

BRIEFLY

Prominent Russian opposition figure shot dead

MOSCOW (AP) — Boris Nemtsov, a charismatic Russian opposition leader and sharp critic of President Vladimir Putin, was gunned down Saturday near the Kremlin, just a day before a planned protest against the government.

The death of Nemtsov, a 55-year-old former deputy prime minister, ignited a fury among opposition figures who assailed the Kremlin for creating an atmosphere of intolerance of any dissent and called the killing an assassination. Putin quickly offered his condolences and called the murder a provocation.

Nemtsov was working on a report presenting evidence that he believed proved Russia's direct involvement in the separatist rebellion in the separatist rebellion that has raged in eastern Ukraine since last April. Ukraine and the West accuse Russia of backing the rebels with troops and sophisticated weapons. Moscow denies the accusations.

Putin ordered Russia's top law enforcement chiefs to personally oversee the probe of Nemtsov's killing.

Police capture top capo 'La Tuta'

MEXICO CITY (AP) — Servando "La Tuta" Gomez, a former school teacher who became one of Mexico's most-wanted drug lords as head of the Knights Templar cartel, was captured early Friday by federal police.

Gomez was arrested in a house in Morelia, the capital of the western state of Michoacan, without a shot fired, according to a Mexican official who spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to discuss the case. He said the operation was based on months of intelligence work.

The 49-year-old led the Knights Templar, a quasi-religious criminal group that once ruled all of Michoacan, controlling politics and commerce and preaching a code of ethics around devotion to God and family, even as it murdered and plundered. The cartel lost power when the federal government took over the state to try to restore order in January 2014. But Gomez evaded capture for more than a year.

The Mexican government had offered a \$2 million reward for his capture, and he also was wanted in the United States for conspiracy to import and distribute cocaine.

Congress tries 1-week bill to keep Homeland Security open

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — On a day of high drama, the Republican-controlled Congress struggled into the night Friday to pass emergency legislation to keep the Homeland Security Department in full funding for one week and avert a partial shutdown threatened for midnight.

Acting without fanfare, the Senate cleared the measure less than four hours before the deadline that would have triggered a partial shutdown at the federal agency with anti-terrorism responsibilities.

That sent the bill to the House, where only a few hours earlier, 52 rebellious Republicans unexpectedly joined with Democrats to vote down a three-week funding bill. The vote was 224-203.

Conservatives were furious that the leadership had dropped provisions repealing Obama administration directives that shield immigrants from deportation. Democrats demanded longer-term funding as their price for passage.

"You have made a mess," House Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi said accusingly to Republicans as the vote neared.

In the aftermath, even some Republicans agreed.

"There are terrorist attacks all over world and we're talking about closing down Homeland Security. This is like living in world of crazy people," tweeted Rep. Peter King of New York, a former chairman of the Homeland Security Committee.

The debate in the House set a chain of events in motion.

First, Homeland Security officials circulated a lengthy contingen-



AP Photo/J. Scott Applewhite

House Minority Whip Steny Hoyer, D-Md., leaves the chamber after lawmakers failed to advance a short-term funding measure to keep the Department of Homeland Security funded past a midnight deadline, at the Capitol in Washington, Friday evening.

cy plan indicating that about 30,000 employees could expect to be furloughed without passage of funding legislation.

Then the White House announced President Barack Obama had spoken with Pelosi and Senate Democratic Leader Harry Reid. Moments later, Majority Leader Mitch McConnell of Kentucky strode onto the Senate floor and swiftly gained approval for the seven-day measure.

Taken together, the day's roller-coaster events at the Capitol underscored the difficulty Republicans have had so far this year in translating last fall's election gains into legislative accomplishment — a step its own leaders say is necessary to establish the party's credentials as a responsible, governing party.

Republicans gained control of the

Senate in November's balloting, and emerged with their largest House majority in more than 70 years.

A combination of conservative, tea party-backed Republicans on one side of the political aisle and Democrats on the other brought down the funding measure.

The first group was upset because the legislation had been stripped of changes to Obama administration directives policy that shielded millions of immigrants from the threat of deportation. Democrats opposed it in overwhelming numbers because it lacked full-year funding for the sprawling department.

Pelosi and other Democrats urged Republicans both before and after the vote to allow debate on legislation to keep the department in funds through the Sept. 30 end of the

budget year — a step the GOP high command has so far refused to take.

That might get enough Democratic votes to pass the bill, but at the same time had the potential to drive away Republicans.

"It does not make any difference whether the funding is for three weeks, three months or a full fiscal year. If it's illegal, it's illegal," said Rep. Mo Brooks, R-Ala.

Further demonstrating GOP woes, House GOP leaders abruptly called off a vote on a major education bill that had attracted significant opposition from conservatives as well as Democrats and the White House.

Aides attributed that decision to the need to work separately on rounding up enough votes to pass the measure that would prevent a partial shutdown at Homeland Security.

Across the Capitol, the Senate waited all day to add its assent after playing out a series of acts in the Republicans' effort to use the measure to wring concessions on immigration from the White House.

A largely symbolic attempt to advance legislation that would repeal Obama's immigration directive of last fall failed on a vote of 57-42, three short of the 60 required.

That separate proposal was "commonsense legislation that would protect our democracy from the egregious example of executive overreach we saw in November," said Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell of Kentucky, who successfully led his rank and file in recent days to a decision to pass Homeland Security legislation without immigration-related provisions.

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