Table" by the Obama campaign, in which President Obama states his four-point case for re-election.

"In consumer advertising, 'competitive advertising' is generally viewed as an approach that may help a challenger brand — but not a leadership brand," Mr. Simon said. "In this context, it is very surprising that incumbent candidates have turned to this approach so forcefully.

"I'd rather see campaigns that focus on what the candidate stands for. Tell me what you're going to do for America and how you're going to do it. Don't tell me about your opponent. 'Table' does this while promoting 'economic patriotism,' an interesting concept."

Pro-Romney pick: "Too Many Americans," in which Mr. Romney makes his case directly to voters.

"Both sides focus most of their attention on attacking the other candidate rather than building their own case," Mr. Simon said. "It seems as if 'comparative' — that is, negative — advertising has become the dominant political advertising approach of our times.

"This is something we've rarely heard in this campaign: agreement between the candidates. 'President Obama and I both care about middle-class families.' And it works well for the undecided without alienating those who might be leaning towards Obama. The choice of wardrobe and set design makes Mitt more accessible to middle-class America."

Carl Johnson, Anomaly, founding partner

Pro-Obama pick: "My Job"

"Mr. Obama's brand is authentic, clearly understood and has been built with set-piece speeches and interviews," Mr. Johnson said. "However, his larger-than-life ability to inspire does not sit well with point-by-point attacks. Attacks are, by their very nature, uninspiring, as they tear down rather than build up.

"So as a brand, Obama has an issue with attacking directly as it undermines what gives his brand strength. However, Romney does his work for him with the most self-destructive quote of the entire campaign — the infamous 47 percent — allowing Obama a full-fronted attack without uttering a word. 'Listen to Romney,' it suggests. 'Need we say more?'"

Pro-Romney pick: "Give Me a Break," a Romney campaign ad that repurposes an attack on Mr. Obama by former President Bill Clinton from the 2008 Democratic primary.

"As an executive with a businesslike persona," Mr. Johnson said of Mr. Romney, "he is much more comfortable being on the attack. His competitiveness comes through more naturally than any vision for the future. His past debate performance bears this out even further.

"However, his smartest ad, I think, avoids reinforcing the sometimes negative, uncaring side of Romney by once again turning the opposition

back on themselves — in this instance, undermining Obama with the words of one of his strongest advocates, Bill Clinton.

"Making it even more effective, it works with the accepted inspirational Brand Obama, but suggests it's just 'a fairy tale.' "

Oct. 28: In Swing States, A Predictable Election?

Monday, October 29, 2012

New York Times

By Nate Silver

The conventional wisdom about this year's presidential race is that it has broken out of stasis to become wildly unpredictable.

And yet, after a period of polling turmoil following President Obama's convention in Charlotte, N.C., and Mitt Romney's sharp rebound after the first presidential debate in Denver, the polling in most swing states now looks very similar to the way it did for much of the late spring and summer.

When we introduced this year's FiveThirtyEight forecast model on June 7, the closest states were Colorado, Ohio and Virginia, each of which slightly favored Mr. Obama. In Florida and North Carolina, meanwhile, we had Mitt Romney listed as a modest favorite.

Pretty much the same could be said about the race today. In fact, our projected leader in all 50 states is the same as it was at our launch of the forecast in June.

The table below lists our projected results in the 18 states (and one Congressional district, in Nebraska) that were predicted to produce a single-digit race as of our original forecast in June. On average, our projection of the popular vote in each state has moved by just one and a half percentage points, in one or another direction, since then.

The change has been especially small in several of the most important battleground states. In June, Mr. Obama was projected to a 3-point lead in Nevada, a 2.3-point lead in Iowa, a 1.3-point lead in Virginia, a 1.1-point lead in Ohio and a 1-point lead in Colorado. The forecast in those states has moved just four-tenths of a point since then, on average; the largest shift has been in Ohio, where Mr. Obama's polling has been reasonably resilient and he now has a 2.2-point edge.

Which states have shown more movement? Wisconsin, clearly, became more competitive after Mr. Romney's selection of Representative Paul D. Ryan as his running mate. Mr. Obama enjoyed a

more comfortable margin in New Hampshire in June than he does now. And in Indiana and Missouri, two states that are ordinarily red-leaning but which might qualify under a broad definition of swing states, the campaigns have spent few resources and polls there have gradually drifted toward showing a clearer edge for Mr. Romney.

The states where Mr. Obama has made gains since the June forecast are fewer in number (although the fact that Ohio is among them makes Mr. Obama's electoral math stronger). Mr. Obama is running slightly stronger in Florida now than he was in June, although that still reflects a disappointment for him since he was leading in our forecast there before the Denver debate. Mr. Obama has also made gains in Oregon and New Jersey, counterparts to Indiana and Missouri in that they might have become competitive had Mr. Romney made more of an effort to contest them, but Mr. Romney did not do so.

In blue states, Mr. Obama's numbers are little changed on average from the June forecast. New York is one exception; polls there have shown an especially large lead for Mr. Obama, larger than we originally predicted. And Mr. Obama might have to settle for a single-digit margin of victory in New Mexico, but he is in little danger of losing it.

Change in FiveThirtyEight Forecast — Blue States

It's in deeply red states where the forecast has shifted more. On average, Mr. Romney has gained two percentage points since June between the red states you see in the chart below.

Could the race really have been this stable? Part of it is in the way the FiveThirtyEight forecast is constructed, since it uses nonpolling factors in a state (like its past voting results, relative to the national mean) in cases where the polling is sparse, helping to avoid unwarranted fluctuations based on one or two outlier polls.

But consider this interpretation of events. Prior to the Democratic convention, Mr. Obama's favorability ratings exceeded his approval ratings by several points. The voters who took a favorable view of Mr. Obama but had lukewarm views of his performance may have represented easy targets for the president, and they were brought into the fold by the strong speeches given by Bill Clinton, Michelle Obama, and Joseph R. Biden Jr., who praised Mr. Obama's accomplishments. After the convention, Mr. Obama's approval ratings caught up with his favorability ratings, and his performance in horse-race polls against Mr. Romney improved as a result.

If Mr. Obama won over his share of Democratic-leaning undecided voters in Charlotte, however, Mr. Romney claimed most of the Republican-leaning ones after Denver. That event precipitated a sharp improvement in Mr. Romney's favorability ratings as voters saw him share the stage with Mr. Obama, and appear competent, confident and presidential.

Some other truly undecided voters may have jumped on the bandwagon along the way, favoring Mr. Obama after Charlotte but Mr. Romney after Denver based on the momentum they perceived in the race. However, their support may be inherently fickle; Mr. Obama now appears to have regained roughly a percentage point of the support he lost after Denver, which may come from this group. (It may also be that the magnitude of the respective bounces was slightly exaggerated in the polls because of the tendency of more enthusiastic voters to respond to surveys.)

The national polls certainly look different than they did in June, but part of that may be artificial as well.

In June, many of the national polls were conducted among registered voters rather than likely ones. In national polls that have reported both registered-voter and likely-voter results throughout the course of the year, Mr. Romney has run about three points stronger in the likely-voter version, on average. (Interestingly, this difference is smaller in state polls, where the difference is about two points on average.)

Some of what looks like movement toward Mr. Romney in other polling averages instead reflects pollsters switching to their likely-voter models. The FiveThirtyEight model, since its design converted registered-voter polls into likely-voter ones from the start, will recognize that a change in methodology is different than a new trend in the race.

This change has been less pronounced at the state level, since a larger fraction of the state polls were reporting likely-voter numbers to begin with. We alerted you back in August to the prospect that the different-seeming results between state and national polls would become more apparent as more national pollsters flipped over to their likely-voter models.

Of the remaining gains that Mr. Romney has made in national polls, much of it may have come from his improved performance in deeply red states; that is where our state-by-state forecasts show his numbers improving the most. It might be kept in

mind that, during the Republican primaries, Mr. Romney's performance was strongest in states and counties that are Democratic-leaning in general elections, while being weaker in deeply red areas. As highly conservative voters became more comfortable with Mr. Romney, however, he made gains among them.

So sure, there have been some twists and turns along the way — but that is true in every presidential election. Anyone who thinks this race has been especially wild need only look at the polling trajectory in 1976, 1980 or 1992 to get a sense for what a truly variable presidential election looks like.

Over all, instead, this race has been fairly stable relative to most presidential elections. And especially in the state polls, the results we're now seeing are quite consistent with what the economic fundamentals might dictate: a very tight race, narrowly favoring Mr. Obama.

There is always the chance that the race could be disrupted again over the final week of the campaign, perhaps because of the candidates' responses to Hurricane Sandy. And there is the possibility that this will be one of those years where the polls miss the mark badly in one or another direction on Election Day.

There is a pretty good possibility, however, that our forecast in every state on Nov. 6 will be the same as it was on June 7. Colorado, Virginia and Florida, being the closest states in the forecast now, are the most likely to switch sides.

Sunday's Polls

The polls released on Sunday were mostly unremarkable. The eight national polls showed about a tied race, on average, with each candidate gaining ground in some polls but losing it in others.

The state polls out on Sunday were slightly favorable to Mr. Obama, with polls by the firm Public Policy Polling showing him making gains in Ohio, Florida and New Hampshire. In another poll of Ohio, from Gravis Marketing, Mr. Obama held a one-point edge, versus a tied race before.

It should be noted that Public Policy Polling is showing a more pronounced shift toward Mr. Obama than any other pollster. Their polls were strongly Democratic-leaning at the start of the year, but then showed a poor run of numbers for Mr. Obama after the Denver debate, with their polls often being slightly more Republican-leaning than the consensus. Now, Mr. Obama has rebounded in their surveys, typically by two or

three percentage points in the different swing states that they've polled, to the point that they now seem to be Democratic-leaning again by a percentage point or two.

Our forecasts adjust for these pollster "house effects" — whether pollsters are Republican- or Democratic-leaning relative to the consensus. But one innovation that we might consider in future years is to also apply an adjustment for the variance or "swinginess" in a poll. Some pollsters, like Public Policy Polling, American Research Group and Gallup, show more pronounced fluctuations. In others, like Rasmussen Reports and polls for the online firm YouGov, the numbers seem to move much less. There are sometimes logical reasons why these patterns occur — Rasmussen Reports, for example, weighs the results by party identification, which tends to dampen swings (if also potentially missing real changes in the electorate).

Still, there are now so many active polling firms, especially in states like Ohio and Florida, that one or two new polls won't affect the forecast much. (In Ohio, Mr. Obama advanced only to a 2.2-point lead on the basis of the new surveys, as compared with a 2.1-point lead in Saturday's forecast.)

Even in this last full week before the election, I'd encourage you to take a more macroscopic view of the election. We have seen, broadly speaking, a mild recovery for Mr. Obama over the past week or so in the polls. Among polls that have surveyed the race more than once since Denver, his numbers have improved more often than they have worsened in the most recent edition of the survey, and Mr. Obama's predicted probability of winning the Electoral College has improved as a result (to 74.6 percent as of Sunday).

Then again, it may be best not to make too much of these mild fluctuations. There certainly seemed to be the possibility in a brief period after Charlotte that Mr. Obama would run away with the race, although even then forecast expected some reversion to the mean.

But other than in that convention bounce period, the polls have usually told about the same story: that Mr. Obama has a modest edge, but far from an insurmountable one, in the states necessary for him to win him 270 electoral votes.

The forecast model is a bit more confident now about Mr. Obama's potential to turn that edge in to an Electoral College victory because there is so little time remaining in the race.

Still, an election held today would probably keep us up quite late before we knew the result with much certainty — and so, in all likelihood, will the one on Nov. 6.

POLITICAL NEWS

Romney Plays For Hillary Voters In Ohio

Monday, October 29, 2012

Politico

By Maggie Haberman

Via POLITICO's James Hohmann:

Down a couple points and looking to peel off some Obama supporters a week before the election, Mitt Romney made an explicit play Sunday for those who backed Hillary Clinton in the 2008 Democratic primaries.

"Your friends may have voted last time, perhaps in the Democratic primary, they may have voted for who knows? They may have voted or Hillary Clinton or they may have voted for Barack Obama, they may have voted for then-candidate Obama in the final election, but I need you to convince them to vote for Paul Ryan and me," he said at a rally in Marion, Ohio, Sunday night.

"And that's not always easy, but you can ask them this question... 'do you think everything's going just fine?' Do you think we should just go just go - you're gonna say do you think should just go on like they're going for the last four years? And if they have the same answer you just had then you have the number one argument why for why they should vote for us. Because our campaign is about fundamental change, our campaign is about real change, taking a course correction in this country."

One of the most famous moments from the 2008 primaries was used by Romney in an ad this cycle — Clinton denouncing the now-president with Ted Strickland by her side, saying, "Shame on you, Barack Obama — meet me in Ohio!"

But the Clinton wedge had already started to fade by the time the Democrats held their convention in Charlotte this cycle, when Bill Clinton gave a full-throated endorsement of Obama that was credited with giving the president a poll bump.

Obama, Romney Respond To Hurricane Sandy, As It Upends Campaign Plans

Monday, October 29, 2012

Washington Post

By Jerry Markon And Karen Tumulty

Hurricane Sandy upended the closely fought presidential campaign only eight days before election day on Monday, as President Obama and Mitt Romney canceled campaign events, ripped up their schedules and tried to juggle the tricky politics of dealing with the storm.

The responses of the two candidates, who have offered starkly different visions for America, gave voters even more contrasts to evaluate as both worked to find the right tone.

Romney struggled slightly to hit a note that sounded presidential while also maintaining his apparent momentum in the race: He vowed initially to press ahead with his campaign events but then abruptly canceled most of them for the duration of the storm.

Obama, after barnstorming the nation's battleground states last week and shouting himself hoarse at rallies, pivoted to his role as commander-in chief. He canceled an appearance in Orlando, Fla. with former President Bill Clinton, jetted back to Washington, convened a storm briefing in the White House situation room and then addressed the nation.

"Obviously, everyone is aware at this point that this is going to be a big and powerful storm," Obama said. "Millions of people are going to be affected." Asked about the election, the president begged off from political considerations. "I am not worrying at this point about the impact on elections," he said. "Right now, our number one priority is to make sure we are saving lives."

Yet politics hung over the day, if more discreetly than usual, as both campaigns recalibrated their strategies in a race widely seen as a dead heat that is now essentially frozen in place until the storm is over — and perhaps beyond. The Obama campaign convened a conference call to say the president's victory is inevitable, while Romney aides cited newspaper endorsements of the Republican candidates and evidence of his momentum in the critical state of Ohio.

The effects of the monster storm went beyond the candidates's messages and extended to the vital mechanics of the campaign itself. In an extraordinary move so close to an election, Gallup suspended its daily tracking poll as of Monday night in response to the weather. Aboard Air Force One, White House Press Secretary Jay Carney was asked if Obama had the power to delay the election if there were still widespread power outages. (Carney said he didn't know).

Even the monthly Bureau of Labor Statistics jobs report, due out Friday and considered vitally important in a campaign that has turned on the nation's sluggish economy, stood to potentially be affected. Amid news reports, Labor Department spokesman Carl Fillichio said that staffers "are working hard" to get the report out on time and that "it is our intention that Friday will be business as usual regarding the October Employment Situation report."

But Fillichio and other officials could not rule out the possibility of delaying the report's release. Some officials noted that the analysts who prepare the jobs report are considered "non-essential" personnel who did not report for work on Monday as the storm hit the Washington area.

As the day began, the Romney campaign issued a statement saying the candidate would maintain a full schedule of events on Monday in Ohio, Iowa and Wisconsin, and that running mate Rep. Paul Ryan (R-Wisc.) would as well.

Later Monday morning, the campaign canceled all of his rallies for Monday night and Tuesday, even as Romney was about to begin his first event of the day at a high school in the crucial battleground state of Ohio. "Governor Romney believes this is a time for the nation and its leaders to come together to focus on those Americans who are in harms way," Romney spokeswoman Gail Gitcho said in a statement announcing the change.

Romney made no mention of the storm as he kicked off his remarks at a gymnasium at Avon Lake High School, which was packed with supporters who had been waiting more than two hours to see the GOP presidential nominee.

Later in his speech, he said, "I don't think there's been a hurricane in Ohio in a long time," to a few chuckles from the crowd. "But this hurricane's going to cause a lot of damage across this country and hurt a lot of families. And so I'd like to ask you who are here today to think about making a contribution to the Red Cross or to another relief agency, to be of help if you possibly can in any way you can imagine and help those that are in harm's way."

The gymnasium full of supporters applauded, and Romney continued.

"We've faced these kind of challenges before," he said. "And as we have, it's interesting to see how Americans have come together. This looks like another time when we need to come together all across the country, even if you're in Ohio, and

make sure that we give of our support to people who need it."

The former Massachusetts governor also spoke to Govs. Robert McDonnell (R-Va.) and Chris Christie (R-N.J.) about storm preparations and suspended fundraising e-mails to states affected by the storm, while his campaign encouraged people to deliver supplies to Romney campaign offices, which the campaign would then deliver to storm victims.

In the statement Monday morning, Romney spokeswoman Andrea Saul emphasized the hurricane but also hailed endorsements Romney recently received from newspapers in battleground states, and his campaign released a political memo hailing his momentum in Ohio.

Aboard Air Force One as it flew back to Washington, White House spokesman Jay Carney said it was too soon to assess the storm's impact on the election.

But his top strategists on Monday pressed forward with a story line that victory remains in reach — and in fact, is inevitable.

The president's team has "data and facts on our side, versus spin and wishful thinking on theirs," Obama campaign manager Jim Messina boasted on a conference call with reporters. "What the facts and numbers clearly show is that the president is going to win this election."

Despite many indicators that the race has tightened in recent weeks, Messina insisted that the tangible measures of voter enthusiasm — voter registration, early voting, public polling — show that "what we have been building for the past 18 months is working and it's paying off."

He and campaign strategist David Axelrod insisted that a pro-Mitt Romney superPAC's announcement of a \$2.1 million ad buy in Pennsylvania is a bluff, not a sign that an opportunity is opening up for the GOP nominee in that Democratic-leaning state.

Axelrod said the Romney effort is "in a break-glass posture right now, trying to figure out how to put this thing together . . . This isn't a sign on strength on their part. This is a sign of weakness."

The contrasting approaches to the storm reflected two very different candidates with differing visions for America, who have fought a tough and highly negative campaign, but who are also now trying to juggle the imperatives of responding to a natural disaster.

For Obama, the storm's challenge is a delicate one: to function as an effective commander in chief while waging a fight for his political life — and to avoid being seen as placing politics over the needs of storm-damaged areas and their residents.

Romney will also need to respond to storm damage but avoid the appearance of exploiting it for political gain.

The differences between Obama and his Republican challenger also extend to how they have responded to natural disasters in the past.

Obama campaigned four years ago on a promise of revamping the federal government's disaster response functions and has embraced reforms long-sought by state governors and professional emergency managers. Since becoming president, Obama has led the federal response to multiple disasters, including tornadoes, flooding and major hurricanes, learning from the stumbles of George W. Bush's presidency by ordering federal agencies to aggressively prepare and respond to major storms.

But the president faced criticism for his initial handling to a huge natural disaster on his watch — the Gulf oil spill. Critics said he was slow to respond, a perception the White House has tried to avoid ever since.

As governor of Massachusetts, Romney requested federal disaster assistance for storm cleanup and he has toured storm-ravaged communities as a presidential candidate. He also dealt during his governorship with a man-made disaster when a ceiling tunnel from Boston's notorious "Big Dig" construction project collapsed, killing a woman in a car. Romney's initial response to the tragedy was widely praised, though he later was criticized for resuming his early campaign for the 2008 GOP nomination even as repairs weren't finished.

Ryan, his running mate, tried to block disaster relief funds last year amid disagreements over federal spending and Romney last year agreed with suggestions that the Federal Emergency Management Agency could be dissolved as part of federal budget cuts.

When moderator John King suggested during a June 2011 CNN debate that federal disaster response could be curtailed to save federal dollars, Romney replied: "Absolutely. Every time you have an occasion to take something from the federal government and send it back to the states, that's the right direction. And if you can go even further

and send it back to the private sector, that's even better."

Romney has not made similar comments since the debate and aides insisted Monday that Romney would not abolish FEMA as president.

Ed O'Keefe contributed to this report.

Activists Pour Cash Into Voter Turnout Monday, October 29, 2012

Wall Street Journal

By Brody Mullins

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

Newspapers Abandon 2008 Obama Endorsements, Choose Romney

Monday, October 29, 2012

Daily Caller

By Neil Munro

Republicans are touting a list of newspapers that have switched their endorsements from then-Sen. Barack Obama in 2008 to Gov Mitt Romney in 2012.

Their list is topped by the Des Moines Register, the largest newspaper in swing-state Iowa. But it also includes five Florida papers — Florida Today, the Orlando Sentinel, the Pensacola News Journal, Naples Daily News and the South Florida Sun-Sentinel — plus the Quad City Times, on the border between Iowa and Illinois.

Other newspapers in Republican Texas and Democratic New York, California and Illinois have also flipped to the Republican presidential contender from 2008, when they endorsed Obama.

The Des Moines Register is the largest newspaper in Iowa, with a Sunday circulation of 211,880. (RELATED: Romney wins surprise endorsement from Iowa's Des Moines Register)

The five Florida newspapers have a combined weekly or Sunday circulation of more than 700,000.

A Nevada newspaper, the Reno Gazette-Journal, also flipped, potentially pulling a few move votes towards Romney in that swing state.

Most endorsements are announced on weekends, partly because Sunday editions usually have the largest circulation.

Many newspapers have stuck by Obama, including The New York Times and The Washington Post,

which have a combined Sunday circulation of roughly 2.7 million.

The influence of newspaper endorsements is modest, but both candidates seek them as they battle for electoral votes in swing states.

Obama, for example, talked with the publisher and editor of the Des Moines Register for 30 minutes on Oct. 23 in an attempt to win their support in the hard-fought state. Romney met with them for almost an hour — and it likely paid off when the Register endorsed a Republican for the first time in 40 years.

Iowa has six electoral votes.

The endorsements also generate useful material for TV advertising.

"In these uncertain times, we need a leader who will chart a clear course, sweat the details and get the job done right," the Sun Sentinel wrote Oct. 26 when endorsing Romney.

"Voters should give Mitt Romney a chance to correct the nation's fiscal course and to implode the partisan gridlock that has shackled Washington and the rest of America — with the understanding that he would face the same assessment in four years if he does not succeed," the Des Moines Register wrote Oct. 27.

According to a list maintained by the American Presidency Project at UC Santa Barbara, only one major newspaper that endorsed Republican Arizona Sen. John McCain in 2008 has backed Obama this year. Obama's "shortcomings," the San Antonio Express-News editorial board wrote Oct. 22, "don't justify a change in leadership."

Bain Is Back Monday, October 29, 2012

Politico

By Alexander Burns And Maggie Haberman

For the final days of the 2012 campaign, the Democratic groups pummeling Mitt Romney on television have returned to the weapon they started with last spring: Bain Capital.

The Obama campaign and its super PAC allies have spent months trashing Romney's policies and personal values across the airwaves, branding him as a job-killing, abortion rights-opposing, Medicare-privatizing tycoon who disdains working-class and poor Americans.

But with a little over a week left in the race, several of the Democrats' top independent spenders are leaning hard into the Bain message, eschewing a pure policy message for a gut-punch

reminder that the former Massachusetts governor made his fortune through controversial deals in the private-equity industry.

The late emphasis on Bain, Democratic strategists say, reflects both the potency of Bain as an attack against Romney in general, and the pivotal significance of Midwestern states such as Ohio where the Bain message is especially resonant. Though Romney remains no better than tied with Obama in most national and swing-state polls, he has gained enough ground since the first debate on Oct. 3 that reinforcing Obama's standing in states such as Ohio and Wisconsin is of paramount importance.

The pro-Obama super PAC Priorities USA Action is re-airing one of its most powerful Bain-bashing ads: The spot, titled "Stage," features an employee laid off by Bain describing how workers at his company were asked to build a stage from which executives announced their plant was closing.

Workers' Voice, a super PAC backed by the AFL-CIO, rolled out new TV ads in select battleground markets — in Ohio, Wisconsin and Iowa — attacking Romney for Bain's current decision to outsource jobs from Illinois to China.

"Mitt Romney is Bain Capital," the Workers' Voice commercials say. "And right now, Bain is shipping jobs to China and forcing workers to train their Chinese replacements."

In addition, the super PAC American Bridge announced Monday that it will air \$161,000 in TV and online ads in Ohio targeting Romney's economic views, including his years at Bain.

Democratic pollster Geoff Garin, who advises Priorities USA, said Bain ads have the potential to cut through the fog of commercials from both sides that's currently cluttering the airwaves with statistics about taxes, job creation, health care and more.

"The Obama campaign, I think, is pushing back very effectively against [Romney's] efforts to make himself a little less scary on his ideological agenda. We're playing our part by reminding voters what his values were in business and what they are likely to be as president," Garin said. "If we were running policy advertising, our ability to add or subtract from all the other gross rating points that people are being exposed to would be on the margins at best."

Garin came out of the field over the weekend with a new Virginia poll, showing Obama up 3 points against Romney, and said "we're already seeing it

tick back up, the percentage of voters who say that as a businessman, Romney was just looking out for himself and his investors, even at the expense of workers."

Obama, Helped By Latino Vote, Tries To Cling To Nevada

Monday, October 29, 2012

McClatchy

By Franco Ordonez

If there's any battleground state that should concern President Barack Obama, it's Nevada. The state leads the nation in unemployment. It ranks fifth in foreclosures after months in the top spot — or bottom, depending on how you look at it.

But with the help of a surging Latino population and a strong union presence, Obama holds a narrow lead over Republican presidential nominee Mitt Romney in this state with the fifth largest Hispanic population in the nation. The president has the support of nearly four out of five registered Latino voters in Nevada, according to Latino Decisions polling, which takes into account a 9 percent bump in support after Obama granted hundreds of thousands of young undocumented immigrants two-year deferrals to remain in the country legally.

Nearly 270,000 Latinos are eligible to vote, accounting for about 15 percent of the electorate, according to the Pew Hispanic Center.

"We're going to give Obama another chance," said Ruth Arriaza, a manager at a Latino fast food restaurant.

Arriaza, and her husband, Alex Martinez, 35, lost their "dream home" after going bankrupt during Obama's term, but they said he was the only candidate who really cared about immigrants.

Martinez, a heating and air conditioning technician, said he was disappointed in the president for failing to pass comprehensive immigration restructuring after campaigning on the issue, but he said Obama deserved credit for using his executive powers to helping children who were brought to the country illegally by their parents.

Not all Latinos feel the same way. Rolando, 69, and Esperanza Varera, 58, also lost their house. And they don't see the president helping them get it back. Esperanza, who's originally from Mexico, said that what many recent Latino immigrants failed to understand was that if they didn't have jobs and couldn't keep their homes, then there was no future for them in the United States.

"They say we should be Democrats," she said. "They say Republicans don't like Latinos, but that's not true. The Republicans are the ones who are going to fix our economy so that Latinos can get their jobs back."

Nevada has only 2.7 million residents, but its six electoral votes could be decisive in the election. Obama's support may have surged with Latinos, but it's dropped with white Nevadans, giving Romney an opportunity. Still, Romney must overcome the fact that Nevada voters don't fit traditional voter profiles. And more 70 percent of the population lives in socially liberal Clark County, home to the most extravagant casinos in the nation.

"We're a state built on gambling," said Eric Herzik, a political scientist at the University of Nevada, Reno. "The bars never close. We have legalized prostitution in 10 counties. We're at the bottom of the percentage of individuals who attend church."

In interviews with dozens of residents across Las Vegas, it's clear that the economy wasn't necessarily everyone's top issue. On social issues is where Republicans generally lose ground, Herzik said.

Both candidates paid Nevada a visit last week, each seeking to motivate supporters and convince remaining undecided residents that he's the best-qualified man to tackle local challenges.

On Wednesday night at a rally outside Las Vegas, Obama touted falling unemployment rates and rising home values. He warned that a Romney presidency would "turn the clock back 50 years for women and immigrants and gays."

Earlier that afternoon in Reno, Romney zeroed in on struggling homeowners. He warned that a second term for Obama would mean "the values of your homes continue to bump along in the basement."

Obama handily won Nevada in 2008 with 55 percent of the vote, but he's lost the backing of many supporters over the lack of economic progress since the Great Recession. The state is far from a Democratic stronghold; George W. Bush won it in 2000 and 2004.

Like many of their friends, Jeff and Alicia Wagner voted for Obama in 2008, believing that he could put Nevada and the country back on track. Unemployment had reached 8 percent that November, which was its highest in two decades, and the state already was leading lists of "worst hit" states from the recession.

The Wagners' optimism turned sour as the state's unemployment rate continued to rise, peaking at 14.5 percent last year. An architect, Jeff Wagner said his best friend had lost his job and then his home. Their own home is worth 50 percent less than they paid for it, he said.

"Four years ago it was very clear that our peer group was in Obama's camp," said Alicia Wagner, 29, an interior designer. "We just saw a lot of friends take steps backwards."

"We believed in the rhetoric of change," Jeff Wagner, 33, said after voting for Romney in early polling. It was his first vote ever for a Republican president.

Ethan Souder, 32, his wife, Laura, and his 7-year-old daughter attended Romney's Las Vegas rally last Tuesday. A member of the U.S. military, he's being dispatched to the Middle East next month, his fourth overseas assignment.

Emphasizing that he was speaking only for himself, Souder criticized Obama for planned defense cuts and said the country needed a new leader like Romney. Part of the cuts stem from a deal agreed on by the president and bipartisan members of Congress that involved a package of spending reductions if a budget deficit-reduction program isn't in place by the end of this year. "I'd like to help, but (military regulations) prevent me from volunteering for any political campaign," he said.

Republicans also have cut into the Democrats' registration lead in Nevada. As of April, they'd reduced Democrats' advantage to 36,000 registered active voters. But with the help of the unions, who've paid some members to take time from their casino jobs to register voters, the Democrats made a strong final push. They now have 90,000 more active voters registered than Republicans do.

There are some signs of improvement in Nevada. Foreclosures have begun to drop and home values are rising.

Those seeds of hope are enough for Kyle Matthews to stick with Obama. The trade show coordinator said exhibitions were coming back as well, giving her optimism about the future. Watching football last week at Meatheads video poker bar, she said she worried about Romney's lack of specifics on the loopholes he'd close to cut tax rates.

"When I talk to my friends, we at least think we're on the right track," she said. "And there's a lot of

trepidation for someone who's not articulating a clear path."

Still, the state continues to lead the nation in unemployment, at 11.8 percent. More than 70 percent of Nevada homeowners owe more money on their mortgages than their homes are worth, known as being "underwater," according to RealtyTrac, which tracks foreclosures across the country.

Among the eye-catching billboards that advertise comedy shows and strip shows are others from lawyers promoting their expertise in short-selling underwater homes.

Those types of concerns are on the minds of dozens of volunteers at the Romney headquarters in Las Vegas, where they make hundreds of calls a day encouraging supporters to get out and vote.

"If you're sick, you call a doctor," said volunteer Alex Caveda, 30, who said he's struggled to get full-time work since he graduated four years ago from University of Nevada, Las Vegas. "You have a problem with the economy, you get someone who has worked and succeeded in the economy."

Both Sides Arming For Recounts, Challenges Monday, October 29, 2012

USA Today

By Gregory Korte

WASHINGTON — The legal briefs are already written, just waiting for a few blanks to be filled in. Hundreds of volunteer lawyers stand ready to run to the courthouse to file them.

If there's a problem on Election Day — or if election night fails to produce a clear winner — both President Obama and former Massachusetts governor Mitt Romney are prepared to take the 2012 presidential campaign from the ballot box to the courts.

It's an effort that could cost millions of dollars and require thousands of lawyers, law students and paralegals. But ever since the 2000 presidential election hung on a few hundred ballot chads in Florida, the recount team is as integral to the modern campaign as attack ads and early voting.

"Whenever you have a contested election in Ohio, both sides need armies of lawyers standing by to cover 88 counties and a million different possibilities," said Mark Weaver, a veteran election lawyer who's co-chairing Romney's legal team in Ohio.

Among those possibilities: long lines at polling places, voting machine malfunctions, allegations

of voter intimidation and challenges to the legitimacy of absentee and "provisional" votes.

Neither campaign would discuss its recount contingency plan in depth. But with hours or even minutes crucial to making every vote count, both sides certainly have a legal playbook covering every conceivable situation.

"One thing both sides are thinking about is what court to file in, state or federal? And do you go to court, or do you work through the administrative process?" said Edward Foley, who directs the election law institute at the Ohio State University Moritz College of Law. "And they have different strategies based on if they're up or if they're behind."

Those strategies even extend to the candidates' election night speeches. No longer can a candidate be prepared with just a victory speech and a concession speech. One of the lessons of Florida is that the candidate's words have to be clear and consistent even if the vote-counting isn't.

Foley cautions campaigns to be careful how they use the word "recount" — especially if they're behind by a few thousand votes in a decisive swing state. In Ohio, for example, all the votes aren't officially counted until after Nov. 16 — when all absentee ballots are received and disputes over provisional ballots are resolved. The soonest a recount could begin is Dec. 2. The electoral college meets Dec. 17.

Both campaigns have battle-hardened veterans leading their legal teams. Romney has Ben Ginsberg, who led George W. Bush's successful effort to win the Florida vote in 2000. Obama has his former White House counsel, Bob Bauer, whose background is in election law and who headed up voter protection efforts for Democrats in 2004.

If there is a prolonged and expensive recount battle, Republicans have deeper pockets. The Republican National Committee has taken more than \$5.2 million in contributions into a special recount fund, according to a USA TODAY analysis of campaign finance reports. The Democratic National Committee had \$807,400 through Oct. 1.

Contributors to the GOP's recount effort include casino owner Sheldon Adelson and discount brokerage founder Charles Schwab. Democratic efforts are supported by Yahoo CEO Marissa Mayer and fashion designer Diane von Fürstenberg, among others.

But if there is a contested election, the campaigns will spare no expense and figure out how to pay

for it later, said Trevor Potter, the former Federal Election Commission chairman who served as the top lawyer to Sen. John McCain's 2008 presidential bid.

"They'll expect a lot of volunteer legal services from people who are dedicated to the candidate and may want to serve in the next president's administration," Potter said. "That's the pattern from Florida."

Obama has been aggressively recruiting volunteer lawyers, paralegals and even law students. Election lawsuits are fact-intensive, and poll watchers are needed in every county in every swing state to watch for problems.

But there's another reason why both sides have assembled deep legal teams. "You want a lawyer who knows that area," Weaver said. "The old saying is true. 'Good lawyers know the law. Great lawyers know the law and the judge.'"

GOP's Senate Hope May Hinge On Ohio Monday, October 29, 2012

Politico

By David Catanese

COLUMBUS, Ohio — Mitt Romney isn't the only one whose fortunes may rest on Ohio.

Republicans have renewed optimism that a late surge by Senate candidate Josh Mandel could offer a Buckeye State surprise — and keep the party's fading chances of winning the Senate alive.

Make no mistake: Democratic Sen. Sherrod Brown remains the favorite.

The grizzled first-term incumbent has clung to a durable polling lead over the hard-charging 35-year-old state treasurer. Internal tracking polls consistently have shown Brown running just ahead of President Barack Obama. And during multiple campaign stops this week, the senator carried himself with an air of unmistakable confidence, bordering on gleeful bravado.

"We know there is going to be a record set. Never in the history of the country will there have been this much outside money spent for a losing candidate," Brown told a group of campaign volunteers in Dayton Friday, referring to the nearly \$30 million of third-party money that's been spent to help Mandel.

But it's also true that Mandel has closed on Brown in the final weeks, turning the race from a potential landslide into a single-digit affair.

Though recent polling on the race has been all over the place — Brown has led by anywhere from

1 point to 11 points — an Ohio Newspaper Poll out Monday had the senator ahead, 51 to 47 percent. That respected survey was commissioned by the state's largest newspapers.

On top of Mandel's surge, Romney's all-out pursuit of the state's 18 electoral votes is bolstering the GOP ground game here.

"I don't know that there is another race that is closer in which people are paying less attention to," said a GOP strategist involved in the race.

In a bitter campaign of contrasts, the Brown and Mandel camps agree on one thing: As the presidential race goes in Ohio, so, in all likelihood, will go their Senate race.

"The better he does, the better I'll do," Brown told POLITICO when asked if he needed Obama to carry the state in order to clinch a victory himself. "He's going to win the state. It's tight, but it's 2-to-4 [points]. It's still better than all these other swing states."

That explains why Brown, unlike almost every other Democratic Senate candidate locked in a close race, has done almost nothing to distance himself from the president. To the contrary, Brown is portraying himself as key White House ally: He is astutely running ads on radio stations popular with black listeners, for example, touting his work with Obama on the auto bailout, health care reform and protecting voting rights.

At the same time, Brown's closing argument is his own brand of progressive populism, focused intently on the plight of manufacturing.

As he perused a trucking assembly plant in Springfield Friday, he was greeted by smiling workers donning T-shirts with his name on it.

"Always good to see somebody with a strong manufacturing background," one told the senator.

Later, the plant's manager dubbed Brown "a member of the family."

These friendly confines allow the incumbent to showcase tangible results from the economic progress the state has enjoyed — while sharpening his case for votes he's taken in the Senate that opponents are pummeling him over.

"You couple trade enforcement with what we've done with small-business tax incentives, coupled with auto rescue coupled with a real focus on community colleges," Brown said in an interview, "and it's not shocking that the unemployment rate's down 3½ points in less than three years."

Ohio's resurgence is also being championed by Republicans — though, unsurprisingly, with a different twist.

Obama Fights For Female Voters He May Have Lost

Monday, October 29, 2012

McClatchy

By Lesley Clark And Maria Recio, McClatchy Newspapers

President Barack Obama sports a pink breast cancer awareness bracelet on his wrist as he campaigns across battleground states. He slams rival Mitt Romney as a throwback with 1950s views of women. And he's airing an edgy new ad enticing women casting their first ballot to pick the right man, him.

The consistent emphasis on women comes as several polls have found Obama's once commanding lead among women voters narrowing.

In the past few weeks, Obama's lead dropped sharply in several surveys:

--from 18 percentage points to zero in a poll by the Associated Press.

--from 18 points to 6 in Pew Research Center polls.

--from 14 points to 4 in polls by Monmouth University;

--from 11 points to 6 in the Politico/George Washington University

Battleground Poll.

The drop was not universal. He had a 15-point lead among women in a new ABC News/Washington Post daily tracking poll. He led by 8 points in a recent NBC News/Wall Street Journal poll and in a Gallup poll.

Obama's campaign brushes off polls showing Obama and Romney tied among women. Campaign manager Jim Messina insisted Monday that Obama is "leading among women by double digits nationally and in every battleground state."

Still, the campaign is fighting to shore up support among the critically important voting bloc.

Introducing Obama in New Hampshire on Saturday, Democratic Sen. Jeanne Shaheen characterized Romney as someone "women can't trust," mocking his debate line that he was given "binders full of women" when he sought to diversify his administration.

"We'll keep our rights, we'll keep our health care and we'll keep our president," Shaheen said.

Obama followed her by charging that a Romney administration would "turn back the clock 50 years for women."

An edgy pro-Obama ad by Lena Dunham, star of the HBO show "Girls," suggestively links voting for the first time to losing virginity. "The first time shouldn't be with just anybody," she says into the camera. "You want to do it with a great guy."

Democratic pollster Celinda Lake, who helped conduct the Politico/George Washington University Battleground Poll, told Politico that "women are holding back because of the economy."

Women may be "focusing more strongly on the economy than on women's issues," said Sherry Bebitch Jeffe, a political scientist at the University of Southern California. But she added that Obama also wounded himself — among women as well as men — with his lackluster performance at the first debate.

Analysts also blame a contraction in Obama support to Romney's success at the first debate in casting off the portrayal of him as an unlikely leader.

"I think a lot of these polls were reflecting some real movement there, that Romney was in a pretty deep deficit, and he came out, overcame negative expectations and presented himself as more moderate than in the primaries," said Michael Dimock, associate director for research of the Pew Research Center.

Yet Dimock says he expects Obama to finish with the same gender gap — more support among women than among men — as his Democratic presidential predecessors.

"I don't see anything in the polling that suggests it will be substantially larger or smaller than what we've seen historically," Dimock said. "I don't see that there's anything unique to the gender gap this year."

Susan Carroll, a senior scholar at the Center for American Women and Politics, a nonpartisan research organization in New Jersey, agreed, adding that she's seen no consistent polling to suggest that Obama is losing his edge among women.

"I think there was erosion in women's support following the first debate and movement toward Romney, but I think it happened for men as well," Carroll said. "But at this point there's no evidence

that it's continuing, that Romney is continuing to pick up women voters."

She said Obama's focus on women stems from the fact that there are slightly disproportionately more women among voters who have yet to make up their minds, and women make up a critical part of Obama's base.

"This campaign is going to come down to turnout," she said. "You would expect him to be out there speaking to women and mobilizing his base."

Still, there are voters like Carrie Williams, 33, a Virginia resident who works in marketing and advertising, and should be in Obama's camp. Although she didn't vote in 2008, she comes from a Democratic family and had rooted for Obama to succeed.

The debates, however, made up her mind. She'll be voting for Romney. Of Obama, she says, "I just don't think he's giving us any indication that he has a plan for the future."

But Lily Bryan, 24, a Virginia resident who voted for Obama in 2008, will do so again. She acknowledges some in her circle "have become a little disenchanted," but will still support Obama.

"It's mostly a lot of social issues," she said, listing abortion rights, equal pay for women and gay marriage as issues where she agrees with Obama.

Any softening of female support comes as Obama faces a significant gap with males, especially white men.

Tom Edmonds, a Republican political consultant in Virginia, says Obama's approach to women voters – including an emphasis on access to birth control and abortion rights – may be misplaced during an economic downturn and is doing little to bring aboard male voters.

"Obama is trying to appeal to women on one single point and they want a job, economic opportunities," Edmonds said. "They want the same things men want. Obama's trying to appeal to women through the abortion issue almost exclusively while Romney is trying to appeal to them on jobs and the economy. As Romney's stock has gone up with men, it's also gone up with women."

Obama's approach has its fans: as the president walked into The Common Man restaurant in Merrimack, N.H., on Saturday after a campaign appearance in nearby Nashua, a woman sitting with her husband and two children grabbed Obama's arm.

"I'm so happy with your support of women," she told the president.

Obama replied: "Women are always – usually – ahead of the game."

Critics Of Ryan Budget Question Effect On Hurricane Preparedness

Monday, October 29, 2012

Roll Call

By Jonathan Strong, Roll Call Staff

With Hurricane Sandy making waves, proposed cuts to discretionary spending in the House GOP's budget are getting a closer look for their effect on disaster preparedness.

"If this hurricane were to happen five years from now, and we had the Ryan budget, we would not be able to predict, with the accuracy we have today, where the hurricane would hit and the potential damage," David Kendall of the think tank Third Way, said in an interview about the budget introduced by Republican vice presidential nominee and House Budget Chairman Paul Ryan (Wis.).

In March, Kendall wrote a memo released by the group that hues to a moderate, bipartisan line, projecting that the cuts in the Republican budget would prevent the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration from sending up a new weather forecasting satellite in 2016.

In March 2011, NOAA officials warned that delays to the satellite upgrades would significantly degrade weather forecasting.

"We are now able to provide forecasting as far as out to seven days, whether it is for hurricanes, major snowstorms, and so forth, and especially over Alaska and other parts of the East Coast. Once that gap occurs, for however long it takes until the satellites are in orbit, our ability to accurately predict with confidence weather patterns, weather hurricanes or major snowstorms, will be reduced down to three to five days," said then-Secretary of Commerce Gary Locke, according to the Washington Post. NOAA is housed in the Commerce Department.

However, the GOP's budget only sets a top-line discretionary spending level for future years, meaning that any analyses of how the cuts would impact specific programs are based on assumptions of how the spending would be divided out to specific accounts.

Still, the top-line cuts are so severe that "no program would escape unscathed," Kendall said.

A spokesman for Speaker John Boehner (R-Ohio) said that Congress would make sure the federal government had the resources it needs for hurricane preparation.

"Republicans have always acted to ensure that FEMA and other agencies have the resources they need to prepare for natural disasters and we will continue to do so," the spokesman said.

Romney Would Give More Power To States, Would Not Abolish FEMA

Monday, October 29, 2012

Politico

By Andrew Restuccia

The Romney campaign stressed Monday that states should take the lead in responding to emergencies like hurricanes. But the campaign said Romney would not abolish the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

"Gov. Romney believes that states should be in charge of emergency management in responding to storms and other natural disasters in their jurisdictions," Romney spokesman Ryan Williams said in a statement. "As the first responders, states are in the best position to aid affected individuals and communities, and to direct resources and assistance to where they are needed most. This includes help from the federal government and FEMA."

A campaign official added that Romney would not abolish FEMA.

The statement came after The Huffington Post highlighted Romney's comments from a June 2011 CNN primary debate in which Romney said states should take on a bigger role in responding to disasters. "Mitt Romney In GOP Debate: Shut Down Federal Disaster Agency, Send Responsibility To The States," read the Huffington Post's headline.

"FEMA is about to run out of money, and there are some people who say, 'Do it on a case-by-case basis.' And there are some people who say, 'You know what, maybe we're learning a lesson here that the states should take on more of this role.' How do you deal with something like that?" debate moderator John King asked Romney during the debate, pointing to the May 2011 tornado that killed more than 150 people in Joplin, Mo.

"Absolutely. And every time you have an occasion to take something from the federal government and send it back to the states, that's the right direction. And if you can go even further and send

it back to the private sector, that's even better," Romney responded.

"Instead of thinking in the federal budget, 'What we should cut?' we should ask ourselves the opposite question, 'What should we keep?' We should take all of what we're doing at the federal level and say, 'What are the things we're doing that we don't have to do?' And those things we've got to stop doing," Romney continued.

Romney Would Pass The Buck On Disasters

Tuesday, October 30, 2012

Washington Post

By Eugene Robinson

Back when he was being "severely conservative," Mitt Romney suggested that responsibility for disaster relief should be taken from the big, bad federal government and given to the states, or perhaps even privatized. Hurricane Sandy would like to know if he'd care to reconsider.

The absurd, and dangerous, policy prescription came in a GOP primary debate in June. Moderator John King said he had recently visited communities affected by severe weather and noted that the Federal Emergency Management Agency "is about to run out of money."

"There are some people . . . who say, you know, maybe we're learning a lesson here that the states should take on more of this role," King said. "How do you deal with something like that?"

Romney replied: "Absolutely. Every time you have an occasion to take something from the federal government and send it back to the states, that's the right direction. And if you can go further and send it back to the private sector, that's even better."

Romney went on to express the general principle that, given the crushing national debt, "we should take all of what we're doing at the federal level and say, 'What are the things we're doing that we don't have to do?'"

King gave him a chance to back off: "Including disaster relief, though?"

Romney didn't blink. "We cannot afford to do those things without jeopardizing the future for our kids," he said, adding that "it is simply immoral . . . to rack up larger and larger debts and pass them on to our kids."

Now, with an unprecedented and monstrous storm bashing the East Coast, this glib exercise in ideological purity is newly relevant. Was Romney really saying that the federal government should

abdicate the task of responding to natural disasters such as the one now taking place? Yes, he was. Did he really mean it? Well, with Romney, that's always another question.

As the legendary Watergate source Deep Throat never actually said: "Follow the money."

The dishonest "solution" proposed by Romney and running mate Paul Ryan for the federal government's budget woes relies largely on a shell game: Transfer unfunded liabilities to the states.

Most disastrously, this is what Romney and Ryan propose for Medicaid, the health-care program for the poor. The GOP plan would give the states block grants that would not begin to cover Medicaid's rising costs. Governors and legislatures would be forced to impose draconian cuts, with potentially catastrophic impact for millions of Americans.

Medicaid's most expensive role — and thus, under Romney, the most imperiled — is to fund nursing-home care for seniors who classify as "poor" only because they have exhausted their life savings. Transferring the onus of Medicaid and other programs to the states would save money only by making it impossible to provide services at current levels.

For the hard-right ideologues who control the Republican Party, this would be a good thing. Our society has become too dependent on government, they believe, too "entitled" to benefits; we are unwilling to "take personal responsibility and care for" our lives, as Romney said in his secretly recorded "47 percent" speech.

Romney's budget proposals would end all this coddling — except for the Pentagon and its contractors, who would get a big boost in federal largess, and of course, the wealthy, who would get a huge tax cut.

So-called "discretionary" federal spending would be sharply reduced. This would include spending for such agencies as FEMA. So yes, even if Romney was just pandering to the right-wing base at that June debate, one consequence of his policies would be to squeeze funding for federal emergency relief.

I guess having to survive a few hurricanes, tornados and earthquakes on our own would certainly foster personal responsibility.

And by the way, why is it that we're having such a huge hurricane make landfall in such an unusual place at such a late date in the season? Is this another of those freakish once-in-a-century

weather events that seem to be happening so often these days?

I know it's impossible to definitively blame any one storm on human-induced atmospheric warming. But I'm sorry, these off-the-charts phenomena are becoming awfully commonplace. By the time scientists definitively establish what's happening, it will be too late.

As has been noted, the words "climate change" were not spoken during the presidential debates. Hurricane Sandy wants to know why.

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A Big Storm Requires Big Government
Tuesday, October 30, 2012
New York Times

Most Americans have never heard of the National Response Coordination Center, but they're lucky it exists on days of lethal winds and flood tides. The center is the war room of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, where officials gather to decide where rescuers should go, where drinking water should be shipped, and how to assist hospitals that have to evacuate.

Disaster coordination is one of the most vital functions of "big government," which is why Mitt Romney wants to eliminate it. At a Republican primary debate last year, Mr. Romney was asked whether emergency management was a function that should be returned to the states. He not only agreed, he went further.

"Absolutely," he said. "Every time you have an occasion to take something from the federal government and send it back to the states, that's the right direction. And if you can go even further and send it back to the private sector, that's even better." Mr. Romney not only believes that states acting independently can handle the response to a vast East Coast storm better than Washington, but that profit-making companies can do an even better job. He said it was "immoral" for the federal government to do all these things if it means increasing the debt.

It's an absurd notion, but it's fully in line with decades of Republican resistance to federal emergency planning. FEMA, created by President Jimmy Carter, was elevated to cabinet rank in the Bill Clinton administration, but was then demoted by President George W. Bush, who neglected it, subsumed it into the Department of Homeland Security, and placed it in the control of political hacks. The disaster of Hurricane Katrina was just waiting to happen.

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The agency was put back in working order by President Obama, but ideology still blinds Republicans to its value. Many don't like the idea of free aid for poor people, or they think people should pay for their bad decisions, which this week includes living on the East Coast.

Over the last two years, Congressional Republicans have forced a 43 percent reduction in the primary FEMA grants that pay for disaster preparedness. Representatives Paul Ryan, Eric Cantor and other House Republicans have repeatedly tried to refuse FEMA's budget requests when disasters are more expensive than predicted, or have demanded that other valuable programs be cut to pay for them. The Ryan budget, which Mr. Romney praised as "an excellent piece of work," would result in severe cutbacks to the agency, as would the Republican-instigated sequester, which would cut disaster relief by 8.2 percent on top of earlier reductions.

Does Mr. Romney really believe that financially strapped states would do a better job than a properly functioning federal agency? Who would make decisions about where to send federal aid? Or perhaps there would be no federal aid, and every state would bear the burden of billions of dollars in damages. After Mr. Romney's 2011 remarks recirculated on Monday, his nervous campaign announced that he does not want to abolish FEMA, though he still believes states should be in charge of emergency management. Those in Hurricane Sandy's path are fortunate that, for now, that ideology has not replaced sound policy.

Hurricane Sandy 2012: Political Messages Struggle Amid Storm's Howl

Monday, October 29, 2012

Politico

By Darren Goode

If a tree falls in a forest and no one is around to hear it, does it make a sound?

The same question could be posed about political messages that are aired across the Eastern United States in the run-up and aftermath of Hurricane Sandy in the week before Election Day.

Take for example Monday's announcement by the League of Conservation Voters and Majority PAC regarding a new \$800,000 TV ad buy in Virginia against Republican George Allen's Senate bid. The plan is for the ad, dubbed "Who Loses" and attacking Allen for supporting Big Oil incentives, among other things, to start running Tuesday through Election Day.

But it may be LCV and Majority PAC which loses out in reaching many targeted voters who could be sitting at home without power and busy with storm-related distractions.

"We can't control the weather, but we are doing all we can to defeat George Allen," LCV spokesman Jeff Gohringer said in an email.

The National Republican Senatorial Committee is still running a TV ad against Allen's Democratic opponent, Tim Kaine, on cable stations Monday during breaks between non-stop media coverage of the storm. A Washington Post poll released Sunday had Kaine leading Allen 51 to 44 percent among likely voters.

House Oversight and Government Reform Committee Republicans Friday made much hay about a report released by the Labor Department's inspector general that knocked the Obama administration's green energy jobs training efforts.

"The green jobs training program belongs in the long list of the administration's bad investments including the bankruptcies of Solyndra, Beacon Power, Abound, and just this month, A123," trumpeted a statement Friday from Oversight and Government Reform Chairman Darrell Issa.

The report, which was requested by committee Republicans, is meant to support Mitt Romney's attacks on President Barack Obama's green energy investments and follows two years of hearings and other inquiries by Issa's panel on the effectiveness of stimulus funds.

But any political headwind Republicans hoped to create got largely lost in the preparation for Mother Nature's torrential rains and storm surge that started hitting the Southeastern coastline over the weekend.

Green groups are using the storm to try to draw attention to the effects of climate change and how it causes unusual and more extreme weather.

In Boston, a week-long vigil to "End Climate Silence," involving more than 200 protesters meant to protest the silence from the campaign trail on climate change, was canceled because of Sandy.

"The irony is not lost on us," said organizer Susan Redlich of Cambridge.

The presidential campaigns are also being affected, and both have canceled travel to presidential battleground states squarely in Sandy's path. That includes a trip Obama had planned for Wisconsin Tuesday. Instead he'll stay

in Washington D.C. to monitor the storm after returning Monday from a campaign stop in Florida.

The Romney campaign so far is staying out of the storm's path, cancelling events planned for Monday evening and Tuesday. The campaign is also loading up buses with supplies to distribute to affected areas and has suspended fundraising emails along the East Coast, including the battleground state of North Carolina.

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Obama Suggests 'Secretary Of Business' In A 2nd Term

Monday, October 29, 2012

Wall Street Journal

By Carol E. Lee

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

Obama, In Morning Joe Interview, Predicts War Inside Republican Party If He Is Reelected

Monday, October 29, 2012

Huffington Post

By Sabrina Siddiqui

President Barack Obama said in an interview Monday that the Republican party would have to overcome an internal war if he were reelected, but expressed hope that the partisan gridlock in Washington could come to an end.

"There are a whole range of issues I think where we can actually bring the country together with a non-ideological agenda," Obama said in a pre-taped interview on MSNBC's "Morning Joe."

"The question's going to be, how do Republicans react post-election?" he continued. "Because there's going to be a war going on inside that party. It just hasn't broken up. It's been unified in opposition to me."

Obama has blamed the slow economic recovery during his first term on the obstructionist agenda of congressional Republicans, who have blocked many of the president's proposals. He has repeatedly argued that the House GOP has waged ideological warfare over historically bipartisan issues. Republicans have countered that the president is fundamentally unwilling to compromise.

Asked by host Joe Scarborough what would be different if, in a second term, Obama was once again dealing with a Republican majority in the

House, the president expressed more optimism that Democrats and Republicans would come together to tackle the debt and deficit.

"I truly believe that if we can get the deficit and debt issues solved, which I believe we can get done in the lame-duck or in the immediate aftermath of the lame-duck, then that clears away a lot of the ideological underbrush," he said. "And then now we can start looking at a whole bunch of other issues that, as I said, historically have not been that ideological."

Still, Obama seems prepared for the possibility that if he is reelected, Republicans in Congress might not be willing to cooperate. In an interview with Time magazine, the president said he would be willing to "look for ways to do [things] administratively and work around Congress."

Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.), who infamously stated before the 2010 midterm elections that the "single most important thing" for Republicans would be to ensure that Obama be a one-term president, recently told The Huffington Post that cooperation in a second Obama term would require that the president have "an epiphany."

"The question for him is, 'Do I go to the middle and meet these guys halfway, like Reagan and Clinton did, or do I just double down on the left and we throw things at each other for four years?'" McConnell said.

Secretary Of Say What?

Obama now says he wants a cabinet officer for business. Seriously.

Tuesday, October 30, 2012

Wall Street Journal

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

G.O.P. Tries To Chip Away At Democrats' Edge In Early Voting

Monday, October 29, 2012

New York Times

By Michael Cooper And Jeff Zeleny

With more than one in three votes likely to be cast before Election Day this year, Republicans are stepping up their efforts to chip away at what has been a Democratic advantage in early voting in key battlegrounds like Ohio and North Carolina.

In Ohio, whose 18 electoral votes are at the center of the presidential race, more than a million votes have already been cast, highlighting a

change in the political rhythm that has led Republicans to begin to embrace the belief long held by Democrats that early voting can be used to increase turnout, not just to shift votes from one day to another.

"Some Republicans don't like to vote early, they like to go on Election Day, I understand that," Senator Rob Portman of Ohio, the state chairman of the Romney campaign, said at a campaign rally last week. "If you go down and vote, that frees you up to help others on Election Day."

When President Obama flew home to Chicago last week to cast his ballot, he became one of the millions of Americans who have already voted — a flood of early votes that is reshaping how both campaigns operate.

The early vote gave Mr. Obama his margin of victory in several key states four years ago, and Democrats are trying to maintain that advantage this year by banking as many early votes as they can. But Republicans are trying to dampen any early Democratic edge by making a bigger organizational push than they did in the last election. Hurricane Sandy has introduced more uncertainty into the mix: it forced some early voting sites in North Carolina and Virginia to close on Monday, and the storm could curtail early voting hours in other key states.

The every-day-is-Election-Day effects of early voting have transformed modern campaigning, from the Bruce Springsteen concerts the Obama campaign organized this month to mobilize supporters to the polls, to the less glamorous databases that the campaigns keep to track potential early voters as their get-out-the-vote operations have stretched into weeks instead of one frantic day.

Nearly 15 million people have voted so far, according to Michael P. McDonald, an associate professor of government and politics at George Mason University who keeps tabs on early voting. He said that the pace of early voting this year suggested that 35 percent or more of all votes could be cast before Election Day, surpassing the previous record in 2008 when 30 percent voted early. "Both registered Democrats and registered Republicans are voting at clips that are outpacing their 2008 levels," he said.

Both parties have been spinning cherry-picked statistics to paint their early-vote operations as a success. While the true measure of their success will not be known until all the ballots are cast and counted, a look at who has voted early so far and where they live does give some meaningful

indications of how the early vote is going in some of the key swing states where the election will be decided.

Democrats appear to have an advantage with early voting in several of them. Iowa Democrats had cast nearly 59,000 more early votes than Iowa Republicans through the end of last week. A state law there allows campaigns to petition election officials to open temporary voting locations, which have popped up in Mexican restaurants, evangelical churches and libraries. When Mr. Obama visited Cornell College in Mount Vernon, Iowa, the day after his second debate, a voting site was set up just across campus, with giant chalk-drawn arrows on sidewalks to guide students to cast their ballots. That day 433 people voted, according to Tim Box, the deputy commissioner of elections in Linn County there.

More early votes have been recorded this year in Nevada than were four years ago, and more than 35,000 more early votes have been cast by Nevada Democrats than by Republicans, giving Democrats a 46 percent to 36 percent lead in ballots cast in person by early voters.

But in some states, there are indications that Republicans are narrowing their early vote deficits. In North Carolina, about half of the 1.5 million votes received so far were cast by Democrats, giving them an advantage of nearly 20 percentage points above Republicans. It is a wide margin, but the question is whether it will be wide enough: Mr. Obama won the early vote in North Carolina by an even wider margin four years ago, Professor McDonald noted.

And it was that wide margin that helped Mr. Obama win the state — the early vote propelled him to victory even though he received fewer votes than Senator John McCain on Election Day.

Republicans have an edge in casting early votes in Colorado, where they have cast nearly 20,000 more than Democrats. Since Republicans in many states are more likely to wait until Election Day to cast their ballots, the party's mission in many places is simply to whittle away at the Democratic advantage in early voting — so that Democrats will have a smaller cushion of votes going into Election Day.

Some Republicans argue that the Democrats are effectively cannibalizing their Election Day turnout, saying that many of their early voters appear to be frequent voters who would vote anyway. "Republicans have been focused on increasing turnout among those Romney supporters who are less likely to vote and banking those votes during

the early vote period," a blog post on the Republican National Committee's Web site said.

Several states controlled by Republicans cut back early voting hours this year. After officials in Ohio announced plans to eliminate early voting in the days before the election, with an exception for members of the military, the Obama campaign sued. They prevailed in the case, which made it all the way to the Supreme Court. Republican officials in Florida scaled back their early voting hours this year, too, eliminating voting on the Sunday before Election Day, when many black churches conducted "souls to the polls" voting drives.

Some 1.9 Floridians have already voted. More than half a million people there have gone to the polls since the state began in-person early voting over the weekend, and Democrats cast more than 78,000 more votes than Republicans, according to statistics provided by the state. The first weekend of in-person voting erased the 61,000 vote edge that Republicans had run up with absentee ballots, most of which were mailed in. But in Florida more than 300,000 early and absentee votes were cast by independent voters — whose votes could prove decisive.

In Ohio, party affiliation is difficult to gauge, because the state does not register voters by party; the only indication of party affiliation is which primary they last voted in. The state's decision to send absentee ballot request forms to all voters this year for the first time led to an increase in requests from rural, traditionally Republican counties, said Professor McDonald, but also in urban counties. In Cuyahoga County, the Democratic stronghold around Cleveland, more early votes have been tallied so far this year than there were four years ago.

Bill Dorsey, 68, a retired teacher in Ohio, cast his ballot for Mr. Obama last week in Franklin County, on the north side of Columbus in a former Kohl's department store that closed last year. "If I drop dead before Election Day," said Mr. Dorsey, "my vote still counts."

Democrats Hold Early-Voting Advantage Over Republicans

Monday, October 29, 2012

Bloomberg News

By John McCormick

In two of the most competitive states in the U.S. presidential race — Iowa and Nevada — Democrats are building a significant advantage in early voting.

Who has the edge is more muddled in the bigger swing states of Ohio and Florida, while Republicans have a narrow lead in Colorado. Early, in-person voting started in Florida over the weekend, and dozens of Democrats in Tallahassee marched five blocks from a church to an early-voting site yesterday, chanting "Vote early."

Almost 15 million people have already cast ballots nationwide, according to the United States Elections Project at George Mason University in Fairfax, Virginia. Both parties are spinning their versions of what the turnout means as they seek to project momentum in a contest where more than a third of the nation's vote probably will be cast before Election Day, Nov. 6.

"The data are confirming what we are seeing in the polling, which is that these state races are going to be narrower than in 2008," said Michael McDonald, a professor at George Mason who studies early voting.

In Iowa, more than 470,000 people had cast ballots through Oct. 27, according to the Iowa secretary of state's office. If as many people vote this year as did in 2008, that would represent 30 percent of the total vote. Registered Democrats have cast 44.6 percent of the ballots so far, compared with 32 percent by Republicans and 23.3 percent by independents. Polls Versus Voting

"The main thing is not to look at the polling but to look at the voting," David Axelrod, a senior campaign strategist for President Barack Obama, said yesterday on CNN's "State of the Union" program. "We are mounting up a very, very large lead in Iowa based on where those early votes are coming from."

By the end of this week, McDonald said the proportion of early voting in Iowa, as compared with 2008's total vote, could grow to 45 percent. If current trends for ballots requested and returned remain unchanged through this week, he said, Obama's advantage could become almost insurmountable for Republican challenger Mitt Romney.

"That's got to be troubling for Romney," McDonald said. "Election Day would have to be a Republican parade for Romney to win the state."

In Colorado, Florida, Iowa and North Carolina, Obama banked so many early votes in 2008 that he won those states even though he ran behind in each in votes cast on Election Day itself, according to voting data compiled by the Associated Press. Nevada Balloting

Thus far in Nevada, where an even larger proportion of the vote has been cast than in Iowa when compared with the 2008 vote, Democrats have accounted for 45 percent, according to an update today from the Nevada secretary of state's office. Republicans represent 37 percent and independents 18 percent.

Republicans have a slim edge in Colorado's early voting, according to data released today by the secretary of state's office there. Of the vote turned in so far, 38 percent is from registered Republicans, while Democrats represent 36 percent and independents 24.5 percent.

Early, in-person voting started in Colorado on Oct. 22, a week after absentee voting. About a third of the total 2008 vote has now been cast. **Sandy's Impact**

Although Hurricane Sandy's path toward the East Coast already has altered the final days of candidate travel in the presidential race, it should have minimal impact on early voting.

Other than Florida and North Carolina, which aren't directly in the storm's path, the swing states with the greatest tradition and activity for early voting aren't along the East Coast.

In Virginia, Governor Bob McDonnell said 15 to 20 of the state's local registrars' offices have closed so far due to the storm, preventing some voters from casting absentee ballots. To make up for lost hours, McDonnell told reporters he is asking local officials to offer extended hours after the storm passes.

Among swing states with early voting and party-affiliation voter registration, Democrats have their biggest advantage in North Carolina, where the party held its national convention and people can register and vote in one stop at various locations. The party has recorded 48.3 percent of the early vote, compared with 31.9 percent for Republicans and 19.9 percent for independents, according to the elections project's data.

Democrats also held a large early-vote lead in 2008, with Obama, 51, ultimately winning North Carolina by fewer than 14,000 votes that year. This year, the Republican National Committee says its party has added almost 60,000 early votes to what it had accrued at the same time four years ago, boosting Romney, 65. **Banking Votes**

The popularity of early voting is growing nationally, and Republicans and Democrats alike are seeing an increase from four years ago. Both parties are working to bank as many votes as possible so they can focus on late-deciders and

others in the final week. Republicans say they're placing their greatest emphasis on low-propensity voters — those less likely to show up on Election Day.

Sometimes compared to a water spigot's flow that starts out slowly and gradually grows more robust, early voting will continue to accelerate as Election Day nears, based on prior patterns. The associated data, which for now is a relatively small sample, will also become more predictive of what's happening.

In 2008, about 30 percent of Americans voted before Election Day. That number is projected to grow to at least 35 percent this year, McDonald said. **Florida Vote**

In Florida, only absentee balloting was available until this past weekend. Almost 1.9 million Floridians cast early and absentee ballots as of this morning, according to the Florida State Department. Democratic voters cast 42.2 percent of those ballots, slightly more than Republicans who accounted for 41.2 percent.

Among only absentee ballots in Florida through Oct. 27, Republicans cast 44 percent, while Democrats accounted for 39 percent, according to numbers from the Florida Democratic Party and Romney's campaign. That 5-percentage-point advantage is down from a 15-point Republican edge at this point four years ago. Republicans have dominated absentee voting in recent Florida elections; Democrats have traditionally offset that with higher turnout at early-voting polling places. **'Souls' to Polls**

Black voters are "galvanized" after Republican state lawmakers eliminated early voting in Florida on the Sunday before Election Day — a day when traditionally black churches held "souls to the polls" events, said retired teacher Bill Tucker in Tallahassee.

"We had all the excitement four years ago, and we're trying to get that back," said Tucker, 72, outside the Leon County Courthouse and near a line of more than 80 voters.

In the swing states of Ohio, Virginia and Wisconsin, voters don't register by party, so it's less clear which party has the early-voting edge. Still, the early balloting can be viewed on a geographic basis and compared with 2008 election results.

McDonald said he expects more than 40 percent of Ohio's voting to be done before Election Day, while the percentage of Virginia's early voters will be in the "low teens." **Obama Ohio Edge**

Early, in-person voting started Oct. 2 in Ohio, and already more than 1 million people have voted in a state where 5.7 million did so in 2008. A Time magazine poll of likely Ohio voters last week showed Obama with a 2-to-1 lead, 60 percent to 30 percent, among those who have already voted.

Obama's campaign is banking large numbers of votes in Ohio counties that backed him four years ago. In Franklin County, which includes Columbus, 141,019 people had already voted through Oct. 26, according to the local election board. That represents about a quarter of the county's total vote in 2008, when 44 percent of the vote was cast before Election Day.

In Cuyahoga County, which includes Cleveland and its suburbs, 161,889 had cast early ballots as of the end of last week, also about a quarter of the 2008 vote.

Ohio early voters favored Democratic candidates in 2010 and 2006, while Election Day voters favored Republican candidates, a study of early voting by the University of Akron concluded. Early voters were more likely to be women, older, and of lower income and education attainment, the 2010 study said. Convenience Issue

"The primary reason for early voting is convenience, and many of the groups for whom convenience is a big issue tend to lean Democratic," said John Green, a political science professor at the University of Akron.

In Virginia, the early vote so far has been minimal, with just 6.6 percent of the 2008 vote recorded, according to the project's compilation of state data. New Hampshire doesn't have early in-person voting.

Democrats and Republicans alike have been encouraging early voting in states that allow it. Obama canceled an absentee ballot he'd already received so that he could cast his ballot in person early in his Chicago precinct, trying to make the point to his supporters of how easy it is to do.

Republicans say many of their core voters, including senior citizens, prefer to vote on Election Day, as they have done for decades. Party officials say they aren't making any big effort to get those voters to the polls early.

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Which Candidate's Narrative Will Prevail?

Monday, October 29, 2012

Wall Street Journal

By Gerald F. Seib

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

Messina, Axelrod Set Obama Spin Machine To Max As Election Day Nears

Monday, October 29, 2012

Daily Caller

By Neil Munro

President Barack Obama's aides are spinning like whirling dervishes, eager to knock down any data showing that former Massachusetts Gov. Mitt Romney is gaining ground in critical swing states.

In North Carolina where the polls favor Romney and Obama has not allocated any time to headline a get-out-the-vote rally, "we really believe that North Carolina is within our reach," David Axelrod, Obama's chief strategist, told reporters during a morning conference call.

Although Republicans say they're increasingly confident about winning North Carolina, "I'm calling their bluff," Jim Messina, Obama's campaign manager, declared. "We have an amazing ground game" there, he said.

However, he declined to say if the president would visit the state again before the Nov. 6 election. "We are taking schedules day by day, because of the storm," he told reporters.

In Ohio, Obama has "led in 14 [polls], tied in 2," said Messina, who did not mention the Oct. 29 poll by Rasmussen that showed Romney ahead by two points.

Romney is "bluffing about momentum he doesn't have," Messina claimed.

Factoring in the Rasmussen poll — the most recent one published — Obama's Ohio lead in the Real Clear Politics average of polls is now only 1.9 percent.

Messina also cited Romney's new TV ad in Ohio, which says the new Italian owners of Chrysler may move the production of Jeep vehicles to China. The ad "reeks of desperation ... the fact that Romney decided to run this ad tell us a lot about him," he added.

Axelrod and Messina also denied that their campaign is losing steam in Pennsylvania and Minnesota, despite a decision to send Vice

President Joe Biden and former President Bill Clinton into those blue states.

Romney and his allies are increasing their advertising in the two states "to pretend they have some momentum there," said Messina.

"We're not going to take anything for granted ... [so] we're going to go up as well" with new ads, said Axelrod.

In Wisconsin, where Obama and Romney are level at 49 percent each according to an Oct. 25 Rasmussen poll, "we continue to feel very confident... what I see on the ground is very encouraging," Messina said.

When asked if the president will visit Wisconsin, Messina replied that "we're still trying to figure out he president's schedule," but added the claim that "Governor Romney is on the defense there on a host of issues."

"The facts and numbers clearly show the president will win this election," Messina boasted.

Despite Romney's "faux bullishness," Axelrod insisted, "we're winning this race ... based on cold, hard data, based on who has voted so far and on state-by-state polling"

"You're going to get spun and spun in the next week," he added.

"In just eight days, we'll know who was bluffing and who was not."

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<http://dailycaller.com/2012/10/29/messina-axelrod-set-obama-spin-machine-to-max-as-election-day-nears/>

The President Who Seems Not To Care
Tuesday, October 30, 2012
Washington Post
By Richard Cohen

One of the more melancholy moments of the presidential campaign occurred for me in a screening room. The film was Rory Kennedy's documentary about her mother, Ethel — the widow of Robert F. Kennedy. Much of it consisted of Kennedy-family home movies, but also film of RFK in Appalachia and in Mississippi among the pitifully emaciated poor. Kennedy brimmed with shock and indignation, with sorrow and sympathy, and was determined — you could see it on his face — to do something about it. I've never seen that look on Barack Obama's face.

Instead, I see a failure to embrace all sorts of people, even members of Congress and the business community. I see diffidence, a reluctance to close. I see a president for whom Afghanistan is not just a war but a metaphor for his approach to politics: He approved a surge but also an exit date. Heads I win, tails you lose.

I once wondered if Obama could be another RFK. The president has great political skills and a dazzling smile. He and his wife are glamorous figures. He's a black man, and that matters greatly. He remains a startling figure for a nation that was still segregating its schools when I was growing up — and killing the occasional person who protested. I went up to Harlem the night Obama won and heard Charlie Rangel wonder at the wonder of it all. The street outside was named for Rep. Adam Clayton Powell, an earlier black politician. His aides were not permitted to eat in the House cafeteria.

History was draped over Obama like a cape. His bona fides in that sense were as unimpeachable as Bobby Kennedy's. The crowd adored Obama, although not as much as I think he adored himself. Liberals were intolerant of anyone who had doubts. Obama was not a man, but a totem. A single critical column from me during the campaign triggered a fusillade of invective. The famous and esteemed told me off. I was the tool of right-wing haters, a dope of a dupe.

Kennedy had huge causes. End poverty. End the war. He challenged a sitting president over Vietnam. It could have cost him his career. It did cost him his life. The draft is long gone, and with it indignation about senseless wars. Poverty persists, but now it is mostly blamed on the poor. When it comes to the underclass, we are out of ideas . . . or patience. Or both. Pity Obama in this regard. It's hard to summon us for a crusade that has already been fought and lost. We made war on poverty. Poverty hardly noticed.

But somewhere between the campaign and the White House itself, Obama got lost. It turned out he had no cause at all. Expanding health insurance was Hillary Clinton's longtime goal, and even after Obama adopted it, he never argued for it with any fervor. In an unfairly mocked campaign speech, he promised to slow the rise of the oceans and begin to heal the planet. But when he took office, climate change was abandoned — too much trouble, too much opposition. His eloquence, it turned out, was reserved for campaigning.

Obama never espoused a cause bigger than his own political survival. This is the gravamen of the

indictment from the left, particularly certain African Americans. They are right. Young black men fill the jails and the morgues, yet Obama says nothing. Bobby Kennedy showed his anger, his impatience, his stunned incredulity at the state of black America. Obama shows nothing.

The Post has endorsed Obama, and I cannot quibble with the editorial. He expanded the nation's sorry health-care system. He steered the country around the banking, housing and financial crisis that threatened to crater the economy. He got Osama bin Laden and that was good, but he also let Syria fester and that was bad. Most important, he has not been taken hostage by a bumper-sticker ideology. Mitt Romney promises never to raise taxes — either a lie or a fool's oath.

On the movie screen, Robert F. Kennedy's appeal is obvious: authenticity. He cared. He showed it. People saw that and cared about him in return. With Obama, the process is reversed. It's hard to care about someone who seems not to care in return. I will vote for him for his good things, and I will vote for him to keep Republican vandals from sacking the government. But after watching Bobby Kennedy, I will vote for Obama with regret. I wish he was the man I once mistook him for.

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Stephens: Barack Obama And Other Has-Beens

Yesterday's man of destiny is today's peddler of spent ideas.

Monday, October 29, 2012

Wall Street Journal

By Bret Stephens

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

A Race In Colorado Takes On National Significance

Monday, October 29, 2012

New York Times

By Carl Hulse

AURORA, Colo. — In his former, overwhelmingly Republican district, Representative Mike Coffman's remark that President Obama was "just not an American" might not have caused much of a stir. His aides note that registered independents in that deep-red territory were mainly those who considered Republicans too liberal.

Now, because of a new Congressional map, Mr. Coffman, a two-term conservative with a long military résumé, finds himself in a Democratic-

leaning district in the Denver suburbs in one of the most competitive House races in the country, with implications for the partisan split in the House as well as for the presidential race. And his comment last spring, which he quickly took back, does not play as well.

"Most Coloradans don't want a member of Congress focusing on things like the birther issue," said Joe Miklosi, 42, the Democratic state representative trying to unseat Mr. Coffman. "I think that is when people started taking a second look at Coffman."

The comment by Mr. Coffman, a 57-year-old push-up enthusiast known for suddenly dropping and doing a share of his daily 500, might have put him on the radar of Democrats and their allied groups looking for vulnerable Republicans to pick off. Until he spoke up on the president's background at a fund-raiser, Mr. Coffman was something of a nondescript figure in the House, known as a rare Republican member of the Armed Services Committee willing to entertain Pentagon cuts. He was not seen as an outspoken member of the far right.

But the comment energized the campaign of Mr. Miklosi, who suddenly found himself on television denouncing his opponent. And it helped turn the race for Colorado's Sixth Congressional District — one of three seriously contested House races in this battleground state — into a magnet for outside money from the national parties and advocacy groups.

"It is a different ballgame," acknowledged Mr. Coffman, who was between phone calls to voters from his campaign office just outside Denver. "It is clearly a competitive district, and it is a big transition."

To cut into the Republican majority in the House, Democrats must win races like this one in the suburbs south and east of Denver, a district redrawn to the party's advantage, with Aurora serving as its heart and population center. If Mr. Obama hopes to carry the state, it is also crucial that he perform well here in Arapahoe County, a top target of the White House.

Mr. Miklosi hopes to benefit from the extensive turnout operation the Obama campaign is mounting, with four field offices in the district.

"It is a huge impact," Mr. Miklosi said. He moved into the district to run for Congress, but he is citing his history of working in the area through a nonprofit organization that distributes donated

medical supplies, as well as noting his social ties to the community.

As in the presidential campaign, Democrats are trying to appeal to women in the district and see them as the key to the election. The Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee has invested more than \$2 million in the race, attacking Mr. Coffman for supporting limits on contraception, a plan to convert Medicare into a voucher program, and proposals that prohibit exceptions for abortion in the cases of rape and incest.

Mr. Coffman and the National Republican Congressional Committee, which has also spent \$2 million on its candidate, have fought back hard, faulting Mr. Miklosi for votes in the state legislature that raised taxes and fees as well as for his support for Mr. Obama's health care law. Mr. Coffman also put out an aid that accused Mr. Miklosi of opposing some mandatory minimum sentences for sexual offenders, a claim the Democrat called badly distorted.

Mr. Coffman, who waltzed to re-election in 2010, grew up in Aurora and points to his deep ties to a community that he remembers as a small, military-oriented town. He said his own career in the military and a tour in Iraq as a Marine civil affairs officer helped him relate to the district's many veterans. Most Democrats in the district are not members of the most progressive element of the party, he said.

"It is a different Democrat, really blue-collar, working-class Democrats," he said, suggesting that differences on social issues would not decide the race.

Mr. Coffman has also sought to emphasize his willingness to break with his party. He said that his experience in Iraq had left him opposed to the nation-building exercise the Bush administration pursued there and that his advocacy of Pentagon cuts had put him at odds with fellow House Republicans.

"People see me as conservative in some areas, independent in other areas," he said. "I think Democrats look at that."

Mr. Miklosi has sought to turn the Pentagon spending issue around on his opponent, saying Mr. Coffman's inability to help House Republicans find a consensus on overall deficit reduction has led to the threat of automatic spending cuts and the prospect of layoffs at Buckley Air Force Base and other local installations.

"He didn't get the job done, and as a result our generals and our admirals are handcuffed and we

are not making defense cuts in a strategic way," Mr. Miklosi said. He said that Colorado was in a position to be a major player in alternative energy sources like wind and solar and that Mr. Coffman was too tied to traditional oil and gas development.

In reviewing the race, the newspaper The Aurora Sentinel said both men were solid options for a growing city that would for the first time be in a single unified House district. But in endorsing Mr. Miklosi, the newspaper's editorial page said the increasingly diverse community had moved on while Mr. Coffman had not. The election next Tuesday will show whether voters see it that way as well.

Mormon Church Is Conspicuously Absent In Md. Same-sex Marriage Referendum Monday, October 29, 2012

Washington Post

By Michelle Boorstein

Maryland activists working to overturn same-sex marriage have had to get used to one surprising absence from their religious coalition: Mormons.

A huge amount of Mormon money and foot soldiers and the support of church leadership were credited with an epic win for traditional marriage in 2008 when California voters approved Proposition 8, which said that only marriage between a man and woman would be recognized in the state. And the D.C. region has one of the largest communities of Mormons outside the West.

But Mormon leaders in Maryland have been silent on the ballot measure to affirm or toss the state's new same-sex marriage law. Activists in other states voting next month on the issue (Maine, Minnesota and Washington) say they see the same thing. The dramatic turnaround from 2008 reflects the tightrope the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is walking as it tries to maintain a generally apolitical church culture while in the global spotlight of a presidential campaign.

"It's surprising they haven't been in the lead on this," said Mike McManus, head of the Potomac-based Marriage Savers marriage counseling and advocacy group and an organizer for Question 6, the November ballot measure that requires voter approval of the state's new same-sex marriage law.

Some Mormons are thrilled to see the church publicly stay out of politics, particularly on an issue that has such strong partisan overtones. Mormon scripture calls it "unjust" to mingle "religious influence with civil government," and

politics is generally a taboo topic in church. Which is why Mormon leaders' decision to become involved in campaigns in California and, earlier, Hawaii, was deeply divisive.

Most Mormons can name measures on which church leaders have taken clear public positions: same-sex marriage in California in 2008, a missile defense system in the 1980s, the Equal Rights Amendment in the 1970s — all against.

But experts and even church officials say Mormon officials are being especially cautious this year because of Republican presidential nominee Mitt Romney's campaign and the danger of their strongly evangelical faith becoming too closely associated with one party.

This year, for the first time in decades, church officials didn't meet at the start of the legislative session with Utah state lawmakers.

"It's the political climate we're in. There was just too much over-interpreting," said Michael Otterson, church spokesman.

Some experts say Mormonism is in a period of flux when it comes to mixing politics and faith. The community's identity was shaped by discrimination, including in the late 1800s, when measures aimed at Mormons were passed barring polygamists from voting or holding elected office. Mormonism is also very hierarchical, and ordinary Mormons and local church leaders are discouraged from speaking as individuals. Local clergy don't take public positions; only the church's headquarters in Salt Lake City does. Several Mormons contacted for this story for their personal view referred a reporter to spokespeople.

Mormonism is also spreading overseas, and leaders are concerned about taking positions on issues that may seem parochial.

"I think there has been a sense that the church needs to rise above this sort of thing," said Matthew Bowman, a Mormon and a historian of American religion at Hampden-Sydney College.

Sensitivities were clear right away in Maryland, when in March two Mormon women working to gather petition signatures sought volunteers on an unofficial church e-mail group list for a congregation in Chevy Chase. The posting was quickly taken down, and the congregation had a meeting about proper use of the e-mail group and not using it for political outreach.

Neither woman responded to requests for comment.

"A lot of people signed up with them, but a lot of people were taken aback," said David Baker, a gay member of the congregation who is working to oppose the measure.

Baker and other advocates for same-sex marriage are glad that the church in 2012 is taking such a different tack than it did the last year there were a slew of measures on the ballot.

California, Otterson said, was an exception because it is such a large "bellwether" state and because of its large Mormon population. But the cost to the church was real in terms of the controversy generated. Protesters set up camp outside Mormon temples. Some temples were sent fake anthrax. Lists of donors were made public, and Mormon businesses were picketed. Prominent Mormon and former Olympian Peter Vidmar had to step down from a prominent position with the 2012 Olympics after it came out that he had donated to the campaign for Proposition 8.

The silence is not true on the other side. This year has been a landmark one for gay and lesbian Mormons, in good part because of gay-rights initiatives in a number of states and several years of publicity about their faith that say encouraged them to be more open. For the first time, there were Mormon contingents in gay pride parades in cities across the country this year, and advocates in the states where there are same-sex ballot measures said they feel they can speak out without being sanctioned by local church leaders.

But even from supporters of same-sex marriage, there are some mixed feelings about the church's withdrawal from the public arena.

Spencer Clark, 29, of Takoma Park is head of his congregation's male auxiliary and leader of the national Mormons for Marriage Equality. He wonders how Mormons can claim to be led by a prophet who receives revelation from God and yet be wary of speaking up on policy issues.

"I think there is relief and disappointment in the Mormon community that we don't get involved politically in many issues of the day," he said.

Will Obama's Bankruptcy Line Work In Ohio? Tuesday, October 30, 2012

Washington Post

By Marc A. Thiessen

YOUNGSTOWN, Ohio

In an interview with Rolling Stone, President Obama called Mitt Romney a "bull-s---er." But here in Ohio, it is Obama who is peddling the B.S. when it comes to Romney and automobile-

company bankruptcy. The question is: Will Obama's bankruptcy B.S. win him the Buckeye State — and with it a second term in the White House?

The president clearly is betting on it. An Obama campaign ad running here declares that Romney wanted the auto industry to "fail," and an auto worker says, "Mitt Romney would have just let us go under, just let them go bankrupt."

Three years ago, Obama was singing a different tune when it came to bankruptcy. "I know that when people even hear the word 'bankruptcy,' it can be a bit unsettling, so let me explain what I mean," Obama told worried auto workers in 2009, when he announced that he might take GM and Chrysler bankrupt — as indeed happened weeks later. Bankruptcy, the president said, is simply a "tool that we can use" to "make it easier for General Motors and Chrysler to quickly clear away old debts that are weighing them down so they can get back on their feet and onto a path to success." It is not, Obama insisted, "a process where a company is simply broken up, sold off, and no longer exists."

Now Obama using the "B" word to suggest that is exactly what Romney wanted to do.

So how does Obama attack Romney for wanting to take GM and Chrysler bankrupt when he actually took them bankrupt? Romney, Obama claims, would not have provided "government assistance to the U.S. auto companies, even if they went through bankruptcy," adding that "we would have lost a million jobs." This is false. Romney wanted the federal government to guarantee private-sector loans, while Obama wanted the federal government to provide the loans directly. No matter, Obama continues to peddle the falsehood that Romney would have let GM and Chrysler die, declaring at a Cleveland rally last week, "If Mitt Romney had been president when the auto industry was on the verge of collapse, we might not have an American auto industry today."

While the facts are on Romney's side, the messaging is not. The Romney campaign allowed Obama to dominate the airwaves for months and to hammer Romney with bankruptcy attacks without responding — allowing the impression to harden that Romney opposed federal help for the auto industry.

Sen. Rob Portman (R-Ohio) has been a lonely voice in countering the Obama bankruptcy assault. He wrote an op-ed, published Friday in Cleveland's Plain Dealer newspaper, in which he declared, "The question was never whether to let

Detroit go under, but how best to save it." And at a rally in Defiance, Ohio, last week, while Romney didn't mention the bankruptcy issue, Portman took the argument head-on: "Mitt Romney did propose government help. . . . And folks, all the independent fact-checkers who have looked at this agree: President Obama . . . [is] not telling the truth."

Portman knows how to win in Ohio. He beat a sitting lieutenant governor by 18 points just two years ago and is widely credited with helping Romney to achieve his narrow Ohio primary victory in March. And it seems Team Romney is belatedly starting to follow his lead. Over the weekend, the Romney campaign finally released a new ad that goes on the offensive on the auto bankruptcy issue. "Obama took GM and Chrysler into bankruptcy and sold Chrysler to Italians who are going to build Jeeps in China," the narrator says as the screen shows two American cars getting crushed at a scrap yard. "Mitt Romney has a plan to help the auto industry. He is supported by Lee Iacocca and The Detroit News."

The campaign is also beginning to highlight the fact that Obama's plan was, in Portman's words, a "political bankruptcy" that put the government in charge of "picking winners and losers." GM plants in Mansfield, Columbus and Parma were shut down, and more than 100 local dealerships in Ohio were among the losers in Obama's plan. This weekend, Paul Ryan held a round-table with retirees from auto-parts maker Delphi who were cut out of the government deal and saw their hard-earned pensions shrink by up to 70 percent.

A Cincinnati Enquirer/Ohio Newspapers poll last weekend shows the race now tied at 49 percent apiece— which means Ohio, and ultimately the presidency, could hinge on who wins the fight over the auto bailout. Will the late-breaking Romney counterassault be enough to turn the tide, or is it too little too late? We'll know the answer in eight days.

Marc A. Thiessen, a fellow with the American Enterprise Institute, writes a weekly online column for The Post.

Oliver Stone's New Book Rips President Obama

Monday, October 29, 2012

Politico

By Katie Glueck

A new book from filmmaker Oliver Stone offers a scathing critique of President Barack Obama's time in office.

Stone, who wrote "The Untold History of the United States" with historian Peter Kuznick, puts forth a liberal interpretation of American history from the turn of the last century to present day. The 618-page book, slated for release Tuesday — a week before Election Day — from Gallery Books, slams Republicans and Democrats alike, and the authors' assessment of Obama's presidency is tinged with disappointment.

"The country Obama inherited was indeed in shambles, but Obama took a bad situation and, in certain ways, made it worse," Stone and Kuznick wrote. "...[R]ather than repudiating the policies of Bush and his predecessors, Obama has perpetuated them."

Obama's election "felt like a kind of expiation for the sins of a nation whose reputation had been sullied, as we have shown throughout this book, by racism, imperialism, militarism, nuclearism, environmental degradation and unbridled avarice," they wrote.

But on subjects from Wall Street reform to health care to Afghanistan, Stone and Kuznick rip Obama for breaking campaign promises and continuing the policies of President George W. Bush — who's roundly condemned throughout the book. In some instances, they write, Obama went further than Bush's White House toward anti-progressive policies.

"Obama asserted presidential power in ways that must have made Dick Cheney jealous," they wrote.

"In 2011, Obama defied his own top lawyers, insisting that he did not need congressional approval under the War Powers Resolution to continue military activities in Libya," they continued, in their write-up of Obama's handling of intervention in that country.

An accompanying documentary series is set to air on Showtime starting Nov. 12.

Stone said in 2008 that he backed Obama, but earlier this year said that he would support GOP Rep. Ron Paul over Obama if he could.

The biting criticism from Stone and Kuznick includes:

On Wall Street reform: "The biggest winner under Obama was Wall Street."

On health care: "Obama's failure to articulate a progressive vision was also apparent in the fight over health reform, which was to have been his signature initiative...Obama's health care reform effort, marked by the inability to even refute

Republican charges of death panels, was so unpopular that it became an albatross around the necks of Democrats in the 2010 election."

On a troop surge in Afghanistan: "When it finally came down to decision time, Obama didn't have the courage or integrity of a post-Cuban Missile Crisis John F. Kennedy. He settled on a 30,000-troop increase, giving the military leaders almost everything they wanted and more than they expected."

On civil liberties: "Among the greatest disappointments to his followers was Obama's refusal to roll back the expanding national security state that so egregiously encroached on American civil liberties."

On 'imperialism': "[He] was not offering a decisive break with over a century of imperial conquest. His was a centrist approach to better managing the American empire rather than advancing a positive role for the United States in a rapidly evolving world."

On defense spending: "While cutting defense spending, pulling combat forces out of Iraq and beginning the drawdown in Afghanistan represented a welcome retreat from the hypermilitarism of the Bush-Cheney years, they did not represent the sharp and definitive break with empire that the world needed to see from the United States."

NEAR EAST & NORTH AFRICA

Israel Believes Sanctions On Iran Hit Hezbollah

Tuesday, October 30, 2012

Associated Press

By Amy Teibel, Associated Press

TEL AVIV, Israel (AP) — A top Israeli military official says international sanctions against Iran are cutting its flow of aid and weapons to anti-Israel Hezbollah militants in Lebanon.

Even so, he says the Lebanese guerrilla group remains a potent force with an arsenal far larger and of higher quality than it possessed during a monthlong war against Israel in 2006.

Speaking Monday, the official said Hezbollah possesses tens of thousands of rockets and missiles capable of striking deep inside Israel.

Israel has expressed concerns that Syria's chemical weapons might fall into the hands of Hezbollah as the Syrian civil war deepens. The official said for now, the Syrian government

appears to be maintaining control over its chemical weapons arsenals.

The official spoke on condition of anonymity under military rules.

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Peres Tells US Military Chief Iran Sanctions Showing Results

Tuesday, October 30, 2012

AFP

US military chief Martin Dempsey and Israeli President Shimon Peres on Monday discussed "the Iranian nuclear threat, the strengthening of strategic relations between the two countries and developments in the region," a statement from Peres's office said.

It quoted Peres as saying that economic sanctions aimed at forcing Iran to abandon what Israel and the West say is a nuclear arms programme are starting to take effect.

"The sanctions are beginning to show some results," he said.

"I think all of us agree that we should start with the non-military options while keeping all options on the table. If we can conclude it in a diplomatic way, then it's much better."

Peres's office said that Israeli armed forces head Benny Gantz sat in on the meeting.

Dempsey arrived in the Jewish state on Sunday in conjunction with a massive US-Israeli missile defence drill, described by officials on both sides as the largest joint military exercise ever between the two allies.

"I know we're having a joint exercise at the moment which is important," Peres was quoted as telling Dempsey. "I want to thank you for coming and for your personal commitment to Israel's security."

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu says that time is running out for the diplomatic option and the moment for military force is fast approaching.

He has urged US President Barack Obama to define clear "red lines" for Tehran, along with the consequences of crossing them.

Obama says that the use of force remains an option, but that there is still time for diplomacy to work.

"I think it is our commitment to remaining strong militarily together that provides the foundation for the other instrument of power to be applied," Peres's office quoted Dempsey as telling him.

Gantz earlier had his own meeting with Dempsey at military headquarters in Tel Aviv, discussing what an Israeli military statement called "aspects of military cooperation and shared security challenges."

Meanwhile, Israeli Defence Minister Ehud Barak flew to Britain on Monday for talks with senior defence officials and Foreign Secretary William Hague, Barak's office said in a statement.

It did not elaborate on the reason for the trip, but talks were likely to centre on Iran's nuclear ambitions and instability in Syria and elsewhere in the Middle East.

Last month Britain's Daily Mail newspaper said that the head of Britain's foreign intelligence agency MI6 had visited Israel to warn Netanyahu against military action on Iran.

Sir John Sawers was also reported to have met Barak and a number of security and diplomatic officials.

On Sunday Barak met Dempsey and a statement from his office said they discussed the exercise, known as "Austere Challenge 12" and talked about "all current regional matters."

Report: Iran Has Drone Pictures Of Israeli Bases

Tuesday, October 30, 2012

Associated Press

By Ali Akbar Dareini, Associated Press

TEHRAN, Iran (AP) — Iran has images of sensitive Israeli military bases taken by a drone that was launched by Lebanon's Hezbollah movement and downed by Israel earlier this month, a senior Iranian lawmaker claimed Monday in the latest boast from Tehran about purported advances in the capabilities of its unmanned aircraft.

The announcement gave no details about the photos — other than calling the Israeli bases "forbidden sites" — but it suggested Iranian drones have the ability to transmit data while in flight. It also appeared aimed at warning Israel about the options for retaliation for any possible strikes on Iranian nuclear sites.

A prominent lawmaker, Ismaeil Kowsari, also was quoted as saying that the Iranian-backed Hezbollah possesses more sophisticated Iranian-

made drones than the one that was downed, including some that could carry weapons.

"These drones transmit the pictures online," Kowsari he told the semiofficial Mehr news agency. "The pictures of forbidden sites taken and transmitted by this drone are now in our possession."

The lawmaker, who heads the parliament's defense committee, said Hezbollah is "definitely" equipped with more sophisticated drones, but gave no further details.

A senior Israeli military official in Israel's northern command said he did not believe the drone possessed a camera, though he noted an Israeli investigation is continuing. He spoke on condition of anonymity under military guidelines.

Hezbollah "won't announce it as long as it doesn't see the need to do so ... That's why we say we will respond to Israel inside (its) territory, should it take any action against us," said Kowsari, a former commander of the powerful Revolutionary Guard.

Iran has claimed that Iranian-made surveillance drones have made dozens of apparently undetected flights into Israeli airspace from Lebanon in recent years. Israel has rejected the account.

Iran's Defense Minister Ahmad Vahid also claimed on Sunday that Tehran has drones far more advanced than the Ayub unmanned aircraft launched by Hezbollah, saying it was not the "latest Iranian technology, definitely." He did not elaborate.

Hezbollah leader Sheik Hassan Nasrallah has said the Ayub drone was manufactured in Iran and assembled in Lebanon.

Iran routinely announces technological breakthroughs in its defense program. Last month it claimed to have started producing a long-range missile-carrying drone with a range of 2,000 kilometers (1,250 miles).

The Shahed-129, or Witness-129, covers much of the Middle East including Israel and nearly doubles the range of previous drones produced by Iranian technicians, who have often relied on reverse engineering military hardware with the country under Western embargo.

But it's unclear whether the new drone contains any elements of an unmanned CIA aircraft that went down in eastern Iran last year. Iran said it has recovered data from the RQ-170 Sentinel and claimed it was building its own replica.

Iran's claims are impossible to independently confirm because the country's arsenal is not open to widespread international inspection with multinational war games or other cooperation.

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Israel Arrests Hamas Activists In West Bank Tuesday, October 30, 2012

Associated Press

By Ian Deitch

JERUSALEM (AP) — Israel's intelligence service has arrested dozens of Hamas members in the West Bank who had been setting up infrastructure for the militant Islamic group there, according to a statement Monday.

In Hamas-controlled Gaza, militants fired volleys of rockets and mortars at southern Israel, triggering an Israeli airstrike.

The Shin Bet said that 30 Hamas members were arrested near Ramallah, the West Bank's administrative center. It said they were setting up a Hamas network in the West Bank and were relaying information to the overseas leaders of the group, which is sworn to Israel's destruction. They were also setting up Hamas cells in West Bank schools, the statement said.

The statement said two of those arrested were involved in the murder of two Israeli soldiers by a Palestinian mob in 2000. The soldiers entered Ramallah by mistake and were taken to a police station, where they were tortured and then thrown out of a second-story window.

Hamas violently took over Gaza in 2007 in bloody street battles from the rival Palestinian group Fatah.

The Palestinian Authority, dominated by Fatah, has limited powers in the West Bank under Israel's overall security control and has launched its own crackdown against Hamas.

Israel and much of the West deals with the Palestinian Authority, while shunning Hamas, labeling it a terror group due to its suicide bombings and other attacks on Israel that killed hundreds of civilians.

Also Monday, Israeli aircraft struck a Palestinian rocket launching pad and an unidentified militant activity site in the Gaza Strip, in response to persistent rocket and mortar fire from the coastal territory, the military said.

Gaza militants launched 21 rockets and mortars into southern Israel earlier in the day, according to the military's count. No casualties were reported on either side.

The hostilities threatened to undercut a brittle, informal truce that went into effect last week after the worst outbreak of violence between the two sides in months.

Military aircraft dropped leaflets over Gaza warning Palestinians to stay away from the border fence with Israel or risk drawing fire.

The leaflets also warned civilians not to cooperate with militants, dig smuggling tunnels or smuggle in weapons.

Hamas police scooped up the leaflets, witnesses said.

Additional reporting by Tamer Ziyara in Rafah, Gaza Strip.

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Israel Says It Broke Up Hamas Command In W. Bank

Tuesday, October 30, 2012

AFP

Israeli security forces have arrested about 30 activists of the militant Islamist Hamas organisation in the occupied West Bank "in recent months" the Shin Bet domestic security service said on Monday.

It said that a joint operation by its agents, the army and police had "exposed a widespread Hamas command structure operating in the Ramallah district."

"So far about 30 Hamas activists, who were involved in command activity, have been arrested," it said, adding that the network's aim was to give a boost to Hamas activity in the Ramallah area.

Hamas, which rules the Gaza Strip, has been largely suppressed in the West Bank by security forces of the Ramallah-based Palestinian Authority, dominated by the rival Fatah movement of Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas.

"In interrogation of those arrested it transpired that the command worked with the objective of reviving the activities of the Hamas movement and to resurrect it in the Ramallah area," the statement said.

It said that among Hamas methods was a membership drive in local universities.

On Saturday, Israeli security forces held senior Hamas MP Mahmud al-Ramahi for several hours at a military roadblock in the West Bank and impounded his car, Palestinian parliamentary officials said.

The parliament speaker's office said Ramahi, formerly secretary general of the Palestinian parliament, was questioned until evening about his activities in Hamas before being sent back to his home in Ramallah, but his vehicle was confiscated as allegedly Hamas property.

It said that Israeli forces this week visited the home of jailed Hamas MP Ahmed Mubarak and took his car away on the same grounds.

Israel's Likud To Vote On Merger With Lieberman

Tuesday, October 30, 2012

Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Israel's governing Likud Party will be deciding on whether to merge with Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman's nationalist Israel Beiteinu faction.

The union proposed by Lieberman and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is likely to win approval, though some moderates in Likud are opposed to it.

A poll released ahead of the vote on Monday evening shows a merged Likud-Israel Beiteinu party could be far ahead of rivals in Jan. 22 elections.

The TNS/Teleseker poll of 500 people, conducted for the Maariv newspaper and published on Monday, gave the merged party 43 of parliament's 120 seats. Ultra-Orthodox parties that traditionally align with Likud would win 24, potentially handing Netanyahu a comfortable hard-line majority of 67 seats.

The survey had a margin of error of 4.5 percentage points.

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Al-Qaida Claims Deadly Holiday Attacks In Iraq

Tuesday, October 30, 2012

Associated Press

BAGHDAD (AP) — An al-Qaida affiliated group in Iraq has claimed responsibility for wave of attacks

that killed dozens of people in the past two days during a major Muslim holiday.

In a statement posted Monday on a militant website, the Islamic State of Iraq, al-Qaida's Iraqi branch, said the attacks were in response to what the group alleged were the arrests of Sunni women to pressure their wanted relatives to turn themselves to Iraqi security forces.

The al-Qaida statement warned the Shite-led government and its "apostate beasts" to stop persecuting Sunni tribes and women, otherwise "they will not dream of security in the day or night and in Eid (holiday) or not."

The Eid al-Adha attacks killed about 50 people despite the government's efforts to secure the four-day holiday.

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Kuwait Arrests Opposition Chief Over Emir Remarks

Tuesday, October 30, 2012

AFP

Kuwait secret service officers on Monday arrested prominent opposition leader and former MP Mussallam al-Barrak for publicly criticising the Gulf state ruler, a rights official said.

"Members of the secret service arrested Barrak after they came to his residence and produced an official warrant issued by the public attorney," director of the Kuwait Society for Human Rights Mohammad al-Humaidi told AFP.

Humaidi, a lawyer, said Barrak was arrested on accusations that he made public remarks deemed offensive to Emir Sheikh Sabah al-Ahmad al-Sabah, who cannot be criticised under the constitution.

Barrak, considered to be the main figure leading the opposition in Kuwait, made the remarks at a public rally on October 15 when he broke decades-old taboos by warning the emir against changing the electoral law.

Last week, police arrested three former opposition MPs on similar charges and were later released on bail pending trial. A fourth former MP gave himself up and was released on bail after questioning.

Ahead of the arrest, hundreds of supporters gathered at Barrak's residence in Andalus, around 20 kilometres (12 miles) southwest of Kuwait City in a show of support for the outspoken politician.

Kuwait's opposition has been staging protests against a decision by the emir to amend the electoral law after the constitutional court last month confirmed the legislation was in line with the constitution.

The opposition claims that the change is not legal and is aimed at electing a rubber stamp parliament when voters go to polls on December 1.

More than 100 protesters were wounded at the hands of riot police during a massive rally on October 21 described as the largest in Kuwait history.

The opposition plans to stage another protest on November 4 amid stern warnings by the authorities that demonstrations will not be allowed.

EUROPE & EURASIA

Italy And Spain Defer Use Of Bond Plan

Tuesday, October 30, 2012

New York Times

By Raphael Minder

MADRID — The leaders of Spain and Italy insisted on Monday that neither country had near-term plans to use the bond-buying program that the European Central Bank had offered, nor to support a recent proposal for a supercommissioner who might intervene in national budgets.

Instead, both the Spanish prime minister, Mariano Rajoy, and his Italian counterpart, Mario Monti, insisted that they would continue to push for rapid adoption of a European fiscal and banking union. "With regard to the European agenda, Spain and Italy are more united than ever," Mr. Rajoy said at a joint news conference with Mr. Monti.

Mr. Rajoy has been under pressure to tap a bond-buying program announced by Mario Draghi, the president of the European Central Bank, in early September. But he has refused to leap at the opportunity, and on Monday he said Madrid would ask for such financing only when he felt it was "convenient" to do so. Mr. Monti also dismissed the idea that Italy would need such help to meet its immediate refinancing obligations.

Neither leader is eager to expose his government's finances to the greater European scrutiny that requesting the aid would entail.

The Madrid meeting of the two prime ministers came shortly after Mr. Draghi endorsed a proposal initially made by Wolfgang Schäuble, the German finance minister, to establish a European

monetary and economic affairs commissioner. That person would have the power to intervene in national budgets if euro zone governments broke deficit rules. Creating such a post would probably require the approval of all 27 countries in the European Union.

"If we want to restore confidence in the euro zone, countries will have to transfer part of their sovereignty to the European level," Mr. Draghi said last week during an interview with the German magazine Der Spiegel.

Mr. Rajoy and Mr. Monti discussed the supercommissioner proposal on Monday, but neither offered support for the idea, warning that it could further confuse investors about policy making in the euro zone.

"There is a limit to the signals that can be given to the markets in terms of fiscal virtue," Mr. Monti said. "The markets could see this as meaning that the existing instruments don't work."

The Rajoy-Monti show of unity underlines the extent to which Madrid and Rome face the same challenges in persuading investors to buy their debt at a sustainable borrowing cost.

Mr. Monti argued that the difference between the interest rates of German and Italian government bonds, albeit less than before the European Central Bank's bond-buying offer, remained "higher than what is justified" by economic fundamentals.

New Dutch Coalition Govt Seeks \$20 Billion In Cuts

Tuesday, October 30, 2012

Associated Press

By Mike Corder, Associated Press

THE HAGUE, Netherlands (AP) — A new Dutch ruling coalition made up of the pro-free market VVD party and the center-left Labor Party plans to slash government spending by €16 billion (\$20.6 billion) by 2017.

Prime Minister Mark Rutte said he and Labor leader Diederik Samsom agreed Monday to a policy blueprint for their new coalition, an announcement that came after weeks of closed-door talks aimed at bridging their parties' ideological gulf.

"Getting government finances in order is an absolute priority," Rutte said as he gave the financial targets for cuts.

It's his second term as leader of this European Union nation of 16 million. His new administration is expected to be sworn in next week.

The blueprint underscored that Rutte's second government will continue the fiscally conservative policies of his first coalition, which was a staunch supporter of German Chancellor Angela Merkel's tough line on financial responsibility as the EU struggles to rein in its debt crisis.

Samsom conceded that the deal means more belt-tightening for the Netherlands, one of Europe's most economically stable nations and one of only a handful of EU states to have kept its top AAA government credit rating throughout the crisis.

"You can't say you're happy with this deal, because everybody will have to make sacrifices," Samsom told reporters in Parliament.

VVD and Labor together hold 79 seats in the 150-seat House of Representatives after both recorded big gains in Sept. 12 election.

That healthy majority is in stark contrast to Rutte's first administration, which was a minority coalition supported by the Freedom Party of maverick anti-Islam Euroskeptic lawmaker Geert Wilders.

Rutte's first government collapsed earlier this year after 18 months in office when Wilders refused to support a far-reaching austerity program aimed at bringing the Dutch government debt within EU guidelines.

The policy platform made clear that the Dutch will remain strong supporters of the European Union.

"Europe is of great importance for our peace, security and prosperity," the 81-page document said.

Rutte said his party had made "an important concession" to Labor by agreeing to cut tax relief on the mortgages of the wealthy. Rutte's VVD had long pledged not to lower mortgage relief, including at the September elections.

The blueprint also said the Netherlands will not try to host the Olympic Games, saying that successfully bidding for and organizing the Olympics "brings financial risks. There is little support for this in a time of crisis and austerity."

In the past, the Dutch had considered bidding for the Olympics in 2008 — exactly a century after Amsterdam last staged the games.

The new coalition also pledged to lift the age at which Dutch youths can buy alcohol from 16 to 18 years.

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**Berlusconi Party Loses Key Sicily Vote
Tuesday, October 30, 2012**

AFP

Italian ex-premier Silvio Berlusconi's People of Freedom party (PDL) on Monday lost a key regional election in Sicily seen as a barometer for national polls due in April, handing victory to a centre-left anti-Mafia candidate.

With over 50 percent of votes counted, Rosario Crocetta of the Democratic Party (PD) was leading with 30.88 percent, ahead of the PDL's Sebastiano Musumeci with 24.90 percent, robbing him of what was once the centre-right's stronghold on the Mediterranean island.

The outsider, the anti-politics Five Star Movement, surprised observers by garnering 18.46 percent amid rising sentiment against the established parties and anger over rampant corruption, particularly in the Mafia stronghold.

"It's the first time that a candidate for the left is elected as regional governor, it's the first time that an anti-Mafia candidate wins," declared a victorious Crocetta, 61, an openly-gay campaigner against organised crime.

"Today is more than an election result, it is a date with history," Crocetta, who lives under police protection after threats to his life, told journalists.

Pier Luigi Bersani, head of the PD party, called the result "historic".

The regional vote comes at time of deep political uncertainty in Italy, with divisions and bickering within the main parties. Frustration is also running high over waste and corruption in the recession-hit country.

Italy's economic crisis is particularly acute in Sicily, which came close to bankruptcy this year, and where nearly 40 percent of young people are unemployed.

Talk of the day was the success of the Five Star Movement, whose candidate Giancarlo Cancelleri — a surveyor who has never held political office — came in third behind the two main parties.

The movement, founded by comic Beppe Grillo, advocates a "participatory democracy," and promises to tackle waste and privileges in a period of tough financial sacrifices, and has done particularly well among the young.

Grillo swam across the Strait of Messina earlier this month in an election campaign stunt, and spent 17 days drumming up support for the movement in often-packed piazzas across the island.

The defeat comes as a blow to the beleaguered PDL party, which has been struggling with internal divisions and embroiled in corruption scandals.

The political situation was aggravated at the weekend when Berlusconi threatened to withdraw support for the government — a move which could spark panic among markets which have placed their faith in Prime Minister Mario Monti.

Berlusconi's PDL is the biggest in parliament and could force an early election if it withdraws its backing for Monti's technocrat government, but the loss in Sicily is a decisive setback.

The billionaire, who was found guilty on Friday of tax fraud, had announced last week that he would not run for premier in the 2013 election, but later vowed to remain in politics to reform the justice system that found him guilty.

"We left nothing out over the last few weeks: a guilty verdict for Berlusconi a few days before the vote, an overly-agitated internal debate, uncertainty over the party leadership," Musumeci commented bitterly.

Political watchers said Berlusconi's attack on Monti was an attempt to garner some of the anti-establishment fever driving the Five Star Movement.

Berlusconi "still has his old instincts, he knows which buttons to push. The same Beppe Grillo has been pushing for a while: anti-German sentiment, tax intolerance, unemployment and frustration," the Repubblica daily said.

Others said he had done no more than hurt the PDL's chances in Sicily.

The Sicily election was held early because the island's last governor, Raffaele Lombardo, was forced to resign in July after allegations of Mafia collaboration and a crisis in the public finances of the autonomous region.

His predecessor, Salvatore Cuffaro, is serving a seven-year prison sentence in Rome for aiding and abetting the Mafia in its home turf in Sicily.

**Low Voter Turnout In Sicily Suggests Anger
At Politicians**

Tuesday, October 30, 2012

New York Times

By Elisabetta Povoledo

ROME — Sicilians shunned regional elections to renew the island's Parliament on Sunday in record numbers, in an unequivocal signal of growing disaffection with Italy's political class, even as the center-left wrested control from center-right parties that had governed the region since 2000.

A little over 47 percent of Sicily's eligible voters turned out, a record low, down from 67 percent in the 2008 elections, according to the Electoral Office of the Sicily Region. Another pointer of widespread malaise was the surprising success of the Five Star Movement, a nascent protest group. Headed by Beppe Grillo, a sardonic comedian turned political guru, Five Star has surged in a series of local elections this year on a campaign to overthrow the existing political order. With half the ballots counted, the movement had won about 18 percent of the vote.

Mr. Grillo campaigned actively in Sicily, swimming across the channel that separates the island from the rest of Italy, scaling its active volcano, Mt. Etna, and drawing thousands of Sicilians to campaign rallies for his derisive stand-up routines. The party's candidate, Giancarlo Cancelleri, told Sky News on Monday, "It's possible that we got many protest votes to give a signal to the political parties." But he also said low turnout "is always a sign of defeat for politics."

Though local, the elections were closely watched as a possible harbinger of voter intent in national polls next April, when the main political parties appear poised to implode because of internal dissent.

The low turnout and success of a protest movement suggested that public tolerance of Italy's political class had dramatically dwindled in the wake of a series of corruption scandals that brought down regional leaders in Lazio and Lombardy.

The center-left candidate, Rosario Crocetta, was ahead in the polls at about 30 percent, running on a ballot with a multiparty alliance, while the results dealt a further blow to former Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi's People of Liberty party, whose candidate, Sebastiano Musumeci, was struggling to reach a little more than 25 percent of the vote.

Mr. Crocetta will have to forge alliances with other parties in order to have enough seats to form a majority.

The results also reflected Sicily's own problems, including chronic wastefulness and questionable administrative practices. On Monday, the ratings

agency Fitch downgraded Sicily's credit ratings to the lowest rungs above speculative, or junk, grade.

The departing Sicily president, Raffaele Lombardo, who belongs to the Movement for Autonomy — which calls on Sicily to secede from Italy — and is under investigation on reported Mafia ties, resigned in July as the region struggled to balance its books. He denies the accusations and has not been formally charged.

Sunday's vote boded badly for Mr. Berlusconi's chosen successor in the People of Liberty party, Angelino Alfano, a Sicilian lawmaker who had largely staked his reputation on the outcome.

Mr. Alfano's attempts to unify the party behind him was effectively quashed over the weekend when Mr. Berlusconi announced that he had reversed his decision last week to retire from politics. The turnaround was prompted by a desire to reform the justice system, he said in a rambling speech on Saturday, the day after he was convicted of tax fraud.

In the speech, Mr. Berlusconi also warned that his party's support of Prime Minister Mario Monti's technocratic government was wavering, and he distanced himself from the tough measures that Mr. Monti has passed to put Italy on a more virtuous economic path.

Mr. Berlusconi's abrupt hard line against Mr. Monti — along with jabs at Germany, which he accused of swaying Italian economic policy — threw his fracturing party into further disarray, with several prominent members seeking to distance themselves from Mr. Berlusconi. "The Monti government guarantees the credibility of Italy," Franco Frattini, a former foreign minister told the Milan daily newspaper Corriere della Sera on Monday.

Observers Denounce Ukrainian Election, Saying Abuses By Rulers Made It Unfair Tuesday, October 30, 2012

New York Times
By David M. Herszenhorn

KIEV, Ukraine — International observers delivered scathing criticism on Monday of Ukraine's parliamentary election, saying the vote was heavily tilted in favor of President Viktor F. Yanukovich's Party of Regions through the abuse of government resources, the dominance of media coverage and the jailing of two prominent opposition leaders.

"Considering the abuse of power, and the excessive role of money in this election, democratic progress appears to have reversed in Ukraine," said Walburga Habsburg Douglas, a Swedish lawmaker who led an observer mission for the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe's Parliamentary Assembly.

With more than 80 percent of Sunday's ballots counted by Monday night, the results showed the Party of Regions well ahead of its opponents, with about 32 percent of the vote.

The Fatherland party of the jailed former prime minister, Yulia V. Tymoshenko, was second, with about 24 percent. The results showed the Communist Party with about 14 percent; Punch, a party led by the boxing champion Vitali Klitschko, with 13 percent; and the ultranationalist Freedom party with 9 percent.

The vote was closely watched as a gauge of developing democracy in this former Soviet republic of 45 million, once viewed as on a steady track toward integration with Europe after the Orange Revolution of 2004.

Framed in that context, the verdict by international observers was devastating.

"Obviously, if you look at the excitement of the Orange Revolution and what it brought about and where we are today, it's very unfortunate," said Representative David Dreier, Republican of California, who led an American delegation here.

"When you have political opponents incarcerated, when you have the minority television stations basically kept off the air, these are not positive developments," Mr. Dreier said. "Democracy is about much more than elections. Democracy is about recognizing the rights of minorities, respecting the rule of law, building Democratic institutions. Unfortunately, we have not heard that taking place here."

Andreas Gross, a member of the Swiss Parliament who led a delegation to Ukraine from the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, said problems were so deep that even calling a new election would not help.

"We have systemic problems," Mr. Gross said. "To make a new election with the same rules, you get the same result."

The Yanukovich government had been bracing for criticism from international observers and went to great lengths to portray the balloting as free and fair, even installing Web cameras in more than 30,000 polling stations. The casting of votes itself

seemed largely free of shenanigans, with only scattered complaints of malfeasance.

But observers said they could not look past the overall tilting of the political field in favor of the Party of Regions, particularly the continued jailing of Ms. Tymoshenko, the country's best-known opposition politician, and Yuri Lutsenko, another opposition leader.

Ms. Tymoshenko announced through a lawyer on Monday that she would begin a hunger strike to protest fraud in the parliamentary election.

The balance of power in the Ukrainian Parliament will not be known for several weeks because half of the 450 seats will be filled by candidates who did not have to declare a party affiliation ahead of Sunday's vote. They can choose later to align with a party.

The relatively strong showing by the right-wing Freedom party, whose leader, Oleg Tyagnibok, is known for espousing anti-Semitic and racist views, had not been predicted in opinion polls. In the last parliamentary elections five years ago, the party won less than 1 percent of the vote, far short of the threshold to control a faction in Parliament.

Support for the nationalists seemed partly to reflect a backlash against a law rammed through Parliament this year elevating the status of the Russian language, a move viewed by many as undercutting Ukrainian.

The Party of Regions has its base of support in the predominantly Russian-speaking south and east of the country, while the nationalists are stronger in the Ukrainian-speaking west.

Some voters said their support of the nationalists was a general protest against the ruling authorities. Others said they were disenchanted with all of the familiar choices.

About 16 miles outside Kiev, in the small city of Brovary, Natalya Volonyuk voted at a school, accompanied by her husband, Yevgeny, the director of a small Internet company, and her sons, Denis, 4, and Svyatoslav, 2.

"I don't like Yanukovich or Yulia," Ms. Volonyuk said. "They disappointed us."

Anatoly Gaidai, 51, who worked for a German distribution company and now seeks out freelance jobs while his wife works as a teacher, said Ukraine needed to adopt a nationalist stance to avoid being dominated by Russia.

Mr. Gaidai said he had voted for Freedom also hoping that the party would fight corruption.

"It's the only political party that can maybe, maybe change something in Ukraine, because it's really very corrupted," he said. "Everything in Ukraine belongs to one family, the Yanukovich family."

Pavlo Rizanenko, a former investment banker and city councilman who ran for Parliament in Brovary for the Punch party, said the authorities had repeatedly tried to get him thrown off the ballot. He said they had hoped to help the Party of Regions candidate, Sergey Federenko, who is Prime Minister Mykola Azarov's massage therapist.

On the City Council, Mr. Rizanenko built a reputation for fighting land-use corruption by public officials. Last year, he spent a month in a hospital after four men beat him with rubber clubs on a street.

Mr. Rizanenko declared victory on Monday, citing parallel counting of votes at polling stations by his supporters. The official count, however, seemed stalled with a lesser-known, independent candidate in the lead.

"They don't live by laws," Mr. Rizanenko said of officials connected to the Yanukovich administration. "They live by their own rules."

Ukraine Elections And The Russia Model
Tuesday, October 30, 2012
Washington Post
 By Will Englund

MOSCOW—Election results reported Monday in Ukraine's parliamentary election point to an effort by the ruling Party of Regions and President Viktor Yanukovich to follow the same path of government-by-strongman as neighbors Russia and Belarus.

In balloting that was sharply criticized by international observers and denounced as flagrant fraud by the opposition, the party appears to have furthered its grip on power. Tax investigations, denial of television airtime and intimidation of opponents marked the election campaign up until Sunday's voting, and individual precinct vote totals from the balloting have been kept confidential.

The government, which generously wielded public resources on behalf of the party, operated in a "climate of impunity," Walburga Habsburg Douglas, leader of a group of observers from the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, said Monday.

Most disturbing, she said, was that this election was a "step backward" from the democratic progress that Ukraine has made in years past.

Yet in important respects, Yanukovich's standing is not parallel to that of Russian President Vladimir Putin or Belarus President Alexander Lukashenko. Ukraine is a deeply divided country: between east and west, between Russian-speakers and Ukrainian-speakers, between those who loathe the 2004 Orange Revolution and those who only regret its subsequent disappointments.

And even those who voted for Yanukovich — eastern, Russian-speaking citizens — are increasingly dismayed by the corruption and cronyism that mark his regime.

Yanukovich's opponents, even if they are divided and relegated to minority standing in the parliament, will be a vocal force nonetheless. Vitali Klitschko, a champion boxer and head of a new party called UDAR, said at a Monday press conference that he wants the opposition groups to join together to put Ukraine on "a democratic path" and remove "the Yanukovich regime."

It's not at all clear they could do that, even if they could find a way to unite. But unlike Putin, who has faced vocal opponents recently, Yanukovich has no oil or gas revenue to lavish on his country. He has raised salaries and benefits, with no obvious way of paying for them now that the election is over. His critics believe he also lacks the political savvy that Putin has used to cement his place at the top in Russia.

"Without money, they will try to stick to power by using physical force," predicted Denis Kazansky, a political journalist in Donetsk, Yanukovich's home town. But that has its own risks.

Yanukovich's oligarch friends, rather than fearing him, show signs of wanting to distance themselves from him. Rinat Akhmetov, a Donetsk businessman and one of Ukraine's richest tycoons, chose not to keep his seat in parliament. He's more interested now in improving his own image, said Yevgeny Stratievsky, a blogger in Donetsk, and Yanukovich and the Party of Regions aren't good for that.

"Their shadow falls on his name," Stratievsky said.

And Yanukovich has Europe to worry about. For 20 years, Ukraine has been trying to tie its future to the European Union — under Yanukovich as much as with his predecessors — and a break with Europe would be devastating to the Ukrainian economy. It also would make Ukrainian businesses vulnerable to Russian takeover artists.

Western Europeans were loudest Monday in denouncing the conduct of the elections and have been the most vocal critics on the imprisonment of Yanukovich's rival, former prime minister Yulia Tymoshenko (as well as her ally, Yuriy Lutsenko). The OSCE observer mission was unusually forthright in its criticisms of Ukraine: Its members talked of their "deep regrets" at the election's lack of fairness and transparency.

Habsburg Douglas pointed out that the election process continues right up to the seating of the parliament, and she promised that the OSCE would keep it under constant observation.

Final results of the election won't be tabulated until November. Voters on Sunday chose half the parliament by party list, and half by individual district. There are at total of 450 seats.

As of Monday afternoon, with 60 percent of the votes counted, the Party of Regions had won 34 percent of the party ticket, Ukraine's election commission reported.

Tymoshenko's opposition party, Batkivshchyna, was reported to have received 22 percent; the Communist Party, 15 percent; UDAR, 12 percent; and the virulent nationalist group Svoboda, 9 percent.

The ruling party's reported results were markedly stronger than exit polls taken Sunday suggested. So far, according to the commission, the Party of Regions won 117 of the 225 district votes. Allied with the Communists, it is nearly certain to control the next parliament.

Yanukovich's room for maneuver also will be defined to some extent by the results of the U.S. election next week. Republicans, including presidential nominee Mitt Romney, have been more hostile to Russia than has the Obama administration, and Ukrainian analysts expect that a Romney administration would be more likely to give Yanukovich at least a partial pass as long as he professes independence of Moscow.

Democrats, on the other hand, have kept Yanukovich and the opposition at arm's length — out of fear that they could become hostage to Ukrainian politics, which could have unforeseen consequences for U.S. relations with Russia.

Rep. David Dreier (R-Calif.), who led a group of observers to Ukraine on behalf of the International Republican Institute, said in a phone interview from Kiev that there was "cause for concern about the credibility of the election."

Nothing about it, he said, is likely to change the cool attitude of the West toward the current regime.

Ukraine's Ruling Party Leads In Vote Called Biased

Tuesday, October 30, 2012

Associated Press

By Maria Danilova And Yuras Karmanau

KIEV, Ukraine (AP) — The Ukrainian president's party will retain its strong grip on power, according to returns Monday from a parliamentary election that was criticized by Western observers as unfair and biased against the opposition.

The West was paying close attention to Sunday's vote in the strategic ex-Soviet state of 46 million people, which lies between Russia and the European Union and serves as a key transit nation for Russian energy supplies to many EU countries.

Observers from the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe called the vote a setback to Ukraine's democratic and European aspirations. That assessment could lead to a further freeze in Kiev's ties with the West and push it closer to Russia.

Monitors said the election was marred by the absence of jailed former Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko and another opposition leader, the ruling party's use of government funding for the campaign and the skewed media coverage that favored the ruling party. While the voting process got positive ratings at most polling stations observed, the vote tallying lacked transparency, the group said.

"Considering the abuse of power and the excessive role of money in this election, democratic progress appears to have reversed in Ukraine," said Walburga Habsburg Douglas, the special coordinator who led the OSCE election observation mission. "We do not think that this election was fair because it was not level."

"Ukrainians deserved better from these elections," said Andreas Gross, the Head of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe delegation. "Unfortunately, the great democratic potential of Ukrainian society was not realized in yesterday's vote."

President Viktor Yanukovich's Russia-friendly Party of Regions was leading in the count with 34 percent of the vote. Tymoshenko's pro-Western party was second with 23 percent, trailed by the Communists, Yanukovich's traditional allies, with 15 percent. Another liberal party, Udar (Punch),

led by world boxing champion Vitali Klitschko had 13 percent and the far-right Svoboda (Freedom) party had 9 percent.

Yanukovich's party benefited strongly from an electoral change last year that replaced the strictly proportional electoral system with a mixed one, in which half of parliament's seats are elected based on party lists and the other half in individual races.

Despite a combined strong showing of opposition parties, Yanukovich's party was poised to retain its parliamentary majority as its candidates were expected to take the lead in individual races, benefitting from greater access to government funds and the opposition's fielding of multiple candidates.

Tymoshenko's party alleged widespread violations such as vote-buying and multiple voting. Tymoshenko, who was sentenced last year to seven years in prison for abuse of office in a trial condemned by the West as politically motivated, launched a hunger strike to protest the vote violations.

The Party of Regions defended Sunday's election, saying it reflected the people's will.

"We received a great credit of trust from the voters who said that we are moving down the right path," said Yanukovich adviser Hanna Herman.

The opposition tapped into the anger over Tymoshenko's jailing, the country's rampant corruption and a stagnant economy to make a strong showing in the proportional section of the vote. It remains to be seen whether Tymoshenko's group, Klitschko's party and the radical Svoboda can form a strong alliance.

"The Party of Regions won by the number of points, but the opposition scored a moral victory," said Kiev-based political expert Volodymyr Fesenko. "The monopoly on power will be harder to maintain."

Experts say while Yanukovich's supporters seem poised to retain their parliament majority, they will fall short of winning the two-thirds of seats needed to change the constitution.

Political analyst Vadym Karasyov said the new parliament will be "turbulent" and the opposition will seek to block some of the undemocratic initiatives the president may launch.

"Yanukovich can get a simple majority, but it doesn't mean anything, because without a

constitutional majority in parliament he cannot radically change anything," Karasyov said.

The showing of the far-right Svoboda party, which had been expected to barely pass the 5 percent vote threshold, emerged as a big surprise.

Svoboda, which campaigns for the preservation of the Ukrainian language and culture and strongly attacks Yanukovich, is also known for xenophobic and anti-Semitic rhetoric. Analysts said the party's popularity was due more to many Ukrainians' anger with the ruling party than vehemently nationalist views.

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Greece Moves Quickly To Put Editor On Trial Tuesday, October 30, 2012

New York Times

By Rachel Donadio

ATHENS — Prosecutors on Monday set a fast-track trial date for the investigative journalist arrested last weekend after publishing a politically sensitive list of Greeks said to have Swiss bank accounts.

The snowballing case has raised questions about press freedom and Greece's willingness to crack down on tax evasion.

Prosecutors said that Kostas Vaxevanis, the editor of Hot Doc magazine, would be tried Thursday in Athens on charges of interfering with sensitive personal data in a one-hearing procedure that is routine in Greece for misdemeanors. If found guilty, he could face a minimum prison term of one year and a fine of around €30,000, or about \$39,000, one of his lawyers said.

Since his arrest on Sunday and release that same day, Mr. Vaxevanis has become a popular symbol as a crusader against a corrupt system, one in which the political class is seen as protecting the interests of the business elite at the expense of ordinary Greeks who are suffering from years of austerity.

The case has also prompted a debate about whether a journalist has the right to defend freedom of the press at the expense of personal privacy.

On Saturday, Hot Doc published a list of 2,059 Greeks said to have accounts in the Geneva branch of HSBC. The magazine said the list matched the one that Christine Lagarde, as French finance minister, gave her Greek counterpart in 2010 to help Greece track down tax evaders. Ms.

Lagarde is now the managing director of the International Monetary Fund.

Many Greeks saw Mr. Vaxevanis's swift arrest as a sharp contrast to the normally slow wheels of Greek justice — and particularly hasty, given the state's reluctance to investigate the list for the past two years. In testimony before a parliamentary committee in recent weeks, two former Greek finance ministers and the financial crimes authorities have offered wildly contradictory accounts of when they received the list and whether they had acted on it.

One former finance minister, George Papaconstantinou, said that he had "lost" the list, and his successor, Evangelos Venizelos, the leader of the Socialists, also said the list had gone missing.

At a time when Greeks have faced tax increases and wage cuts, their statements raised popular anger at the Greek political establishment. In a country where few political figures have ever received jail terms after being convicted in high-level corruption scandals, analysts said that Mr. Vaxevanis's arrest did not reflect well on the country.

The arrest was "a major political mistake," said Aristides N. Hatzis, a professor of philosophy of law at Athens University. "It's a mistake that's going to have repercussions not only for the Greek government, but also for the Greek political system."

Hot Doc published the names and occupations of more than 2,000 Greeks with accounts at HSBC, including a former culture minister and others including doctors, lawyers and individuals identified as "housewives." But the list did not indicate how much money they had in the accounts. The magazine, as well as the Greek Finance Ministry, noted that having a Swiss bank account was not proof of tax evasion.

Legal experts differed over whether the district attorney had to press charges on Mr. Vaxevanis. Some said that he might have violated laws protecting sensitive personal data or the secrecy of judicial investigations. Some critics accused him of releasing people's personal data simply to spur sales of his magazine.

A lawyer for Mr. Vaxevanis, Harris Ikonomopoulos, said his client was acting in the public interest and had not violated personal data protections in publishing a list that Greek government officials had obtained from the French Finance Ministry.

"The development that made the publication of the list necessary was a huge failure of the authorities to do anything in the past two years and the fact that every government and judiciary authority we know of was allegedly looking for it," Mr. Ikonomopoulos said.

Mr. Vaxevanis wrote that he obtained a copy of the list from a person who had been given the original. Publishing it means it can be compared to the ones that the two former finance ministers, Mr. Papaconstantinou and Mr. Venizelos, gave to prosecutors in recent weeks, Mr. Ikonomopoulos said. "If it's not the same," he said, "one of them has been tampered with."

Many Greeks saw the quick arrest of Mr. Vaxevanis in sharp contrast to the case of a member of Parliament from the extremist Golden Dawn party, who was not apprehended within 48 hours after an arrest warrant was issued in June on assault charges for punching a Communist member of Parliament and throwing water at another leftist member of Parliament on live television. After the 48-hour threshold, the man turned himself in, which allowed for a trial at a more measured pace, rather than the fast-track process that awaits Mr. Vaxevanis.

"It is not Hot Doc that is on trial but freedom of the press in Greece and the truth," Mr. Vaxevanis said on Twitter.

Niki Kitsantonis contributed reporting.

Turkish Police Use Tear Gas Against Demonstration

Tuesday, October 30, 2012

Associated Press

By Suzan Fraser, Associated Press

ANKARA, Turkey (AP) — Police used tear gas and water cannons against a demonstration by tens of thousands of pro-secular protesters, but Monday's march to mark the founding of the Turkish republic went on in defiance of a government ban.

The Republic Day celebrations have in the past few years become a symbol of the divide between Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan's elected, Islamic-leaning government and its opponents who fear the country's secular traditions are in danger.

The Ankara governor's office last week denied authorization for the march, citing security reasons, and declared the gathering illegal.

Challenging the ban, tens of thousands of people assembled in the old part of Ankara, near the building housing Turkey's first parliament, to

march to the mausoleum of Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, who founded the secular republic 89 years ago after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. Government officials, meanwhile, marked the day with an official celebration and parade at a hippodrome, 2 kilometers (1.25 miles) away.

Police fired tear gas and water cannons to disperse protesters who tried to break through police lines, before a barricade was lifted and the demonstrators proceeded to march, waving Turkish flags and carrying posters of Ataturk.

They chanted: "We are the soldiers of Mustafa Kemal!" and "Turkey is secular and will remain secular!" and dispersed peacefully after reaching the mausoleum. There was no report of any arrest or injury.

There were conflicting reports however, about whether the demonstrators had broken past the barricades or the government had ordered the barricades to be lifted. The march was supported by the main opposition party, whose leader, Kemal Kilicdaroglu, briefly took refuge in a nearby military guest house to escape the tear gas.

Under Erdogan's leadership over the past decade, Turkey has boosted economic growth, raised its international profile and reduced the power of the military which had staged three coups since the 1960s. But serious concerns remain about public rights and freedoms in the country.

Hundreds of people, including politicians, academics and military officers, have been jailed, accused of plotting to overthrow the government, in trials that have been marred by judicial irregularities and lengthy detention periods. Last week, the media advocacy group, Committee to Protect Journalists, accused Turkey of waging the "world's biggest crackdown" on media freedoms and said at least 61 journalists are in prison for their published work or newsgathering activities.

On Monday, the media and opposition politicians said police had prevented several buses carrying demonstrators from traveling to Ankara to take part in the march.

The Republic Day celebrations have long been a source of tension in the country. Until two years ago, military leaders and other secularists shunned Republic Day receptions at the presidential palace to protest of the president's wife who wears an Islamic-style headscarf. That forced President Abdullah Gul to hold two separate receptions: a midday one attended by military officers and other VIPs without their wives, and

one in the evening during which women in headscarves were commonly seen.

The opposition to Islamic headscarves has since eased off, and Gul now hosts a single reception.

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Cyprus Police: Hit On Attorney General Foiled Tuesday, October 30, 2012

Associated Press

By Menelaos Hadjicostis, Associated Press

NICOSIA, Cyprus (AP) — Three men including a "paranoid" convicted felon allegedly plotted to assassinate the country's attorney general using an anti-tank weapon, a police investigator told a court on Monday.

The court granted a police request to keep the three suspects in police custody for eight days until investigators build their case against them. The suspected ringleader is 61-year-old Andreas Ounoufriou, who was sentenced to 18 years in prison for the 1996 attempted murder of a judge. The trio faces charges of conspiracy to commit murder and possession of military-grade explosives, a missile launcher and other weapons.

Police investigator Ioannis Georgadjis told a Nicosia District Court that Ounoufriou allegedly masterminded the foiled killing of attorney general Petros Clerides from behind bars a few months before he was due to be released from a four-year sentence for an earlier prison escape. Ounoufriou, believed to harbor intense hatred for Clerides and other figures of authority, allegedly recruited the other two men, aged 39 and 52, to help him carry out his plan.

Georgadjis said Ounoufriou planned the hit in prison so that he could argue that he couldn't have been involved because he was still behind bars. Under cross examination, the police investigator didn't disclose anything more about Ounoufriou's possible motivation, saying that the investigation was ongoing.

According to the investigator, an informer tipped off police about the plot earlier this month and the suspects were placed under surveillance. The killing was allegedly planned for Oct. 28 near Clerides' home, using the Turkish-made light anti-tank weapon.

The suspects were arrested on the night of the alleged hit in a police sting after the suspected triggerman went to pick up the rocket launcher from a man working for law enforcement. Police

had earlier tracked down the rocket launcher to where it lay hidden, and switched it with another without the explosive warhead.

Ounoufriou, who spoke in his own defense during the court hearing, dismissed the allegations as a "fabrication" by another convicted felon who concocted the story so he could negotiate his release from prison.

Cyprus Police Chief Michalis Papageorgiou said police have information that the suspects had also marked another individual for assassination and that more people may have been on a 'hit list' which investigators are trying to verify.

Georgadjis told the court that it was necessary for the suspects to remain in custody because police believe they would either flee abroad or try to influence witnesses.

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Russians Gather Against Totalitarianism

Tuesday, October 30, 2012

Washington Post

By Kathy Lally

MOSCOW — The muddy slush numbed the feet. Voices trembled, not because of the freezing cold but because of the weight of their words. Russians gathered Monday in the shadow of the building where Stalin's secret police drew up their death lists, and they spoke the names of the murdered.

Members of the Memorial human rights society, relatives of victims and others come here once a year to stand near the Solovetsky Stone, brought from the White Sea island where the Soviets organized their first prison camp in 1923, and read from a list of the 30,000 Muscovites executed in 1937 and 1938.

This year, the reading had more than the usual resonance. Opponents of President Vladimir Putin have been saying that his crackdown on political opposition reminds them of those two years, the worst of Stalin's terror, when 1.7 million Russians were arrested and at least 725,000 of them were shot. Others were sent to the gulag.

"No," said Vladimir Kantovsky, an 89-year-old survivor of the camps, after he had read four names of the dead and placed a candle next to the stone. "It cannot be compared. You cannot even imagine what it was like."

He pointed across the square to the Lubyanka, the home of the Federal Security Service, successor to the KGB.

"There were guards there with knives," he said. "People wouldn't even walk near the building, they were so terrified."

Even so, Kantovsky said, it was more important than ever to read the names. "We must make people remember," he said. "We can't let them forget. If they do, it can happen again."

Memorial organized the first reading in 2007, the 70th anniversary of the terror. The names are read on the eve of Oct. 30, the day set aside to remember victims of political repression. The names, along with ages, professions and dates of execution, are read to defy a totalitarian system that tried to obliterate its victims — relatives of the executed often did not know when they died or where they were buried.

"It is our duty to return their names to them," said Yelena Zhemkova, Memorial's executive director.

Memorial has been working for years to build a database of the victims of Soviet-era repression and was among the agencies supported by funds from the U.S. Agency for International Development, which the Russian government forced out of the country Oct. 1.

A 45-year-old village laborer, a 52-year-old employee of a brick factory, a 42-year-old accountant, a 40-year-old newspaper editor, a 22-year-old unemployed man. The names went on and on. The reading began at 10 a.m. and would end at 10 p.m., still not enough time for every name.

Kantovsky was a 17-year-old high school student when he was arrested in 1941 for passing out leaflets defending his history teacher, who had been arrested. He spent time in six different prisons and camps, including the Lubyanka, and served on the front in World War II with a penal battalion.

After the war, he finished his sentence and then spent five years in Siberian exile, finally gaining his freedom in 1956. He returned to school at age 33 and got an engineering degree. His old teacher, Pavel Dukovsky, had died in April 1942 near Nizhny Novgorod.

"Why were they arrested?" he asked rhetorically. "Why were they executed? Stalin did not like people to think and have their own opinions."

Natalya Leleka, a teacher, read four names, all young men named Alexeyev, none of them related.

"It's important for our children and our grandchildren to remember," she said. "I'm here so those times won't be repeated."

After reading her names, 84-year-old Marina Lukoyanova squeezed the arm of an American reporter and thanked the United States for its support of dissidents during the dark Soviet years.

"Get ready," she said, smiling. "We may all have to start leaving for America again."

A framed picture of a handsome young man hung from a cord around her neck. It was her father, a scientist executed in 1938 at age 34 because he was Latvian. He was rounded up with thousands of other Latvians in Moscow by Stalin's paranoid henchmen.

"They arrested writers, poets, researchers," Lukoyanova said. "They were murdering the intelligentsia, the same kind of people who are in prison today."

Now, protesters who demonstrated against Putin on the eve of his presidential inauguration in May are being prosecuted.

"They are suffering for your rights," she told the gathering.

She was 9 in 1937 when the terror began.

"I remember listening to the radio," she said. "Horrible things were happening, and they were playing waltzes, saying, 'Don't worry, we are destroying your enemies.'"

Lukoyanova said she is deeply worried about the arrests of today's dissidents, even though only a relative few are being pursued.

"We have such a great country, such great people," she said, "and once again, they want to destroy us."

EAST ASIA & PACIFIC

Report: U.S. Should Allow Japan To Use Military Air Base For Commercial Use
Tuesday, October 30, 2012

Washington Post

By Chico Harlan

TOKYO — This megacity of 35 million says it badly needs a third airport to help it meet rising demand for passenger flights. And its officials think just the right airport already exists: a U.S. air base in the

sprawling western suburbs, under the shadows of Mount Fuji.

So far, despite almost a decade of lobbying from Tokyo and the central government, Japan hasn't persuaded the United States to grant it partial use of Yokota Air Base. Talks stalled after a 2007 feasibility study raised the possibility of emergency-time chaos if the base was handling both military jets and commercial planes.

But Tokyo's case for sharing Yokota received an unlikely push with the release last week of a report from the Center for a New American Security, a moderate D.C.-based think tank that recommended that the United States reconsider the issue as it boosts its military presence in Asia.

The Pentagon, though, has not indicated it will do so. Cathy Wilkinson, the Pentagon's spokeswoman for Asian and Pacific security affairs, said the Defense Department's conclusions from 2007 still stand.

The think tank's report, which comes after a year-long study, says dual use at Yokota could potentially help the United States make its military in Japan more nimble, more popular with locals and harder to attack. Washington could prove its willingness to cooperate with Japan, diluting the bitterness that dominates base issues on the southern island of Okinawa.

The United States could also bargain with Japan for a "quid pro quo" deal, the report said, gaining military access to Japanese civilian airports during emergency situations. The report theorized that such access could come in handy as the United States increasingly focuses on potential threats posed by China and other Asian powers.

"Although . . . securing the ability to operate out of additional airports in Japan would only be a small part of a potential U.S. response to counter [China], they would help mitigate the threat," the report said.

In the event of emergencies, the report said, military use must clearly take priority over civilian use.

The United States already has a handful of dual-use facilities across the world, including three in Japan, but Yokota is particularly appealing, lying just 23 miles west of downtown Tokyo. Tokyo's two major airports — Haneda and Narita — sit to the south and east of the city, leaving several million residents in the western part of Tokyo with a 1 / 2- or 2-hour commute if they want to catch a plane.

Tokyo, compared with other Asian cities like Hong Kong and Shanghai, has a shortage of runway space for private business flights, meaning it gets passed over for major corporate events and conventions, city officials say.

Tokyo is also bidding for the 2020 Olympics, and although the bid does not depend on joint use of Yokota, gaining such access would spur train and road upgrades in the western part of the city and increase the "vibrancy" of Tokyo, said Takahiro Kojima, a Tokyo Metropolitan Government official in charge of the Yokota efforts.

Tokyo officials, along with those from the central government, are trying to keep the issue on the front burner. Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda called on President Obama during an April meeting to consider joint use of Yokota. Earlier this month, Tokyo released a report where it forecasted that 5.6 million passengers could fly into and out of Yokota by 2022.

Yuki Oda contributed to this report.

China Steps Carefully With Protesting Middle Class

Tuesday, October 30, 2012

Associated Press

By Gillian Wong, Associated Press

NINGBO, China (AP) — A victory by protesters against the expansion of a chemical plant proves the new rule in China: The authoritarian government is scared of middle-class rebellion and will give in if the demonstrators' aims are limited and not openly political.

It's far from a revolution. China's nascent middle class, the product of the past decade's economic boom, is looking for better government, not a different one. They're especially concerned about issues like health, education and property values and often resist the growth-at-all-costs model Beijing has pushed.

The past week's chemical-plant protests reached an unruly crescendo over the weekend, when thousands of people marched through prosperous Ningbo city, clashing with police at times. The city government gave in Sunday and agreed to halt the plant's expansion.

Even so, the protesters did not back down, staying outside city government offices hours after the concession. About 200 protesters, many of them retirees, returned Monday to make sure the government keeps its word on the oil and ethylene refinery run by a subsidiary of Sinopec, the state-owned petrochemical giant.

"In yesterday's protest, the ordinary people let their voices be heard," a 40-year-old businessman who would give only his surname, Bao, said on the protest line Monday. Government officials, he said, "should say they are completely canceling the project. They should state clearly that they will stop doing these projects in Ningbo and the rest of China."

The protest in Ningbo — a centuries-old trading center of tree-lined streets and canals south of Shanghai now surrounded by industrial development zones — was well-timed. It came a few weeks before a transfer of power in the ruling Communist Party, and Beijing wants calm nationwide so as not to detract from the leadership transition.

Given that pressure and the fact that many Ningbo officials also have middle-class concerns about air pollution and other quality-of-life issues, the local government found it easier to back off, Peking University sociologist Liu Neng said.

"The government would need lots of courage to insist on keeping this project. The cost would be too high if the protest escalated to another level," Liu said. "Since the 18th party congress is around the corner, it is very important to maintain stability."

The protests underscore the challenge the incoming leaders face in governing an increasingly wealthy — and wired — population who are growing more assertive about issues they care about. Democratic movements in places such as South Korea and Taiwan started with the middle class, and in Taiwan's case environmental issues featured prominently.

It's not the first time the government blinked in the face of middle-class protesters.

In the past five years, officials in the northeastern port of Dalian and the southeastern port of Xiamen have relented on plans to operate or build petrochemical plants after large protests. In Xiamen's case, worries about declining property values figured as much as health issues.

In 2009, when Beijing ordered computer owners nationwide to install software that supposedly blocked pornography but that people feared was a back door to snooping, a national outcry forced it to back down.

Dalian, Xiamen and Ningbo are among the better-off cities in China. The treatment protesters there received has been gentler than the beatings and large-scale arrests often given to rowdy rural and working-class protesters. Those tend to be larger

and more violent, and are seen as more of a direct challenge to the party, which supposedly represents the proletariat.

The recent protests across China against Japan's move to nationalize some islands in the East China Sea were rare cases in which the government tacitly allowed broader demonstrations.

Even among middle-class protesters, officials are not caving in to all demands. In Ningbo's case, the government did not heed protesters' demands for the mayor, Liu Qi, to step down, or for police to release protesters who refused to heed police orders to leave the area around the government offices. The city government said Monday police had taken away or detained 52 people in the three days of large protests, and denied rumors that anyone had been killed.

In the compromises of recent years, the outlines of an unspoken protest compact have emerged: Keep the demonstrations peaceful and focus largely on local issues, and the backlash will be minimal.

The crowds in the Ningbo protests carried smartphones and had mobile Internet connections. Though they often displayed a large dose of skepticism about the party's official rhetoric, they also urged fellow protesters to stay calm and not fight back against police. The government calibrated its response carefully.

After police tried to thwart the Ningbo protesters on Friday night and scuffles ensued, the government backed off. But the clashes angered the public and seemed to galvanize more participants. Police let the protesters gather and shout for hours, positioning hundreds of riot and military police in the city government compound but at first only sporadically deploying them. They let protesters march through the city's busy downtown without incident.

By appealing for peaceful protests, the Ningbo demonstrations attracted thousands of participants, said the writer and prominent social commentator Murong Xuecun, the pen name of author Hao Qun.

"That's a safer way to protest," he said. "If China wants to move toward democracy using a gentle approach, it will depend on the middle class."

Associated Press researcher Flora Ji in Beijing contributed to this report.

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Survivors Criticize Myanmar Gov't Over Clashes

Tuesday, October 30, 2012

Associated Press

By Aye Aye Win And Khin Maung Win, Associated Press

SITTWE, Myanmar (AP) — Survivors of ethnic clashes in western Myanmar lashed out at the government Monday for failing to prevent violence between Muslims and Buddhists that has displaced more than 28,000 people over the last week.

The crisis, which first began in June, has raised international concern and posed one of the biggest challenges yet to Myanmar's reformist President Thein Sein, who inherited power from a xenophobic military junta last year.

The latest violence between ethnic Rakhine Buddhists and Rohingya Muslims began Oct. 21 and has left at least 84 people dead and 129 injured, according to the government. Human rights groups believe the true toll could be far higher.

"The authorities are not solving the problem and soldiers are not defending us," said Kyaw Myint, a Muslim man who took refuge at Thechaung camp outside Sittwe. He fled his home in nearby Pauktaw when it was torched Wednesday.

"I feel as though I am in hell," he said. "We have no one to take care of us, no place to go, and now no job to earn a living."

A 37-year-old Rakhine trader named Maung Than Naing, reached by phone in the village of Kyauktaw, also expressed anger over the government's handling of the violence.

"We are helpless because the government is not dealing with the root of the problem," he said. "We no longer want to live with the Muslims."

Maung Than Naing, who also lost his home in an arson attack, blamed the Rohingya for breaking the calm.

"These poor Muslim people who live hand to mouth burned their own homes so that they enjoy the U.N. aid where they are given shelter and free food," he said.

A tense calm has held across the region since Saturday, Rakhine state spokesman Myo Thant said.

Security had been stepped up in the state, with additional police and soldiers deployed, but he declined to give details.

The priority now is to ensure those who lost homes have adequate shelter and food, Myo Thant said.

The long-brewing conflict is rooted in a dispute over the Muslim residents' origin. Although many Rohingya have lived in Myanmar for generations, they are widely denigrated as intruders who came from neighboring Bangladesh to steal scarce land.

The Rohingya also face official discrimination, a policy encouraged by Myanmar's previous military regimes to enlist popular support among other groups. A 1982 law formally excluded them as one of the country's 135 ethnicities, meaning most are denied basic civil rights and are deprived of citizenship.

Human rights groups say racism also plays a role: Many Rohingya, who speak a Bengali dialect and resemble Muslim Bangladeshis, have darker skin and are heavily discriminated against.

Bangladesh, though, also denies them citizenship. The U.N. estimates their population in Myanmar at 800,000.

Tensions have simmered in western Myanmar since clashes first broke out in June after a Rakhine woman was allegedly raped and murdered by three Muslim men.

The June violence displaced 75,000 people — also mostly Muslims.

U.N. Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator in Myanmar Ashok Nigam said on Monday that the number of displaced was likely to rise because some people who fled affected areas along the coast by boat last week have yet to be counted.

An estimated 27,300 of the 28,000 newly displaced are Muslims, Nigam said, adding that the U.N. figure was based on statistics from local authorities.

The new numbers bring the total number of displaced in Rakhine state since June to at least 103,000.

—
Aye Aye Win reported from Yangon, Myanmar.

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UN Says 28,000 Displaced In Myanmar Ethnic Clashes

Tuesday, October 30, 2012

Associated Press

By Aye Aye Win And Khin Maung Win, Associated Press

SITTWE, Myanmar (AP) — Myanmar's government said Monday it has boosted security in a western state hit by ethnic and sectarian unrest as the number of displaced rose to 28,000 people, mostly Muslims.

The latest violence between ethnic Rakhine Buddhists and Rohingya Muslims, which began Oct. 21, killed at least 84 people and injured 129 more, according to the government. Human rights groups believe the true toll could be far higher.

A tense calm has held across the region since Saturday, Rakhine state spokesman Myo Thant said.

He said security had been stepped up in the state, with additional police and soldiers deployed, but he declined to give details.

The priority now is to ensure those who lost homes have adequate shelter and food, he said.

U.N. Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator in Myanmar Ashok Nigam said the figure of 28,000 displaced was likely to rise because some people who fled affected areas along the coast by boat have yet to be counted.

An estimated 27,300 of the displaced are Muslims, Nigam said, adding that the U.N. figure was based on statistics from local authorities.

Human Rights Watch has said that the Rohingya have suffered the brunt of the latest violence.

Tensions have simmered in the region since clashes first broke out in June, displacing 75,000 people — also mostly Muslims.

The long-brewing conflict is rooted in a dispute over the Muslim residents' origin. Although many Rohingya have lived in Myanmar for generations, they are widely denigrated as intruders who came from neighboring Bangladesh to steal scarce land.

The U.N. estimates their population in Myanmar at 800,000. But the government does not count them as one of the country's 135 ethnic groups, and so — like neighboring Bangladesh — denies them citizenship. Human rights groups say racism also plays a role: Many Rohingya, who speak a Bengali dialect and resemble Muslim Bangladeshis, have darker skin and are heavily discriminated against.

Associated Press writer Aye Aye Win reported from Yangon, Myanmar.

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SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA

Afghan Raid Kills 4 Taliban, 3 Civilian Bystanders

Monday, October 29, 2012

Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP) — An Afghan army officer says a pre-dawn raid in the eastern province of Ghazni killed four Taliban and three civilian bystanders.

Lt. Ghulam Sarwer Attai, who commanded the special army unit which carried out Monday's raid along with NATO forces, said it was in Qalai-i-Qazi area of Ghazni.

NATO said in an announcement that the raid targeted a Taliban leader and that the force was attacked by insurgents carrying assault rifles and returned fire, killing a number of them. It did not mention the number of Taliban killed or civilians.

Villagers at the funeral of the civilians told reporters they included a farmer, his wife and their 14-year-old son. Video images from the funeral showed the bodies of two men and a woman.

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At Afghanistan University, Disputed Name Turns Into Fighting Word

Students tired of the violence in Afghanistan opposes naming Kabul Education University after a former warlord. Their chancellor criticizes their stubbornness.

Monday, October 29, 2012

Los Angeles Times

By Ned Parker

KABUL, Afghanistan — If they could sit down together, the chancellor and the hotheaded student activist who helped shut down his university might find that they are not so very different.

After all, Afghanistan's history has dealt both men harsh blows. But that same history also divides them. The older one, attuned to what was lost in decades of war, seeks stability at all costs; the

student, knowing just conflict and chaos, has no patience left for the older generation he blames for the violence.

Now, that history has brought them into conflict, in the form of a late warlord turned peace negotiator whose name now graces what has long been known as Kabul Education University.

PHOTOS: A look back in Afghanistan

In early October, Chancellor Amanullah Hamidzai strolled his campus alone as protests led by student Mohammed Yar and his peers brought the university to its knees. Hamidzai, a harmless-looking figure with his thinning gray hair and wide girth, pondered how to keep the peace.

"If a student is hurt, I don't want to be chancellor of this university," he said. "Before that, I will resign."

As students like Yar called him weak and political leaders ignored his views, he wondered whether he was stupid to come back here from his comfortable life in Maryland. "It was my emotion," Hamidzai said, shaking his head. "I am stuck now. I can't live without this university."

The chancellor's crisis of confidence was unleashed by a surprise decision by President Hamid Karzai to name the university after ethnic Tajik warlord and former President Burhanuddin Rabbani, who was assassinated a year ago by a Taliban suicide bomber when Rabbani tried to broker peace talks.

Ever the diplomat, the chancellor is careful — he refers to Rabbani as "a controversial figure" — but he understands why his students dislike the late mujahedin leader whose men once shelled Kabul: He is one of the powerful people who helped plunge the country into endless war.

Even though many Tajik students expressed no love for Rabbani, the fact that mostly ethnic Pashtun and Hazara groups were demanding his name be taken down and boycotting classes sparked fights on campus.

In the second week of October, Hamidzai stood in the university courtyard as student activists blocked the campus entrance, Pashtun and Tajik students traded punches, and police hauled off protesters.

Hamidzai then accompanied a group of activists to the Ministry of Higher Education, where a compromise was put forward: Rabbani's name would not be put on diplomas for current four-year students. But the school would be referred to as the Kabul Education University of Rabbani.

"You have to give something to get something," Hamidzai says in a soft phlegmatic voice, dressed in his bright blue-striped suit and tie, like a nightclub promoter from the 1950s. "The students weren't happy, but they accepted it. They went back to class."

At least in part, Hamidzai is amused by the activists, who ducked meeting him in the days after they ended their university shutdown. But he also gets annoyed at the mention of some of them, like Yar, whom he calls "complicated."

Yar, 35, has intense black eyes and seldom smiles. He walks with crutches because of a clubfoot he was born with. When he leans on his crutches to walk, it is almost like he is leaping hurdles.

Other students defer to Yar's serious air. He says it is right for students to return to classes, but he vows they will hold peaceful demonstrations in the future. "We don't want this name for the next generation," he says to nods from his friends.

Yar, a Pashtun literature student, has no tolerance for his elders; he associates them with his country's violence, corruption and ethnic and regional divisions.

"Our chancellor is very weak," he says, calling him a hypocrite for not standing up to Karzai. During the rounds of meetings with government officials, Yar says, he walked up to the chancellor and recommended he resign. The chancellor fired back in a calm voice: "You don't have any wisdom; you don't have any knowledge."

Yar has lived through Afghanistan's darkest period. As a teenager, he watched warlords kill his friends and relatives in his home city of Kandahar. Unable to study literature under the Taliban, he ran a secret library. He wants to believe that his generation will prove different from men such as Karzai, Rabbani or the Taliban fighters.

"I am hopeful for the future of Afghanistan. It is in our hands," he says. "The situation will be what we want it to be."

Afghanistan's painful past also scars the chancellor. At age 4, Hamidzai spent a year in jail after his father led protests against the king in his birthplace, the eastern city of Jalalabad. Much of the chancellor's childhood was spent with his family in internal exile in the country's remote west.

Hamidzai's early trials taught him responsibility and he excelled, becoming a doctor and a professor at the university in Jalalabad and then

working for the United Nations. When the Soviets invaded Afghanistan, he slipped out of the country, not even telling his brother, who was a general and chief of staff in the Defense Ministry.

But he always loved Afghanistan, and in 2004, the Afghan government asked him to return to Jalalabad to rescue his old college. He soon found the dangers that drove him away still very much present. Armed groups, angry at his efforts to shield the campus from politics, tried to assassinate him, including planting a land mine by his home and putting a poisonous snake in his room. Later, he moved on to the university job in Kabul, the capital.

In the nine years since he's been home, Hamidzai has torn a retina and lost sight in his right eye. But he would rather dismiss the rough spells in Kabul with an old Pashtun saying or a joke. He's as coy about his age — "I'm somewhere between 60 and 70" — as any regret he harbors.

Leaning back on a couch, Hamidzai says that when the school year ends in January, he may bow out. The uncertainty of 2014 and the departure of the Americans disturb him; civil war is too real a possibility. Besides, his wife and his son, a software developer in Maryland, worry about him.

Making light of his predicament, he quotes an old saying to describe his return to Afghanistan and his thoughts about leaving.

"Getting into a prostitution house is one shame, and getting out is another shame."

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In Pakistan's Taliban Territory, Education Is A Casualty Of Conflict

Tuesday, October 30, 2012

Washington Post

By Michele Langevine Leiby And Saleem Mehsud

ISLAMABAD, Pakistan — At Oxford Public Middle School, an enthusiastic group of students recite their lesson for the day, which involves learning how to count. Only here there are no desks, no chairs and even the teacher's chair doesn't have a cushion. Oxford Middle School is in North Waziristan, in the heart of Taliban country, and these fidgety youngsters — wearing baseball caps that sport their school logo — are learning to count in Urdu and Pashto.

In this wartime landscape, where hundreds of schools have been bombed, drones fly overhead and army-imposed curfews keep teachers out of

the classrooms, the fact that school continues at all seems remarkable.

At least 400 students in grades 1 through 8 — including the children of Taliban fighters — attend the school in the off-limits tribal region of Pakistan. About six miles away is Miram Shah, a city considered a hub of al-Qaeda-affiliated militants, including the Haqqani network.

Hafiz Gul Bahadur, the Taliban commander who controls the area that supplies students to Oxford school, has maintained an uneasy truce with the Pakistani army. But he supports the war against U.S.-backed NATO and Afghan forces across the border in Afghanistan.

All Taliban oppose coeducation, and girls lucky enough to receive any kind of formal instruction typically do so in private homes.

The Pakistani Taliban, as well as other insurgents, have bombed many schools, but some factions claim to do so because Pakistani troops seek refuge in the buildings. A military spokesman who was not authorized to give his name countered this claim on Oct. 26: "There is not even a single school under the occupation of the army in North Waziristan."

At least one CIA drone strike, reported in April, destroyed an abandoned school when it targeted the suspected extremists hiding there.

Masood Bangash, a senior government official for the Federally Administered Tribal Areas, said schools throughout the tribal belt have been occupied by "various organizations" and used for non-educational purposes. He said he does not doubt that some in the Taliban ranks encourage education, but added that the long-running insurgency "won't really permit" any educational system to properly function in the tribal belt.

"I would blame both the government and the Taliban for that," Bangash said.

The omnipresent armed conflict has made it increasingly difficult for an entire generation of young people to get a basic education. Yet there are some success stories such as the Oxford Public Middle School, which was founded 22 years ago, and is, despite its name, a private school.

Monthly tuition fees range from little more than a dollar for first graders to \$3.70 for eighth graders, according to principal Fazl Rahim. Orphans receive education for free while poor students attend at reduced rates.

There are seven teachers — all male — for 400 boys. Rahim said the parents of many of his students are loyal to Taliban commander Bahadur.

"Local Taliban are happy that their offspring are getting a modern education," Rahim said.

When the precarious law-and-order situation caused schools — especially those in remote areas — to close down for lack of teacher attendance, the local Taliban convened a committee to help ensure that they stayed open, the principal said.

"They direct the schoolteachers to attend the school and educate the locals," he said, adding that the committee provides security for teachers.

There have been reports of Taliban enforcers who don't hesitate to use intimidation to make sure teachers get to the schoolrooms.

The boys at Oxford fill its classrooms from Sunday through Thursday, sitting on mats worn through to the ground. Classes follow the same rhythm of the local religious schools, known as madrasas. They attend school in the morning for academics and then head to the madrasas in the evening.

Umar, a second grader at Oxford, bragged that he is not afraid of "banganas," as drones are called locally. But, he added in afterthought, "When they start to hover sometimes at low height at night, then I feel scared."

The remotely piloted aircraft are a key weapon in the U.S. war against extremism, introduced in Pakistan under President George W. Bush. The drone strikes have increased dramatically since President Obama took office.

Last week, a woman was reportedly killed in a strike in Mir Ali, another town not far from the school and a regular target of drone strikes. This month alone, attacks in the area have killed at least nine people, according to local officials.

Another Oxford schoolboy, first-grader Saeedullah, spoke of his plans for when he grows up. "I want to become a doctor to give medicine to the sick people and also give them injections," he said.

Mehsud reported from Miram Shah, Pakistan.

WESTERN HEMISPHERE

Brazil Ruling Party Candidate Wins Sao Paulo Mayor

Monday, October 29, 2012

Associated Press

SAO PAULO (AP) — The Brazilian ruling party candidate easily won the mayoral race in South America's biggest city Sunday in a second-round vote, outpacing an experienced opposition rival and former presidential candidate.

Workers' Party candidate and former education minister Fernando Haddad won more than 55 percent of the vote in Sao Paulo, a traditional stronghold for the top opposition party.

Haddad began the race months ago polling just 2 percent. But he eased into office on the back of strong campaigning from popular former President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva and Brazil's current leader Dilma Rousseff.

Haddad served as education minister from 2005 until 2012 under both Silva and Rousseff.

Following his win, Haddad said he would break through the "wall of shame that separates the rich city from the poor city." He promised to make advances in education and the woeful public transportation system poor.

Jose Serra, of the Brazilian Social Democracy Party and a former mayor and governor of Sao Paulo, won 44 percent of the vote. He ran against Rousseff in the presidential race in 2010 and against Silva for the presidency in 2002.

Brazilians cast their votes in the second round of municipal elections Sunday to decide who would lead in 50 big cities.

The Brazilian electoral system requires candidates to win with a majority. Sunday's election resolved races where top finishers fell short of half on Oct. 7.

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Brazil's Municipal Poll Results Bolster Ruling Party

Tuesday, October 30, 2012

AFP

Brazil's ruling Workers Party (PT) emerged stronger from Sunday's nationwide municipal polls, leaving it well positioned for the 2014 presidential elections, analysts say.

The leftist PT of President Dilma Rousseff and her popular predecessor Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva won a total of 635 mayoral races, including in Sao Paulo, the country's economic capital, although it lost in key northeastern state capitals such as Recife, Fortaleza and Salvador.

In Sao Paulo, Brazil's most populous and wealthiest city, Fernando Haddad, a 49-year-old Lula protege, defeated veteran opposition candidate Jose Serra in a runoff vote 55.6 percent to 44.4 percent.

The 70-year-old Serra, a former mayor and state governor, had lost to Rousseff in the 2010 presidential election.

Haddad's decisive victory with direct support from Lula and Rousseff, coupled with the PT's overall good performance nationwide, puts the ruling party in a strong position ahead of the 2014 presidential election, according to many analysts.

"The PT needed to prevail in Sao Paulo in order to win the 2014 presidential contest and it has done so," said Andre Cesar, a political analyst at the Prospectiva consulting firm.

The hugely popular Lula, who ruled this booming country from 2003 to 2010, showed that his clout remains intact despite his two-year absence from the political stage due to larynx cancer and a political corruption scandal that ensnared his party and several of his key aides.

"Lula is the big winner of this election and he will be even more influential in 2014," Cesar noted.

In his victory speech, Haddad conceded as much, expressing gratitude to his mentor who had named him education minister and later imposed him as the PT's mayoral candidate in Sao Paulo.

"I want to thank president Lula from the bottom of my heart. Without him I could not have won this election," he said.

Many analysts had expected Haddad and the PT in general to suffer from the fallout of the congressional vote-buying scandal.

Twenty-five of 37 former ministers, lawmakers, businessmen and bankers facing prosecution before the Supreme Court have been charged with corruption over a 2002 to 2005 vote-buying scheme in Congress during Lula's first term.

They include Lula's former chief of staff Jose Dirceu. While Lula was cleared, the scandal nearly cost the 66-year-old his re-election in 2006.

But the high-profile trial "did not have a major impact despite all the media hype. The people of Sao Paulo said no to business as usual," said political analyst Evaraldo Moraes.

"The Mensalao (trial) had no impact because voters in municipal elections focus on local issues (health, transport, flooding) and corruption comes last," said another expert, David Fleischer.

The poll results reflected the traditional balance of power between the three major parties in this vibrant democracy of 194 million people.

The centrist PMDB, a member of the ruling coalition, remains the country's leading party, particularly in small towns, but it lost significant ground, winning only 1,024 races against 1,207 in 2008.

The opposition Brazilian Social Democratic Party remains in second place nationally, winning 702 races, down from 788 four years ago.

The PT is still in third place, capturing 635 city halls, up 14 percent from 558 in 2008.

The ruling party also won the largest number of cities of more than 200,000 people but only four state capitals, compared with six in 2008 and nine in 2004.

But the 10-member ruling coalition prevailed in 17 of the country's 26 state capitals, including Rio.

Cuba's 2nd City Without Power, Water After Sandy

Tuesday, October 30, 2012

Associated Press

By Peter Orsi, Associated Press

HAVANA (AP) — Residents of Cuba's second-largest city of Santiago remained without power or running water Monday, four days after Hurricane Sandy made landfall as the island's deadliest storm in seven years, ripping rooftops from homes and toppling power lines.

Across the Caribbean, the storm's death toll rose to 69, including 52 people in Haiti, 11 in Cuba, two in the Bahamas, two in the Dominican Republic, one in Jamaica and one in Puerto Rico.

Cuban authorities have not yet estimated the economic toll, but the Communist Party newspaper Granma reported there was "severe damage to housing, economic activity, fundamental public services and institutions of education, health and culture."

Yolanda Tabio, a native of Santiago, said she had never seen anything like it in all her 64 years: Broken hotel and shop windows, trees blown over onto houses, people picking through piles of debris for a scrap of anything to cover their homes. On Sunday, she sought solace in faith.

"The Mass was packed. Everyone crying," said Tabio, whose house had no electricity, intermittent phone service and only murky water coming out of the tap on Monday. "I think it will take five to ten years to recover. ... But we're alive."

Sandy came onshore early Thursday just west of Santiago, a city of about 500,000 people in agricultural southeastern Cuba. It is the island's deadliest storm since 2005's Hurricane Dennis, a category 5 monster that killed 16 people and did \$2.4 billion in damage. More than 130,000 homes were damaged by Sandy, including 15,400 that were destroyed, Granma said.

"It really shocked me to see all that has been destroyed and to know that for many people, it's the effort of a whole lifetime," said Maria Caridad Lopez, a media relations officer at the Roman Catholic Archdiocese in Santiago. "And it disappears in just three hours."

Lopez said several churches in the area collapsed and nearly all suffered at least minor damage. That included the Santiago cathedral as well as one of the holiest sites in Cuba, the Sanctuary of the Virgin del Cobre. Sandy's winds blew out its stained glass windows and damaged its massive doors.

"It's indescribable," said Berta Serguera, an 82-year-old retiree whose home withstood the tempest but whose patio and garden did not. "The trees have been shredded as if with a saw. My mango only has a few branches left, and they look like they were shaved."

On Monday, sound trucks cruised the streets urging people to boil drinking water to prevent infectious disease. Soldiers worked to remove rubble and downed trees from the streets. Authorities set up radios and TVs in public spaces to keep people up to date on relief efforts, distributed chlorine to sterilize water and prioritized electrical service to strategic uses such as hospitals and bakeries.

Enrique Berdion, a 45-year-old doctor who lives in central Santiago, said his small apartment building did not suffer major damage but he had been without electricity, water or gas for days.

"This was something I've never seen, something extremely intense, that left Santiago destroyed. Most homes have no roofs. The winds razed the parks, toppled all the trees," Berdion said by phone. "I think it will take years to recover."

Raul Castro, who toured Cuba's hardest-hit regions on Sunday, warned of a long road to recovery.

Granma said the president called on the country to urgently implement "temporary solutions," and "undoubtedly the definitive solution will take years of work."

Venezuela sent nearly 650 of tons of aid, including nonperishable food, potable water and heavy machinery both to Cuba and to nearby Haiti, which was not directly in the storm's path but suffered flash floods across much of the country's south.

Across the Caribbean, work crews were repairing downed power lines and cracked water pipes and making their way into rural communities marooned by impassable roads. The images were similar from eastern Jamaica to the northern Bahamas: Trees ripped from the ground, buildings swamped by floodwaters and houses missing roofs.

Fixing soggy homes may be a much quicker task than repairing the financial damage, and island governments were still assessing Sandy's economic impact on farms, housing and infrastructure.

In tourism-dependent countries like Jamaica and the Bahamas, officials said popular resorts sustained only superficial damage, mostly to landscaping.

Haiti, where even minor storms can send water gushing down hills denuded of trees, listed a death toll of 52 as of Monday and officials said it could still rise. Prime Minister Laurent Lamothe has described the storm as a "disaster of major proportions."

In Jamaica, where Sandy made landfall first on Wednesday as a Category 1 hurricane, people coped with lingering water and power outages with mostly good humor.

"Well, we mostly made it out all right. I thought it was going to be rougher, like it turned out for other places," laborer Reginald Miller said as he waited for a minibus at a sunbaked Kingston intersection.

In parts of the Bahamas, the ocean surged into coastal buildings and deposited up to six feet of seawater. Sandy was blamed for two deaths on the archipelago off Florida's east coast, including a British bank executive who fell off his roof while trying to fix a window shutter and an elderly man found dead beneath overturned furniture in his flooded, low-lying home.

Associated Press writers Anne-Marie Garcia in Havana, David McFadden in Kingston, Jamaica, and Jeff Todd in Nassau, Bahamas, contributed to this report.

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Cuba And Haiti Struggle To Recover From Hurricane Sandy

Monday, October 29, 2012

Miami Herald

By Mimi Whitefield And Jacqueline Charles

Even before Hurricane Sandy tore through Santiago de Cuba last week, a humble wood-frame church called San Pedrito was living on borrowed time with beams ravaged by termites and an ancient tin roof that let in the rain.

But San Pedrito crumbled Thursday as Sandy's 115 mph winds ripped Cuba's second largest city. "It is totally on the ground, but we were able to recover the statue of Our Lady, the crucifix and the bell," said the Rev. Luis del Castillo, a retired Uruguayan bishop who now works in Cuba.

There is scarcely any area of Santiago that was left unscathed. Photos show neighborhoods that look like trash piles of construction materials with wood beams tossed like toothpicks and tin roofs and tiles scattered on the ground. Walls of some homes lean at crazy angles or tilt toward streets still littered with huge trees.

As Sandy bore down on the U.S. East Coast on Sunday, the two hardest hit Caribbean nations — Cuba and Haiti — concentrated on trying to put together what Sandy tore apart.

In Cuba, where the death toll stood at 11, state-run media reported that 137,000 homes in Santiago were damaged, including 43,000 that lost their roofs and at least 15,000 that collapsed. Government estimates pegged losses at 2.1 billion pesos (\$2.1 billion at the official rate Cuba uses for imports and \$87.5 million using the exchange rate for everyday purchases in Cuba). But that figure is expected to rise when losses from tourism, the sugar industry and other sectors are added in.

In Holguín province where Sandy exited Cuba, the Cuban News Agency said that 17,000 homes suffered damage and there were significant losses to crops and livestock. The municipalities of Mayari, Banes, Antilla, Rafael Freyre, Baguano, Urbano Noris, Sagua de Tanamo and Cueto were among the hardest hit.

But Sandy also brought driving rain, which caused severe flooding in the central Cuba provinces of

Villa Clara and Sancti Spíritus. Cuban leader Raúl Castro visited them Saturday and has said he intends to travel to eastern Cuba as well.

"We can say that we have had a great hurricane in the east and a small 'Flora' (a destructive 1964 hurricane) in the center of the country," said Castro, according to the state-run National Information Agency.

Haitian President Michel Martelly also was on the streets of his devastated country over the weekend, personally handing out aid kits.

Hundreds of residents from the Jalousie slum crowded a Petionville street mid-afternoon Sunday for the arrival of Martelly and a truck carrying the kits, which included candles, spaghetti and other foodstuffs.

In Haiti, 51 people were reported dead and 15 missing. More than 200,000 people were homeless and nearly 17,200 people had been placed in shelters. The government was serving hot meals and handing out \$25 cash vouchers to shelter residents in the city of Les Cayes in southwest Haiti.

Damages were still being tallied Sunday and the death toll could rise.

Officials from Les Anglais, a small coastal village in southern Haiti, told a local radio station they feared homes may have washed out to sea. The road to the village remains impassable.

Another concern in Haiti is that cholera cases may increase. The International Organization for Migration reported that 16 new cases had already been recorded since Sandy's pass.

In Cuba, residents described how people were coping with the aftermath of the hurricane that came ashore on a beach southwest of Santiago and swept north across the eastern part of the island.

The Army has been clearing the streets and removing trees that have toppled electrical poles and wires, but most of the city remains without power, water or telephone service, said del Castillo, who was reached via an Internet connection over the weekend.

State-run media said that electricity had been restored to about 80 percent of those who lost power in Holguín, but restoration was proving more complicated in Santiago where 72 work brigades from around the country were working on returning electricity.

"The churches in Santiago are in very bad shape — some are just rubble; others have lost their roofs," said del Castillo. "We will celebrate mass in the streets."

For a country that was officially atheist until 1992, there was already a shortage of churches and priests before Sandy hit. Now, del Castillo said he expects the church's Casa del Misión (Mission House) program to expand. Under the mission house concept, parish priests and nuns travel a circuit to communities without priests and religious activities are held in people's homes or makeshift facilities.

But he added, "The priority isn't the church buildings; it is the people."

In a city known for its hospitality as well as for being the cradle of the revolution, neighbors, even small children who are clearing branches, have pitched in to help those with less, he said.

"People are just happy they're alive and they're concentrating on rebuilding and how they can help each other," said del Castillo.

With windows smashed and without power, many stores are closed and food supplies are difficult, he said. Those who have food are sharing with neighbors and cooking on wood fires in the streets.

State-run media said the government was shipping in food, including bread, from nearby provinces.

Some food, said del Castillo, also has begun to arrive via Caritas, the Catholic relief organization in Cuba. Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Miami is working with Caritas and Catholic Relief Services to help those in the areas most affected by Sandy. It is accepting monetary donations through its website (www.ccadm.org) but is not calling for food donations at this point.

Schools have been closed since Thursday in Santiago and many that remain intact are being used to house the homeless. Del Castillo said he has two families that are staying at his church,

The first shipment of 12,000 roofs arrived in Santiago on Saturday via train, according to the website of Sierra Maestra, a provincial newspaper.

The government said that was the first wave of shipments of some 84,000 roofs and 220,000 tons of cement expected to arrive in the province via train and ship.

SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

South Africa Prez Says Media Must Respect Privacy

Tuesday, October 30, 2012

Associated Press

JOHANNESBURG (AP) — South African President Jacob Zuma says freedom of expression needs to be balanced to give the right to dignity and privacy to all South Africans.

Zuma told foreign correspondents Monday that a proposed Media Appeals Tribunal would accomplish that in South Africa, where Zuma's complaints against some in the local press have brought this tension into sharp focus.

Zuma has brought several media organizations to court for alleged defamation, including a cartoonist with the local Sunday Times who in 2008 depicted him poised to rape Lady Justice.

The Sunday Times said over the weekend that Zuma's lawyers had agreed to withdraw the case. Zuma said Monday he agreed to drop that case after the newspaper conceded it had defamed him. He said he wants an apology.

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10 Wounded In Fighting Ahead Of Sierra Leone Vote

Tuesday, October 30, 2012

Associated Press

FREETOWN, Sierra Leone (AP) — Authorities in Sierra Leone say serious pre-election violence broke out over the weekend, leaving at least 10 people wounded.

The fighting in the diamond-rich Kono District comes just weeks before voters head to the polls for presidential and legislative elections in this West African nation.

Police Superintendent Saidu Jalloh says violence broke out Saturday in Kono, the home district of the incumbent vice president.

The opposition party says youth backing the governing APC party threw stones, seriously injuring seven people. The ruling party, though, accuses opposition supporters of attacking people and trying to burn one man's house down.

Sierra Leone was ravaged by an 11-year-long brutal civil war that ended in 2002.

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Guinea Police Fire Tear Gas At Students

Tuesday, October 30, 2012

Associated Press

CONAKRY, Guinea (AP) — Residents of the northern town of Labe say that riot police fired tear gas at hundreds who gathered to protest the firing of a teacher who allegedly criticized the Guinean government in class.

A student said Monday during the march that Mariama Tata Diallo was an exemplary teacher and shouldn't be fired for being active in Guinea's opposition. Another student, Binta Diallo, said that police fired tear gas at the students and some were hurt but that they would not give up until Diallo is reinstated.

Other witnesses said Monday that anti-riot police and a mobile security force remained on the streets of Labe, 250 kilometers (155 miles) northeast of the capital, Conakry.

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Ghana: A Grant Meant To Curb Infant Mortality Focuses On Getting Mothers To The Hospital

Tuesday, October 30, 2012

New York Times

By Donald G. McNeil Jr.

The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation has given a \$5 million grant to a Massachusetts nonprofit group to work on a very specific problem: how to get new mothers in Ghana to hospitals.

Child mortality is very high in Ghana, but many newborns can be saved if the mother gives birth with someone trained, even rudimentarily, in Western medicine and if the baby is seen within two days by a doctor or nurse.

But in rural Ghana, explained Dr. Pierre M. Barker, vice president of the Institute for Healthcare Improvement, which received the Gates grant, there are many obstacles. Besides the obvious, like rutted roads, there are prejudices against wives or newborns leaving the house.

Sending expert committees to visit village chiefs, he said, has turned many into advocates for getting women to clinics instead of giving birth with untrained local midwives who may be unable to diagnose pneumonia or who have habits that

cause tetanus, like cutting umbilical cords with dirty blades.

Dr. Parker described how his agency helped set up a village meeting that produced a way to get women in labor to hospitals when they had no money. He expected villagers to donate funds. Instead, local minibus-taxi drivers proposed a deal: They would carry the women at no charge if, once they arrived, they were allowed to jump the line for paying passengers headed back home.