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Turkey launches offensive into Syria

The Washington Post

ANKARA, Turkey — Turkish and Syrian rebel forces, aided by U.S. aircraft and military advisers, have launched a major cross-border offensive aimed at capturing the Islamic State's last stronghold on Syria's border with Turkey.

The operation, Turkey's largest direct involvement yet against the militants in Syria, includes Turkish planes, tanks, artillery and special operations units, along with 500 to 700 rebel fighters. In addition to the presence of U.S. advisers, American surveillance aircraft are providing overflight intelligence and are poised to contribute U.S. airstrikes, according to a senior Obama administration official.

The offensive immediately broadened and raised the stakes in the complex Syrian conflict. The Syrian government demanded an immediate end to what it called Turkish aggression, saying the incursion was a "blatant violation" of Syrian sovereignty being carried out under the pretext of fighting terrorism.

The offensive in the Syrian border town of Jarabulus, along the Euphrates River, began just hours before the arrival here Wednesday of Vice President Joe Biden on a mission to repair the eroding U.S.-Turkey relationship, which is considered crucial to the ongoing battle against the Islamic State.

Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu said Turkey's goal is to "sweep ISIS away from the

border." ISIS and ISIL are alternative names for the Islamic State. But he also warned Syrian Kurdish fighters to return east of the Euphrates River, saying that "if they fail to do so, we will do what is necessary."

By late afternoon, rebel fighters and Turkish officials said the rebels had reached the center of Jarabulus after encountering almost no resistance from Islamic State fighters, who appeared to have fled ahead of the advancing forces. Photographs posted on social media showed rebels posing in front of government buildings in the town's central square.

The capture of Jarabulus from the Islamic State would deprive the Islamist militants of their last remaining smuggling route for foreign fighters

and supplies, and it could also blunt a parallel offensive by the U.S.-backed YPG-dominated force that has been advancing against the militants farther to the south at the city of Manbij.

But the Obama administration apparently has decided that it is more important to assuage Turkish sensitivities than to expand the Manbij offensive toward the north.

Biden's visit seemed intended to demonstrate that Turkey and the United States remain close allies in the war, notwithstanding tensions that have strained their relationship since a failed coup attempt last month.

Biden strongly warned the Kurdish rebels not to try to expand their territory or form a separate enclave along the Syrian-Turkish border.

N. Korean missile test-fired from sub goes 300 miles

BY KIM GAMEL

Stars and Stripes

SEOUL, South Korea — North Korea fired a submarine-launched missile that flew at least 300 miles before landing in the sea early Wednesday, officials said. The distance was a personal best for the North, showing it is making serious progress in its nuclear program.

The South Korean, Japanese and Chinese foreign ministers denounced the launch, which occurred amid high tensions as the U.S. and South Korea hold annual war games.

"China is opposed to North Korea's nuclear and missile development process and is opposed to any actions that trigger tensions on the Korean Peninsula," Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi told reporters in Tokyo.

The launch came hours after Pyongyang warned that the joint exercises were pushing the peninsula toward the brink of war and asked for an urgent meeting of the U.N. Security Council. North Korea considers the drills a rehearsal for an invasion, and has issued several warnings that it would retaliate for them. Washington and Seoul insist the exercises are defensive in nature and designed to ensure readiness.

The presumed KN-11 ballistic missile was launched from the eastern port city of Sinpo and "was tracked over and into the Sea of Japan, approximately 300 miles off the coast of North Korea," U.S. Strategic Command said in a statement.

It strongly condemned the launch and said it planned to raise the issue with the U.N. Security Council.

The South Korean military called it an "armed protest" against the Ulchi Freedom Guardian exercises. It said the distance traveled was 310 miles and showed the North is making technical progress in its missile program. The missile was fired at a very steep angle that affected the overall range, an unidentified military official told South Korea's Yonhap news agency. The missile could have flown more than 620 miles if fired at a regular angle, the official said.

Yonhap also reported that the missile fell into waters that are part of Japan's air defense identification zone. Japan's foreign minister said he had lodged a protest with the North.

North Korea had similar success with a land-based Musudan missile earlier this year. Experts said the steep angle is

needed to prevent it from hitting Japan or other territories while still showing off the ability to do so.

"The SLBM launched earlier today indicated improvements compared with the North's previous tests," the Joint Chiefs of Staff in Seoul said. "It seemed to be aimed at raising military tension in response to the ongoing joint military drill between Seoul and Washington."

The missile test could be declared a success, said Moon Keun-sik, an expert at the Korea Defense and Security Forum.

"The fact that the SLBM flew about [310 miles] suggests that North Korea is nearing the stage of completion for the weapon," he said.

North Korea has fired two other missiles from submarines this year.

Quake levels 3 towns in Italy; 120 dead

Associated Press

AMATRICE, Italy — Rescue crews using bulldozers and their bare hands raced to dig out survivors from a strong earthquake that reduced three central Italian towns to rubble early Wednesday. The death toll stood at 120 but the number of dead and missing was uncertain given the huge number of vacationers in the area for summer's final days.

Residents wakened before dawn by the temblor emerged from their crumbled homes to find what they described as apocalyptic scenes "like Dante's Inferno," with entire

blocks of buildings turned into piles of sand and rock, thick dust choking the air and a putrid smell of gas.

"The town isn't here anymore," said Sergio Pirozzi, the mayor of the hardest-hit town, Amatrice. "I believe the toll will rise."

The magnitude 6 quake struck at 3:36 a.m. and was felt across a broad swath of central Italy, including Rome, where residents woke to a long swaying followed by aftershocks. The temblor shook the Lazio region and Umbria and Le Marche on the Adriatic coast.

Premier Matteo Renzi visited the zone Wednesday, greeted

rescue teams and survivors and announced the toll stood at 120. He promised the quake-prone area that "No family, no city, no hamlet will be left behind."

Hardest hit were the tiny towns of Amatrice and Accumoli near Rieti, some 80 miles northeast of Rome, and Pescara del Tronto, some 15 miles further east. Italy's civil protection agency, which was coordinating the rescue and care for survivors, said dozens were injured and thousands in need of temporary housing, though it stressed the numbers were fluid.

The devastation harked back to the 2009 quake that killed

more than 300 people in and around L'Aquila, about 55 miles south of the latest quake. The town, which still hasn't fully recovered, sent emergency teams Wednesday to help with the rescue and set up tent camps for residents unwilling to stay indoors because of aftershocks.

"I don't know what to say. We are living this immense tragedy," said a tearful Rev. Savino D'Amelio, a parish priest in Amatrice. "We are only hoping there will be the least number of victims possible and that we all have the courage to move on."

Suicide bomb, gunfire strike Kabul university

By CHAD GARLAND
Stars and Stripes

KABUL, Afghanistan — Gunmen stormed the campus of the American University in Kabul as part of a complex attack on Wednesday night, military officials and local media said.

A blast and gunfire were heard at the campus on Darul Aman Road in the western part of the capital city about 7 p.m., according to Tolo News on Twitter. The report said attackers had infiltrated the heavily guarded campus.

A spokesman for Kabul garrison said a suicide bomber struck the outer wall of American University, and then one or more armed attackers tried to break in.

"Our security forces are arrived to the area" said Maj. Shahpour, who like many Afghans goes by one name. "There is fighting going on right now at the university parking lot."

Shahpour said that there were some casualties, but could not give an exact number.

Ambulances responded to the scene, and an ABC News report cited an unnamed police offi-

cial who said two people were killed and five were injured in the attack.

A university student who declined to provide his name said shooting was ongoing about an hour after the initial blast.

"There are many students and teachers stuck inside," the student said.

Makia Muneer, a first-year student of English literature at American University, said the suicide attack began 10 minutes after one of her classes ended.

"I left the university, but some of my classmates were still there," Muneer said. Evening classes were just getting underway at the time, and students had started arriving as she was leaving, she said.

"There might have been hundreds of students and staff of the university when it was attacked," she said. She said she tried to call several classmates, but all of their phones were off.

Gen. Abdul Rahman Rahimi, Kabul police chief, told Stars and Stripes the clashes had calmed down by 9:45 p.m.

"We are inside the university right now carrying on clearance operations," Rahimi said.

Many foundation donors met with Clinton at State

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — More than half the people outside the government who met with Hillary Clinton while she was secretary of state gave money — either personally or through companies or groups — to the Clinton Foundation.

At least 85 of 154 people from private interests who met or had phone conversations scheduled with Clinton while she led the State Department donated to her family charity or pledged commitments to its programs, according to a review of State Department calendars released so far to The Associated Press. Combined, the 85 donors contributed as much as \$156 million. At least 40 donated more than \$100,000 each, and 20 gave more than \$1 million.

Donors who were granted time with Clinton included an economist who asked for her help as the Bangladesh government pressured him to resign from a nonprofit bank he ran; a Wall Street executive who sought Clinton's help with a visa problem; and Estee Lauder executives who were listed as meeting with Clinton while

her department worked with the firm's corporate charity to counter gender-based violence in South Africa.

The meetings between the Democratic presidential nominee and foundation donors do not appear to violate legal agreements Clinton and former President Bill Clinton signed before she joined the State Department in 2009. But the frequency of the overlaps shows the intermingling of access and donations, and fuels perceptions that giving the foundation money was a price of admission for face time with Clinton.

Clinton met with representatives of at least 16 foreign governments that donated as much as \$170 million to the Clinton charity, but they were not included in AP's calculations because such meetings would presumably have been part of her diplomatic duties.

Clinton's campaign said the AP analysis was flawed because it did not include in its calculations meetings with foreign diplomats or U.S. government officials, and the meetings the AP examined covered only the first half of Clinton's tenure as secretary of state.

LSU's Miles feeling pressure to win big

Associated Press

BATON ROUGE, La. — The topic of discussion in Les Miles' second-floor office at LSU's expansive football complex centered on how the coach intended to handle the ever-heightening scrutiny upon him this season — particularly in light of the raging speculation that he was on the brink of being fired last November.

At one point, Miles casually leaned forward from the sofa he sat upon, peaked inside a crinkled paper bag on the coffee table in front of him and uttered, "That's a bummer."

Either his wife, Kathy, or 13-year-old daughter, Macy, had finished the tortilla chips while dining with Miles following LSU's evening practice, and the coach asked, "How the heck are you supposed to eat guacamole without chips?"

That might have been the toughest question facing LSU's charismatic, hat-wearing, grass-chewing coach that evening. When it came to how he'll

deal with the perception of uncertainty swirling around him heading into his 12th season with the Tigers, Miles offered a straight-forward response that seemed obvious to him.

"Our plan would be to win and to play very, very well and not to really worry or commiserate and waste time about things you cannot control," Miles said in an interview with The Associated Press. "You can only put the plan in place to win. ... You can't be the best you can be if you're not fully consumed with that very, very specific goal."

In Baton Rouge, many fans are fed up with the Tigers' five-game losing streak against Alabama and question why a program with LSU's profile, highly rated recruiting classes and first-class facilities hasn't played in an elite bowl game for four seasons. That's why pressure mounted on LSU's administration to fire Miles during a three-game skid late last season.

But Miles and his famously unconventional syntax are back

for what many see as make-or-break campaign.

In terms of pure numbers, the Miles era has involved plenty of winning — 112 victories in 11 seasons, second only at LSU to Charlie McClendon's 137 victories in 18 seasons (1962-79). Miles' highlights include the 2007 national title. He'd never lost three straight at LSU before last year.

Miles' backers see him as a friendly, funny, well-grounded family man who is committed to his community for the long-term. All four of his children have spent at least part of their childhood in Baton Rouge, and the 62-year-old Miles doesn't sound inclined to entertain leaving, even if his tenure as LSU coach ends before he'd prefer.

"I see four kids who grew up here and have lifetime friends here and will always want to come back to Baton Rouge," Miles said. "I've had tremendous experiences in Tiger Stadium with young men I've been fortunate to coach and I am not

going to minimize that for a moment."

Kathy Miles said her husband has always been steady through rough patches, even last season.

"In terms of Les, (last season) never felt any different at all from the first day we got here," she said. "You just put your head down, you just try to win and you hope that you do that a great majority of the time — especially at LSU — because the expectations are high. But Les knew that when he got here."

Similar sentiments echo from Miles' players.

"All the speculation that was going on, I know he had to feel some type of way about it," receiver Malachi Dupre said. "But through that whole process, seeing him stay the same just shows the way you have to handle things in life."

"He did a great job of handling it and taught us all a lesson about fighting through it and doing the best you possibly can."

Depth at quarterback becoming problem for Vikings

Associated Press

EDEN PRAIRIE, Minn. — Minnesota Vikings quarterback Teddy Bridgewater has resumed throwing with his sore shoulder.

Coach Mike Zimmer has kept up his silence about Bridgewater's status.

Bridgewater threw a few dozen short and medium-length passes in practice Tuesday, for the first time in front of reporters in a week. He didn't play in the preseason game at Seattle, and Zimmer has refused to discuss the injury. ESPN.com previously reported the shoulder

problem, which Zimmer didn't confirm or deny.

"I told you guys when I first got here I would try to be as transparent and honest as I can. I will be, but there are certain things that I'm not going to tell you, and if he had an issue with his shoulder then I'm going to make sure that I err on the side of caution," Zimmer said. "Because if I played him and he got hurt, you guys would be killing me in the press. So I'm always going to protect the players. I'm going to do what I think is best for the organization, and you're going to have to respect that."

The curt, lecturing tone was aimed at the media members gathered for his post-practice news conference, but the irritant for Zimmer could well be rooted in concern about the health and depth of his quarterbacks.

Bridgewater was in full pads during weekend practices, but he didn't attempt any passes. Backup Shaun Hill was also held out of those workouts, before returning to action Tuesday. Taylor Heinicke, the third-stringer last year, has been on the non-football injury list because of a severed tendon

in his left foot. He was spotted Tuesday without a walking boot for the first time since training camp began.

Undrafted rookie Joel Stave's production as a passer at Wisconsin was unremarkable, but he'd been taking turns with the first team in recent days. Brad Sorenson was signed Saturday to give the Vikings another arm, but he didn't even have his name sewn onto the back of his red jersey yet.

The Vikings host San Diego on Sunday, the first game at the Vikings' new home, U.S. Bank Stadium.



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Arrieta dominant in Cubs' win

Associated Press

SAN DIEGO — Jake Arrieta might be starting a late-season push for an NL Cy Young Award. He's done it before.

Arrieta threw eight scoreless innings of two-hit ball to become the NL's first 16-game winner and Kris Bryant and Addison Russell homered, lifting the Chicago Cubs over the San Diego Padres 5-3 on Tuesday night.

"The story line is Jake," Cubs manager Joe Maddon said. "He hardly ever lost the plate and his fastball command kept getting better as the game progressed. That was really reminiscent of last year."

Arrieta (16-5) allowed a single to Alex Dickerson in the second and Christian Bethancourt's double in the eighth. The defending NL Cy Young winner has two no-hitters in the past year, including one while he went 11-0 with an 0.41 ERA over his final 12 starts last season.

The Padres brought the go-ahead run to the plate in the ninth, but Aroldis Chapman got the last two outs for his 28th save after Felix Pena was charged with three runs.

Dodgers 9, Giants 5: Corey Seager, Justin Turner and Adrian Gonzalez combined for eight hits and four RBIs, and host Los Angeles roughed up Madison Bumgarner again to beat San Francisco.

Rob Segedin and Andrew Toles each homered, and the Dodgers extended their NL West lead to two games.

Red Sox 2, Rays 1: Clay Buchholz pitched into the seventh inning, David Ortiz had a run-scoring single and visiting Boston beat Tampa Bay to remain tied atop the AL East with Toronto.

Blue Jays 7, Angels 2: At Toronto, Russell Martin had three hits and two RBIs and R.A. Dickey pitched 6²/₃ innings for his first home win since July 10.

Royals 1, Marlins 0: At Miami, Yordano Ventura escaped two threats while pitching six innings, and Kansas City extended its winning streak to nine games.

Brewers 6, Rockies 4: Hernan Perez hit a two-run triple in the seventh inning, lifting host Milwaukee over Colorado.

Pirates 7, Astros 1: Ivan Nova took a shutout into the ninth inning and finished with a six-hitter while Gregory Polanco hit two home runs for host Pittsburgh.

Reds 3, Rangers 0: Dan Straily extended his surge since the All-Star break by pitching six innings, and Joey Votto drove in a pair of runs for host Cincinnati.

Mets 7, Cardinals 4: Wilmer Flores and Justin Ruggiano homered, Jose Reyes reached base four times and scored

three runs, and Asdrubal Cabrera had three hits, drove in a run and scored once for visiting New York.

Athletics 9, Indians 1: Khris Davis hit a three-run homer and scored three times, and host Oakland beat Cleveland to snap a three-game losing streak.

Yankees 5, Mariners 1: Jacoby Ellsbury hit a two-run homer and CC Sabathia pitched seven innings to win for the third time in two months, leading visiting New York over Seattle.

Tigers 8, Twins 3: Cameron Maybin drove in three runs, including a go-ahead two-run single in the sixth inning, and Anibal Sanchez (7-12) pitched seven innings to win a start on the road for the first time since the first week of the season for visiting Detroit.

Orioles 8, Nationals 1: Kevin Gausman scattered six hits over six shutout innings, Adam Jones went 4-for-5 and Chris Davis hit his 30th home run for host Baltimore.

White Sox 9, Phillies 1: Jose Abreu homered for a third straight game and Carlos Rodon threw 6²/₃ scoreless innings for host Chicago.

Braves 7, Diamondbacks 4: Matt Kemp's two-out, bases-loaded double in the eighth inning erased a one-run deficit and visiting Atlanta beat Arizona in a game between the NL's worst teams.

Rangers place Hamilton on waivers

Associated Press

CINCINNATI — The Texas Rangers placed Josh Hamilton on unconditional release waivers Tuesday, though they hope his surgically rebuilt left knee is healthy enough to allow him to try for a spot with the team next season.

Texas activated Hamilton off the 60-day disabled list and put him on waivers, a move that was expected. The 35-year-old outfielder had surgery June 8 to reconstruct his ACL and repair cartilage damage. He's hoping to be ready for spring training.

It was Hamilton's third operation on the knee since September.

General manager Jon Daniels said during a conference call that the move had to be done before the end of August, otherwise Hamilton wouldn't have been able to play for the Rangers until after May 15 next year under Major League Baseball's contract rules.

Hamilton is still rehabilitating the knee. He's not expected to be cleared for workouts until December.

In other baseball news:

■ Los Angeles Angels closer Huston Street has undergone season-ending arthroscopic surgery on his right knee.

Street had surgery to repair a torn meniscus Wednesday in his native Texas.

The surgery puts an end to the least impressive season of Street's 12-year career. The three-time All-Star is 3-2 with a career-low nine saves and a 6.45 ERA.

■ Orioles ace Chris Tillman is going to take a break from the pennant race to give his ailing shoulder a much-needed rest.

Baltimore was expected to place Tillman on the 15-day disabled list Wednesday.

Tillman is 15-5 with a 3.76 ERA in 26 starts. No other starter on the team has more than seven wins.

Olympics over, WNBA restarts season

Associated Press

RIO DE JANEIRO — With the Olympics in the rearview mirror, the WNBA is ready to restart its season after a month-long break.

There should be quite the sprint to the finish over the league's final weeks.

"Very excited to get the back end of the season going," WNBA President Lisa Borders said. "You think about the format changes, top eight teams make the playoffs, doesn't matter what your geography is, it matters what your record is."

Only 4½ games separate fourth place and 11th after the league changed its playoff format this season to get rid of conferences. The top eight teams will make the playoffs.

"The league is very close right now and anybody can make it into the playoffs or get kicked out at this point," Chicago Sky star Elena Delle Donne said. "Every game is do or die."

Phoenix, which had nearly half its team go to Rio, had been the biggest disappointment this season. Picked by the league's general managers to win the

title in the preseason, the Mercury sit at 10-14 and in seventh place.

"The WNBA season is very tricky, especially with the Olympic break," Diana Taurasi said. "If we can start building momentum and playing good basketball, we have championship-caliber talent, we just need to start playing like it."

Los Angeles and Minnesota have already clinched playoff spots and most likely will be the top two seeds in the playoffs, earning them byes into the semifinals.