UN urges more airline passenger info in terror fight

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — The U.N. political chief on Tuesday urged the world's nations to share information about airline passengers as part of a stepped up response to the growth of "transnational terrorism" sparked by the Islamic State group's expanding areas of attack.

Jeffrey Feltman also told the U.N. Security Council that it is "critical" to improve the global response to "foreign terrorist fighters" leaving Syria and Iraq, even though many are still in conflict zones.

He was briefing the council on Secretary-General Antonio Guterres' latest report on IS — also known as ISIL and Daesh. It said European member states have reported that between 15 percent and 40 percent of their nationals and residents who traveled to Iraq and Syria to fight have returned — and some governments highlighted a rising number of female returnees.

"A proportion of those returning present a significant threat and are facing appropriate legal and control measures," the secretary-general's report said. "Other returnees are reported to have become disillusioned with the fighting and the distorted ideology of ISIL and therefore represent a lower threat."

In a separate report to the Security Council circulated late Tuesday, a panel of experts that monitors sanctions against IS said it has received various estimates of the current number of fighters for the extremist group. They range from 12,000 to 20,000 in Syria and Iraq to 33,000 fighters in the wider Middle East, "including 15,000 foreign terrorist fighters," the report said.

In December, the Security Council urged all 193 member states to address "the gravity of the threat" posed by IS by adopting laws and sharing intelligence, biometric, biographical data and financial information related to extremist groups — and by requiring airlines operating in their territories to provide advance information on passengers to national authorities.

According to the report, only 56 nations have shared advance passenger information to date, and implementation of the council's call for countries to share passenger name records "continues to be uneven." While some countries have voluntarily provided passenger name records from ocean and sea traffic and cruise ships, "a lack of appropriate regulation continues to represent a significant vulnerability," the report said.

Feltman reiterated that although the Islamic State group's income and the territory under its control are shrinking, it "still appears to have sufficient funds to continue fighting." Moreover, he said, the group has expanded its attacks from Iraq and Syria to their neighbors.

Sparks fly as Vatican conference challenges China on organs

VATICAN CITY (AP) — Participants at a Vatican conference on organ trafficking challenged China on Tuesday to allow independent scrutiny to ensure it is no longer using organs from executed prisoners, saying Chinese assurances aren't enough to prove the transplant program has been reformed.

Sparks flew in the afternoon session of the meeting as China's former vice health minister, Dr. Huang Jiefu, sought to assure the international medical community that China was "mending its ways" after declaring an end to the prisoner harvesting program in 2015.

He provided scant data to rebut critics, however, showing only two slides indicating an increased number of living and deceased donors in recent years and China's recent efforts to crack down on black market transplant activities.

Huang first publicly acknowledged the inmate harvesting organ program in 2005 and later said as many as 90 percent of Chinese transplant surgeries using organs from dead people came from executed prisoners. He has spearheaded a reform effort and pledged that China put an end to the program in 2015. But doubts persist that China is meeting its pledge, given its lack of transparency, the severe shortage of organ donors and China's longstanding black-market organ trade.

Huang's colleague, Dr. Haibo Wang, stressed the sheer impossibility of trying to fully control China's transplant activity since there are 1 million medical centers and 3 million licensed doctors operating in the country. As a result, China proposed at the Vatican meeting that the World Health Organization form a global task force to help crack down on illicit organ trafficking.

Dr. Jacob Lavee, president of Israel's transplant society, insisted in response that WHO be allowed to conduct surprise inspections and interview donor relatives in China.

"As long as there is no accountability for what took place ... there can be no guarantee for ethical reform," he told the conference in a heated exchange.

Boardman, Oregon "On the river, on th way"

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FEBRUARY LUNCHEON

This months luncheon will focus on **Local Health Districts, Health Foundations,** and our **Local Health Clinic**. We will also receive an update from **Boardman Rural Fire District**.

Our catered luncheon will be held at Port of Morrow Riverfront Center on Wednesday, February 15, 2017. 12-00 p.m. - 1:00 p.m.

Speakers for the luncheon are:

GOOD SHEPHERD COMMUNITY HEALTH FOUNDATION

Good Shepherd Community Health Foundation
Bob Green, Foundation Executive Director

MORROW COUNTY HEALTH DISTRICT Excellence in Healthcare

Morrow County Health District
Rovert Houser, CEO

Columbia River Community Health Services

Columbia River Community Health Services
Mindy Binder, Interim CEO

For further information or to rsvp for luncheon please contact the
Boardman Chamber of Commerce
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Luncheon RSVP requested by Monday, February 13, 2017 for catering purposes

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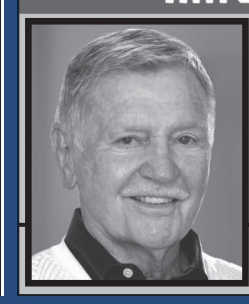
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