

**BRIEFLY**

**20 migrants with severe burn injuries rescued at sea, part of influx into Italy**

MILAN (AP) — The unabated flow of migrants fleeing instability in Libya brought a new horror on Friday: The discovery of 20 migrants adrift at sea who had suffered grave burn injuries in a cooking gas explosion before departing Libya, and then were forced onto a smuggler's boat without treatment. Italian ships have picked up 10,000 people, many of them refugees of war and persecution, over the past week, an unprecedented number in such a short period. The influx is putting pressure on Italy's shelter system and raising calls for a better response to the emergency. Friday's rescue comes after the feared drowning of more than 400 migrants in two shipwrecks in the last week, bringing to more than 900 the number of people who have died or gone missing so far this year making the perilous crossing — 10 times higher than over the same period last year.

**Obama open to 'creative negotiations' over Iran's demand for sanctions relief**

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Barack Obama on Friday left open the door to "creative negotiations" in response to Iran's demand that punishing sanctions be immediately lifted as part of a nuclear deal, even though the initial agreement calls for the penalties to be removed over time. Asked at a White House news conference whether he would definitively rule out lifting sanctions at once as part of a final deal aimed at keeping Iran from developing a nuclear weapon, Obama said he didn't want to get ahead of negotiators in how to work through the potential sticking point. He said his main concern is making sure that if Iran violates an agreement, sanctions can quickly be reinstated — the so-called "snap back" provision. "How sanctions are lessened, how we snap back sanctions if there's a violation, there are a lot of different mechanisms and ways to do that," Obama said. He said part of the job for Secretary of State John Kerry and the representatives of five other nations working to reach a final deal with Iran by June 30 "is to sometimes find formulas that get to our main concerns while allowing the other side to make a presentation to their body politic that is more acceptable."

**Global finance leaders welcome modest economic improvements**

WASHINGTON (AP) — Financial officials from the world's major economies on Friday welcomed modest improvements in the global economy while side-stepping fears rattling global financial markets that Greece will default on its bailout loans. The officials from the Group of 20 issued a joint communique that pledged greater efforts to boost confidence and reduce economic vulnerabilities. The meetings' chairman, Turkey's Deputy Prime Minister Ali Babacan, said the problems confronting Greece did not come up during the two days of official discussions. While Greece wasn't on the official G-20 agenda, it was a hot topic on the sidelines of the finance meetings, which were to conclude Saturday after discussions among the policy panels of the 188-nation International Monetary Fund and its sister lending group, the World Bank. U.S. Treasury Secretary Jacob Lew said he stressed in a series of one-on-one meetings, including discussions with Greek Finance Minister Yanis Varoufakis, that it was urgent that the debt negotiations be resolved quickly.

**Iraqi officials believe Saddam's top deputy killed**

By QASSIM ABDUL-ZAHRA and VIVIAN SALAMA Associated Press

BAGHDAD — He was the last member of Saddam Hussein's inner circle still on the run, depicted with his distinctive red moustache as the "king of clubs" on the U.S. military's deck of cards of most-wanted Iraqi regime fugitives. Now, officials say they believe government forces killed Izzat Ibrahim al-Douri near Tikrit, where the former deputy to Saddam was working alongside Islamic State militants.

Reports of al-Douri's death came Friday as Iraqi forces tried to push back Islamic State group fighters in Salahuddin province, where Tikrit is located. Government troops took back several towns near Iraq's largest oil refinery at Beiji, officials said. Farther north, a car bomb exploded next to the U.S. Consulate in the city of Irbil, a rare attack in the capital of the Kurdish autonomous zone that killed three people and wounded five, police said. U.S. officials said no Americans were hurt and no casualties among consulate personnel or guards.

An Associated Press reporter at the scene said the blast went off outside a cafe next to the building in the Ankawa neighborhood, setting several nearby cars on fire. Shortly afterward, the Islamic State group claimed responsibility, according to the SITE Intelligence Group, which tracks militant websites. The report of al-Douri's death was not the first time Iraqi officials have claimed to have killed or captured the 72-year-old former aide to Saddam.

According to Raed al-Jabouri, the governor of Salahuddin province, al-Douri was killed by Iraqi troops and Shiite militiamen in an operation in the Talal Hamreen mountains east of Tikrit, Saddam's hometown, which was retaken from the Islamic State group earlier this month. Troops opened fire at a convoy carrying al-Douri



A man talks on his phone at the aftermath of a car bomb exploded Friday afternoon next to the U.S. Consulate in the northern city of Irbil.

and nine bodyguards, killing all of them, Gen. Haider al-Basri, a senior commander, told state TV. The government issues several photos showing a body purported to be al-Douri. The body had a bright red beard, perhaps dyed, and a ginger-colored moustache. Al-Douri was a fair-skinned redhead with a ginger moustache, making him distinctive among the members of Saddam's inner circle. Karim al-Nouri, a spokesman for the Popular Mobilization Forces, said the body was brought Friday night to Baghdad for DNA tests, which should be completed within 48 hours. Col. Pat Ryder, spokesman for U.S. Central Command, said the U.S. had no information to corroborate the reported death of al-Douri. In 2013, the Iraqi government said it arrested al-Douri, circulating a photo of a

bearded man who resembled him. It later said it was a case of mistaken identity. Al-Douri was officially the No. 2 man in Iraq's ruling hierarchy. He served as vice chairman of Saddam's Revolutionary Command Council, was one of Saddam's few longtime confidants, and his daughter was married briefly to Saddam's son, Odai, who was killed with his brother, Qusai, by U.S. troops in Mosul after the U.S.-led invasion in 2003. During the war, coalition troops were issued decks of playing cards with the names and faces of many of the most-wanted Iraqis on each one. Saddam was the ace of spades, Odai was the ace of hearts, and Qusai was ace of clubs. Depicted on the cards as the king of clubs, al-Douri was shown in a photo with his red moustache, saluting smartly in his military uniform.

When the Baathist regime collapsed as U.S. troops occupied Baghdad, al-Douri disappeared. Initially, he was No. 6 on the most-wanted list of 55 Iraqis after the invasion. After Saddam was captured and put to death months later and more regime figures were caught, al-Douri became the most prominent fugitive. U.S. authorities soon linked him to the Sunni insurgencies that erupted against the American occupation and the Shiite-led government that replaced Saddam. A bounty of \$10 million was placed on his head. Early in the war, U.S. authorities linked al-Douri to Ansar al-Islam, a militant group with ties to al-Qaeda, and he was accused of being a major financier of the insurgency. Former officers from Saddam's military and police were believed to have played large roles in the insurgency, whether with al-Qaeda or other factions.

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