

WORLD IN BRIEF

Associated Press

Egypt: Militants kill at least 235 in attack on Sinai mosque

EL-ARISH, Egypt — Militants attacked a crowded mosque during prayers in the Sinai Peninsula today, setting off explosives, spraying worshippers with gunfire and killing at least 235 people in the deadliest ever attack by Islamic extremists in Egypt.

The attack targeted a mosque frequented by Sufis, members of Islam's mystical movement, in the north Sinai town of Bir al-Abd. Islamic militants, including the local affiliate of the Islamic State group, consider Sufis heretics because of their less literal interpretations of the faith.

The startling bloodshed, which also wounded at least 109, was the latest sign of how more than three years of fighting in Sinai has been unable to crush an insurgency waged by the IS affiliate. Seeking to spread the violence, the militants the past year have carried out deadly bombings on churches in the capital, Cairo, and other cities, killing dozens of Christians. The affiliate also is believed to have been behind the 2016 downing of a Russian passenger jet that killed 226 people.

But this was the first major militant attack on a Muslim mosque, and it eclipsed any past attacks of its kind, even dating back to a previous Islamic militant insurgency in the 1990s.

Trump signals welfare reform is next, with details to come

WASHINGTON — Welfare reform was one of the defining issues of President Bill Clinton's presidency, starting with a campaign promise to "end welfare as we know it," continuing with a bitter policy fight and producing an overhaul law that remains hotly debated 20 years later.



AP Photo/Alex Brandon

President Donald Trump prepares to hand out sandwiches to U.S. Coast Guard members at the Lake Worth Inlet Station on Thanksgiving in Riviera Beach, Fla.

Now, President Donald Trump wants to put his stamp on the welfare system.

Trump, who has been signaling interest in the issue for some time, said today at a Cabinet meeting that he wants to tackle welfare reform after the tax overhaul he is seeking by the end of the year. He said changes were "desperately needed in our country" and that his administration would soon offer plans.

For now, the president has not offered details. Spokeswoman Sarah Huckabee Sanders said more specifics were likely early next year. But the groundwork has already begun at the White House and Trump has made his interest known to Republican lawmakers.

Paul Winfree, director of budget policy and deputy director of the Domestic Policy Council, told a gathering at the conservative Heritage Foundation last week that he and another staffer had been charged with "working on a major welfare reform proposal," adding that they have drafted an executive order on the topic that would outline administration principles and direct agencies to come up with recommendations.

Cheering Zimbabweans greet country's new leader Mnangagwa

HARARE, Zimbabwe — Exuberant Zimbabweans greeted the swearing-in today of new President Emmerson Mnangagwa, who takes power after an extraordinary series of events that ousted the world's oldest head of state.

Mnangagwa, fired earlier this month as vice president, will lead after the resignation of 93-year-old Robert Mugabe, who succumbed to pressure to quit from the military, the ruling party and massive demonstrations amid fears his unpopular wife would succeed him.

A smiling Mnangagwa greeted a stadium crowd of tens of thousands with a raised fist, and he promised to devote himself to the well-being of the people. The military, fresh from putting Mugabe under house arrest just days ago, quickly swore its loyalty to the new leader.

Mnangagwa, a former justice and defense minister, was a key Mugabe confidant for decades until they fell out because of the presidential ambitions of Mugabe's wife, Grace. Despite his long association with the government that has presided over Zimbabwe's decline, including economic collapse and human rights abuses, Mnangagwa has promised democracy and reached out to other countries for help.

Mugabe, one of Africa's last remaining liberation leaders, quit Tuesday amid impeachment proceedings. In the end, he was isolated and showing few of the political skills that kept him in power for 37 years and made him a prominent but polarizing figure on the world stage. He had led since Zimbabwe's independence from white minority rule in 1980.

Pakistan releases US-wanted militant suspect on court order

LAHORE, Pakistan — Pakistani authorities acting on a court order released a U.S.-wanted

militant today who allegedly founded a banned group linked to the 2008 Mumbai, India attack that killed 168 people, his spokesman and officials said.

Hafiz Saeed, who has been designated a terrorist by the U.S. Justice Department and has a \$10 million bounty on his head, was released before dawn after the court this week ended his detention in the eastern city of Lahore.

The move outraged Indian authorities, but Saeed's spokesman Yahya Mujahid confirmed his release, calling it a "victory of truth."

"Hafiz Saeed was under house arrest on baseless allegations and jail officials came to his home last night and told him that he is now free," he said.

Saeed ran the Jamaat-ud-Dawa organization, widely believed to be a front for the Lashkar-e-Taiba militant group, which India believes was behind the deadly attack in Mumbai.

Sound heard in Argentine sub search was likely explosion

MAR DEL PLATA, Argentina — An apparent explosion occurred near the time and place an Argentine submarine went missing, the country's navy reported Thursday, prompting relatives of the vessel's 44 crew members to burst into tears and some to say they had lost hope of a rescue.

Navy spokesman Enrique Balbi said the search will continue until there is full certainty about the fate of the ARA San Juan, despite the evidence of an explosion and with more than a week having passed since the submarine disappeared. It was originally scheduled to arrive Monday at Argentina's Mar del Plata Navy Base.

The U.S. Navy and an international nuclear test-ban monitoring organization said a "hydro-acoustic anomaly" was produced just hours after the navy lost contact with the sub on Nov. 15. It was near the submarine's last known location.

"According to this report, there was an explosion," Balbi told reporters. "We don't know what caused an explosion of these characteristics at this site on this date."

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