



Jason Hoekema/The Brownsville Herald via AP, File

In this April 28 file photo, a wrecker crew prepares to flip over a Ford Bronco that was involved in an accident in Brownsville, Texas.

Traffic fatalities surge in first half of 2016

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Traffic fatalities were up 9 percent in the first six months of this year compared with the same period last year, continuing a surge in deaths that began two years ago as the economy improved and travel picked up, according to preliminary estimates released Tuesday by the National Safety Council.

An estimated 19,100 people were killed on U.S. roads from January through June, said the council, a congressionally chartered nonprofit that gets its data from state authorities. That's 18 percent more than two years ago at the six-month mark. About 2.2 million people also were seriously injured in the first half of this year.

The council estimates the cost of these deaths and injuries at about \$205 billion.

At that rate, annual deaths could exceed 40,000 fatalities this year for the first time in nine years, the council said. More than 35,000 people were killed on U.S. roads last year, making it the deadliest driving year since 2008, when more than 37,000 were killed.

"Our complacency is killing us," said Deborah A.P. Hersman, the safety council's president and CEO. "Americans should demand change to prioritize safety actions and protect ourselves from one of the leading causes of preventable death."

U.S. drivers have also put in a record 1.58 trillion miles on the road in the first half of this year, a 3.3 percent increase over the same period in 2015, the Federal Highway Administration said this week.

States with the biggest increases since the upward trend began in late 2014 include Vermont, up 82 percent; Oregon, 70 percent;

New Hampshire, 61 percent; Idaho, 46 percent; Florida, 43 percent; Iowa, 37 percent; Georgia, 34 percent; Indiana, 33 percent; California, 31 percent and Wisconsin, 29 percent.

Traffic deaths declined in seven states over the same two-year period: Delaware, -8 percent; Hawaii, -11 percent; Montana, -3 percent; Nebraska, -7 percent; North Dakota, -10 percent; South Dakota, -34 percent and Wyoming, -35 percent. Traffic deaths also declined 31 percent in the District of Columbia.

"While many factors likely contributed to the fatality increase, a stronger economy and lower unemployment rates are at the core of the trend," the council said in a statement. Another likely factor: Average gas prices for the first six months of this year were 16 percent lower than in 2015.

The council also predicts that 438 people will be killed on the nation's roads over the three-day Labor Day weekend that begins Sept. 2, which would make it the deadliest Labor Day weekend since 2008.

Historical data show that after peaking in the 1970s, traffic deaths have generally trended downward, according to the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety. Large dips in deaths have corresponded to shocks to the economy — the oil embargo of the mid-1970s, the recessions of the early 1980s and early 1990s and the more recent downturn that began in late 2007 with the subprime mortgage crisis.

During the Great Recession triggered by the housing crisis, the number of miles Americans put on the road each year plunged and fatalities dropped to levels not seen since Harry Truman was president.

Turkey makes first major foray into Syria with assault on IS

ANKARA, Turkey (AP) — Turkey on Wednesday launched its first major ground assault into Syria since the country's civil war began, sending in tanks and special forces backed by U.S. airstrikes to help Syrian rebels retake a border town from Islamic State militants.

The surprise incursion to capture the town of Jarablus was a dramatic escalation of Turkey's role in Syria's war. But its objective went beyond fighting extremists. Turkey is also aiming to contain expansion by Syria's Kurds, who are also backed by the United States and have used the fight against IS and the chaos of the civil war to seize nearly the entire stretch of the border with Turkey in northern Syria.

That raises the potential for explosive frictions between two American allies. U.S. Vice President Joe Biden flew into Ankara hours after the offensive, and he backed Turkey with a stern warning to the Kurds to stay east of the Euphrates River, which crosses from Turkey into Syria at Jarablus.

Kurdish forces "must move back across the Euphrates River. They cannot, will not, under any circumstance get American support if they do not keep that commitment," he said.

The Turkish assault, launched in retaliation after a string of militant bombings in Turkey, adds yet another powerhouse force on the ground in an already complicated war.

It appeared Turkish forces would remain for at least the near term. A senior Turkish official told journalists that operations would continue until "we are convinced" imminent threats



AP Photo

Turkish army tanks and Turkey-backed Syrian opposition forces move toward the Syrian border from Karkamis, Turkey, Wednesday.

to Turkey are neutralized. He said the aim is to create a "terror-free zone" in northern Syria to prevent militants from entering Turkey. The official spoke on condition of anonymity in line with government regulations.

The Turkish assault began around 4 a.m. with a furious barrage by artillery and warplanes. Then around 20 Turkish tanks, a team of Turkish special forces, and hundreds of Syrian rebels surged across the border, according to Turkish media and Syrian opposition activists.

Only hours later, the rebels burst into Jarablus, posting photos from the town's center. IS militants withdrew apparently without a fight, retreating to the IS-held town of al-Bab further south.

In the evening, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan announced that rebels had retaken the city, saying they seized "government and official residences." He spoke alongside Biden, who said Washington backed the offensive with airstrikes, adding, "We believe very strongly that the Turkish border should be controlled by Turkey."

Much of what happens next depends on whether the Turkish offensive goes deeper and what they move against: IS-held towns or nearby Kurdish-controlled areas, including the town of Manbij which Kurdish forces retook from IS earlier this month. Manbij lies west of the Euphrates, and Ankara has demanded the Kurds hand it over to Syrian rebels and withdraw.

Attack on American University in Kabul leaves 7 dead

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP) — An attack on the American University of Afghanistan has ended, a senior police officer said Thursday, after at least seven people were killed and more than 30 were wounded.

Kabul police Chief Abdul Rahman Rahimi said the dead included one guard, and that about 700 students had been rescued.

Rahami said one foreign teacher had been wounded.

There were no immediate claims of responsibility for the attack on the university on the edge of Kabul. It was established in 2006 to offer liberal arts courses modeled on the U.S. system, and has more than 1,000 students currently enrolled.

Police spokesman Sediq Sediqqi earlier said it was still not clear if there were one or two attackers.

Hedayatullah Stanikzai, an official with the Ministry of Public Health, said a guard employed by



AP Photo/Rahmat Gul

Afghan security forces inspect the site after an attack on the American University of Afghanistan in Kabul, Afghanistan, Thursday.

the university had been killed and that the wounded included a foreign teacher. University authorities could not immediately be reached for comment.

Dejan Panic, the program director at Kabul's Emergency Hospital, said 18 people wounded in the attack, including five women, had been admitted. He said three were "seriously" wounded, probably from automatic gunfire.

AP photographer Massoud Hossaini was in a classroom with 15 students when he heard an explosion on the southern flank of the campus.

"I went to the window to see what was going on, and I saw a person in normal clothes outside. He shot at me and shattered the glass," Hossaini said, adding that he fell on the glass and cut his hands.

The students then barri-

caded themselves inside the classroom, pushing chairs and desks against the door, and staying on the floor. Hossaini said at least two grenades were thrown into the classroom, wounding several of his classmates.

Hossaini and about nine students later managed to escape from the campus through an emergency gate.

Hossaini and the other students took refuge in a residential house near the campus, and were later safely evacuated by Afghan security forces.

The Pentagon said U.S. military advisers were on the ground with Afghan security forces at the university. Spokesman Adam Stump said the forces had been embedded with the Afghan units.

The attack on AUAF comes two weeks after two university staff, an American and an Australian, were kidnapped from their car by unknown gunmen. Their whereabouts are still unknown.

BRIEFLY

Colombia, FARC rebels reach deal to end 50-year war

HAVANA (AP) — Colombia's government and the country's biggest rebel group reached a deal Wednesday evening for ending a half-century of hostilities in what has been one of the world's longest-running armed conflicts.

The government's accord with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia must still be ratified by voters in a plebiscite in order to take effect.

But the announcement in Havana of a deal after four years of talks opens the possibility for Colombians to put behind them political bloodshed that has claimed more than 220,000 lives and driven more than 5 million people from their homes.

The accord, whose final text has yet to be published, commits Colombia's government to carrying out aggressive land reform, overhauling its anti-narcotics strategy and greatly expanding the state into traditionally neglected areas of the country. But many sensitive details being worked out during around-the-clock sessions in recent days remain unknown and the joint statement read by the talks' Cuban and Norwegian sponsors was intended more to celebrate the conclusion of talks than offer new insights.

Negotiations began in November 2012 and were plagued by distrust built

up during decades of war propaganda on both sides.

Polls say most Colombians loathe the rebel group known as the FARC and show no hesitation labeling them "narcoterrorists" for their heavy involvement in Colombia's cocaine trade, an association for which members of the group's top leadership have been indicted in the U.S. Meanwhile, the FARC held onto a Cold War view of Colombia's political and economic establishment as "oligarchs" at the service of the U.S.

The rebel army was forced to the negotiating table after a decade of heavy battlefield losses that saw a succession of top rebel commanders killed by the U.S.-backed military and the its ranks thinned by half to the current 7,000 troops.

Italy earthquake kills at least 159

AMATRICE, Italy (AP) — 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 Wednesday. The death toll stood at 159, but the number of dead and missing was uncertain given the thousands 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 6.2 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, a highly seismic area that has witnessed major quakes in the past.

Dozens of people were pulled out alive by rescue teams and volunteers that poured in from around Italy.

In the evening, about 17 hours after the quake struck, firefighters pulled a 10-year-old girl alive from the rubble in Pescara del Tronto.

"You can hear something under here. Quiet, quiet," one rescue worker said, before soon urging her on: "Come on, Giulia, come on, Giulia. ... Watch your head."

Cheers broke out when she was pulled out.

And there were wails when bodies emerged.

"Unfortunately, 90 percent we pull out are dead, but some make it, that's why we are here," said Christian Bianchetti, a volunteer from Rieti who was working in devastated Amatrice where

flood lights were set up so the rescue could continue through the night.

Premier Matteo Renzi visited the zone Wednesday, greeted rescue teams and survivors, and pledged that "No family, no city, no hamlet will be left behind."

TWO HOURS every morning paid off my credit card debt.



Become an East Oregonian Carrier.
211 SE Byers Ave. Pendleton
or call:
541-276-2211
1-800-522-0255

EAST OREGONIAN

MEDICAL DIRECTORY

To include your business in this directory, contact Chris at 541-966-0827



- Breast Cancer Care Specialist ... 541-278-3224
- Cancer Clinic..... 541-278-6576
- Cardiopulmonary Services 541-278-8284
- Diabetes Education 541-278-3239
- Education 541-278-2627
- Home Health Care/Hospice..... 541-276-4100
- Lactation Services..... 541-966-2541
- Nutrition Counseling 541-278-3235
- Sleep Disorders Lab..... 541-278-3685
- Radiology/Diagnostic Imaging ... 541-278-3228
- Maternity and OB Care..... 541-278-3261
- Outpatient Physical Therapy 541-278-6610
- Family Clinic 541-966-0535

541-276-5121
2801 St. Anthony Way
Pendleton