

# World News Briefs

## Nasir Al-Wahishi, al-Qaida's No. 2 leader and head of its Yemen branch, killed in US strike

CAIRO (AP) — A U.S. airstrike has killed al-Qaida's second-most-powerful figure, the head of its Yemeni branch, dealing the terror network its biggest blow since the killing of Osama bin Laden at a time when it is vying with the Islamic State group for the mantle of global jihad.

Nasir al-Wahishi was the latest in a series of senior figures from al-Qaida's powerful Yemeni branch eliminated by U.S. drone attacks over the past five months, including its top ideologue and a senior military commander. The U.S. has intensified its campaign, trying to push back the group as it has captured new territory in Yemen by taking advantage of the southern Arabian nation's chronic chaos.

In confirming the killing of al-Wahishi in a June 9 drone attack, the White House said Tuesday that his death "removes from the battlefield an experienced terrorist leader and brings us closer to degrading and ultimately defeating these groups."

The U.S. activity against al-Qaida has not been limited to Yemen. Over the weekend, a U.S. airstrike in Libya targeted an al-Qaida-linked militant commander, Mokhtar Belmokhtar, who led a 2013 attack on an Algerian gas complex that killed 35 hostages, including several Americans. U.S. officials are still trying to confirm whether he was killed in the raid.

Al-Wahishi was a former aide to bin Laden who, after the al-Qaida affiliate in Saudi Arabia was crushed in the mid-2000s, rebuilt it in his Yemeni homeland and turned it into the terror network's most dangerous branch. He also served as deputy to Ayman al-Zawahri, who succeeded bin Laden in 2011 as the network's leader. The U.S. had put a bounty of up to \$10 million on al-Wahishi.

## 6 killed in California balcony collapse; victims mostly college students from Ireland

BERKELEY, Calif. (AP) — A 21st-birthday party thrown by a group of visiting Irish college students turned tragic early Tuesday when the fifth-floor balcony they were crowded on collapsed with a sharp crack,

spilling 13 people about 50 feet onto the pavement. Six people were killed and seven seriously injured.

Police and fire and building officials were working to figure out why the roughly 5-by-10-foot concrete-floor balcony broke loose from the side of the stucco apartment building, situated a couple of blocks from the campus of the University of California, Berkeley.

High school student Jason Biswas' family nearby was awakened by the noise.



A crew begins work on the Library Gardens apartment building balcony below the remaining wood from a balcony that collapsed in Berkeley, Calif., Wednesday, June 17, 2015. The balcony broke loose from the building during a 21st birthday party early Tuesday, killing several people and seriously injuring others.

"They thought there was an earthquake, but then we looked out the window and saw seven or eight people on the ground," the 16-year-old said. "There were piles of blood everywhere."

Five of the dead were 21-year-olds from Ireland who were in the country on so-called J-1 visas that enable young people to work and travel in the U.S. over the summer, while the sixth victim was from California, authorities said.

## Ex-NAACP leader Rachel Dolezal says she identifies as black, drew self with brown crayon at 5

NEW YORK (AP) — The NAACP chapter president who resigned after her parents said she is white said Tuesday that she started identifying as black around age 5, when she drew self-portraits with a brown crayon, and she "takes exception" to the contention she tried to deceive people.

Rachel Dolezal said on NBC's "Today" show that some of the discussion about her has been "viciously inhumane."

Asked by Matt Lauer if she is an "an African-American woman," Dolezal said: "I identify as black."

Dolezal's career as a civil rights activist in the Pacific Northwest crumbled in the past few days.

She resigned Monday as president of the Spokane, Washington, branch of the NAACP, lost her position as a part-time African studies instructor at a local university, was fired as a freelance newspaper columnist and is being investigated by the city Ethics Commission over whether she lied about her race on her application when she landed an appointment to Spokane's police oversight board.

## Delegation including Yemen's Houthi rebels arrives for Geneva talks after delay in Djibouti

GENEVA (AP) — Fighting in Yemen raged on Tuesday, with dozens reported killed even as the country's Shiite Houthi rebels arrived in Geneva for U.N.-brokered peace talks. U.N. figures reported an increasing number of civilians killed in a conflict that is showing little sign of abating.

The Geneva talks are aimed at ending months of fighting that prompted a Saudi-led coalition to launch an air campaign against the Houthis and their allies nearly three months ago. Still, neither side has shown desire to compromise even as dozens died in renewed fighting in the southern city of Aden.

Following initial meetings with the U.N. envoy, delegate Ghaleb Mutlak said that the rebels are trying to achieve a truce for the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, and that their delegation is willing to stay in Switzerland as long as it takes to end the bloodshed.

U.N. special envoy Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed said nothing will be settled unless the two sides can be persuaded to sit down together, but that just getting them both to Geneva was a "great achievement."

"We should not underestimate the significance of this event," he told reporters after meeting with the Houthi delegation. "It is the important start toward the return to a political process. Let us be realistic, it will be a difficult path, but the important issue is that we start addressing the crisis."

## Hunt for escaped murderers near NY prison hindered by cool, rainy weather on 11th day

DANNEMORA, N.Y. (AP) — Search teams hindered by cool, rainy weather combed through woods for an 11th day trying to track down two escaped murderers on Tuesday as one official raised doubts the escapees relied solely on a now-jailed prison worker to help them get away after their breakout.

More than 800 law enforcement officers who are searching for convicts David Sweat and Richard Matt shifted their focus eastward along Route 374 leading from the village of Dannemora, home of the Clinton Correctional Facility, in far northern New York.

State police said Tuesday the manhunt will be expanded beyond where it's been most intense, 16 square miles of woods, fields and swamps around a road where search dogs caught the scent of both men and searchers found evidence indicating they may have spent time there.

Clinton County Sheriff David Favro said rain has been washing away any scent dogs might find and interfering with thermal imaging devices being used to detect body heat.

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