

Chicago police to saturate neighborhood where 7 killed

CHICAGO (AP) — The gun violence in one South Side Chicago neighborhood that left seven dead in a 12-hour period was mostly due to gang conflict, Police Superintendent Eddie Johnson said Friday.

On Thursday afternoon, four people were fatally shot in or near a restaurant after a man approached and opened fire. Two men were found dead from bullet wounds inside the restaurant. A third person was found unresponsive outside the restaurant. A fourth man who sustained gunshot wounds was found unresponsive a block away.

Two people were killed late Thursday when a vehicle pulled alongside a van in the city's South Shore neighborhood. A man and woman were shot, police said, and the van crashed into a pole.

"I'm angry and sick," Johnson said during a news conference. "You have my promise that CPD will utilize the full weight of our resources to go after the individuals responsible for yesterday's incidents."

Johnson said investigators have determined most of the victims were targeted and had known gang affiliations. He added the woman's killing wasn't gang related.

Johnson said there will be a heavy and aggressive police presence in the South Shore neighborhood until the perpetrators of Thursday's violence are in custody. He



Chris Sweda/ChicagoTribune via AP
Georgia Jackson, 72, is overcome with emotion upon learning that her two grandsons, Raheem, 19, and Dillon Jackson, 20, were found fatally shot in the South Shore neighborhood in Chicago on Thursday.

added coordinated police operations will target the people who are driving the violence in the neighborhood and where retaliatory violence may occur.

"You lose count of the shootings after a while," Kyra Carr, who lives a few blocks away and said she heard the gunfire, told the Chicago Sun-Times. "But seven bodies in a day. Crazy. Something is wrong."

The Cook County medical examiner's office identified three of the victims as brothers Raheem and Dillon Jackson, ages 19 and 20 respectively, and 28-year-old Emmanuel Stokes. The identity of the fourth victim was withheld pending notification of family.

The Chicago Tribune reports that the Jacksons'

grandmother, Georgia Jackson, 72, said the two had gone to the restaurant to get food and to see their mother, who works there. She said their mother called her about the shooting.

"She only said one at first but when I got here they said they found the other," Georgia Jackson said.

Also on Thursday, about a mile from the restaurant, the body of 26-year-old Patrice L. Calvin was discovered in a home. The medical examiner's office says Calvin, who was four months pregnant, suffered a gunshot wound to the head.

Johnson said the woman likely knew her killer, and her death wasn't gang related.

No arrests have been reported by police.

Three arrested in fire that collapsed highway overpass

ATLANTA (AP) — Three people were arrested Friday in connection with a raging fire that collapsed an elevated portion of Interstate 85 in Atlanta and shut down the heavily traveled route through the heart of the city.

Deputy Insurance Commissioner Jay Florence said Basil Eleby faces a charge of criminal damage to property, and Sophia Bruner and Barry Thomas each were charged with criminal trespass.

"We believe they were together when the fire was set and Eleby is the one who set the fire," Florence told The Atlanta Journal-Constitution.

Florence would not discuss how the fire was started or why, saying those details would be released as the investigation progresses.

Traffic was bumper to bumper on streets near the shut-down portion of the interstate as drivers were forced to take a detour the day after the blaze.

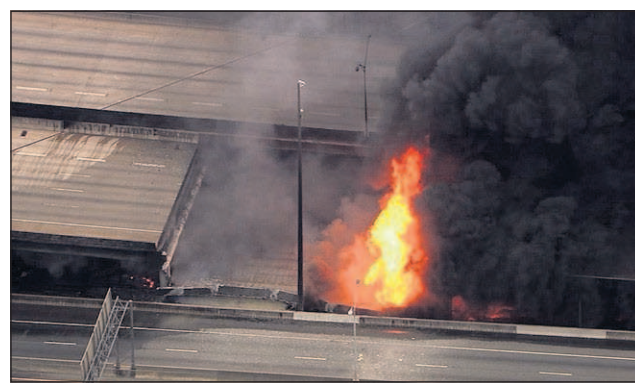
The collapse took place a few miles north of downtown, and the effects could fall most heavily on commuters from Atlanta's densely populated northern suburbs. They will have to find other routes to work or ride mass transit.

Connie Bailey-Blake, of Dacula, 37 miles northeast of Atlanta, waited for a MARTA commuter train to reach her job downtown. She typically drives, often by way of the interstate.

"I'm supposed to be at work at 9 a.m. and it's 9:15 a.m.," Bailey-Blake said. "The first few days are going to be difficult. This will be my new life."

Amelia Ford picked a new route to work by car and said it took her 45 minutes to travel 3 miles from her Atlanta home to the nearest open on-ramp to the interstate.

Georgia Transportation Commissioner Russell McMurry said 350 feet of highway will need to be



WSB-TV via AP
In this aerial image made from a video provided by WSB-TV, a large fire that caused an overpass on Interstate 85 to collapse burns in Atlanta, Thursday.

replaced in both directions on I-85, which carries about 400,000 cars a day through the city and is one of the South's most important north-south routes.

He said repairs will take months but declined to be more specific.

The collapse effectively "puts a cork in the bottle," Georgia State Patrol Commissioner Mark McDonough said.

The fire broke out Thursday afternoon in an area used to store state-owned construction materials and equipment, sending flames and smoke high into the air. Fire authorities said they had not determined how the blaze started.

McMurry said his department stored coils of plastic conduit used in fiber optic networks beneath the span but insisted they were noncombustible.

No injuries were reported from the fire and collapse. Firefighters shut down the section of highway before it gave way, and made it to safety themselves after hearing the road cracking and seeing concrete go flying, authorities said.

In the meantime, MARTA increased rail service and said additional staff would be on hand to help passengers figure out how to get where they're going.

U.S. Transportation Secretary Elaine Chao promptly released \$10

million for the initial repair work, and the Federal Highway Administration promised more in emergency repair funds. Officials gave no estimate of how much the job would cost.

Built in 1953 and renovated in 1985, the span scored high in its most recent inspection, receiving a rating of 94.6 out of 100 in 2015, said Natalie Dale, a spokeswoman for the Georgia Transportation Department.

Lauren Stewart, director of the Structural Engineering and Materials Laboratory at Georgia Tech in Atlanta, said intense heat can compromise even steel-reinforced concrete.

"With fires, especially fires that burn for long periods and with high heat, you can see structures, anything from buildings to bridges, can have their material properties degrade," Stewart said.

It's happened before. In 1996, a fire in a big pile of tires beneath I-95 in Philadelphia left a span too weak to handle cars, forcing authorities to shut down 4 miles of the busy East Coast route for repairs.

Andy Herrmann, a retired partner with the New York-based engineering firm Hardesty & Hanover, said there have also been a few instances of gasoline trucks crashing and causing intense heat that damaged overpasses.

BRIEFLY

Dem opposition to Gorsuch grows; Schumer warns GOP

WASHINGTON (AP) — Senate Democratic opposition to President Donald Trump's Supreme Court nominee swelled Friday as Democrats neared the numbers needed for a filibuster, setting up a showdown with Republicans who have the votes to confirm Neil Gorsuch.

Sens. Claire McCaskill of Missouri, Richard Blumenthal of Connecticut and Brian Schatz of Hawaii became the latest Democratic senators to announce their opposition to Gorsuch, a 49-year-old federal appeals court judge in Denver whose conservative rulings make him an intellectual heir to the justice he would replace, the late Antonin Scalia.

McCaskill's decision came a day after she said she was torn over the decision. She said she's opposing the federal appeals court judge because his opinions favor corporations over workers and he's shown "a stunning lack of humanity" in some of those decisions.

She also criticized Trump in her statement announcing her opposition, saying "the president who promised working people he would lift them up has nominated a judge who can't even see them."

Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer of New York warned Republicans against changing Senate rules, which could prove momentous for the chamber and would allow all future Supreme Court nominees to get on the court regardless of opposition from the minority party. He says President Donald Trump should just pick a new nominee if Gorsuch is blocked.

Civilian casualties in Iraq, Syria undercut U.S. victories

BAGHDAD (AP) — Islamic State group and al-Qaida-linked militants are quickly moving to drum up outrage over a sharp spike in civilian casualties said to have been caused by U.S. airstrikes in Iraq and Syria, posting photos online of a destroyed medical center and homes reduced to rubble. "This is how Trump liberates Mosul, by killing its inhabitants," the caption reads.

The propaganda points to the risk that rising death tolls and destruction could undermine the American-led campaign against the militants.

During the past two years of fighting to push back the Islamic State group, the U.S.-led coalition has faced little backlash over casualties, in part because civilian deaths have been seen as relatively low and there have been few cases of single strikes killing large numbers of people. In Iraq — even though sensitivities run deep over past American abuses of civilians — the country's prime minister and many Iraqis support the U.S. role in fighting the militants.

But for the first time anger over lives lost is becoming a significant issue as Iraqi troops backed by U.S. special forces and coalition airstrikes wade into more densely populated districts of Iraq's second-largest city, Mosul, and U.S.-backed Syrian fighters battle closer to the Islamic State group's Syrian stronghold of Raqqa.

That has the potential to undercut victories against the militants and stoke resentments that play into their hands.

U.S. enrolls volunteers in large test of possible Zika vaccine

WASHINGTON (AP) — U.S. health officials have begun enrolling volunteers for critical next-stage testing of an experimental



AP Photo/Susan Walsh, File

In this March 22 photo, Supreme Court Justice nominee Neil Gorsuch testifies on Capitol Hill in Washington before the Senate Judiciary Committee.

vaccine to protect against Zika, the mosquito-borne virus that can cause devastating birth defects in pregnant women.

The first volunteer was vaccinated Wednesday at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston, as the National Institutes of Health gears up for a two-part study that aims to enroll at least 2,400 people in Texas, Florida, Puerto Rico and five at-risk countries: Brazil, Mexico, Panama, Costa Rica and Peru.

Zika has caused an epidemic of birth defects — including babies with abnormally small heads and brains — in parts of Latin America and the Caribbean, and continues to spread to a creeping list of other countries. For the U.S. the risk has largely been to travelers, although mosquitoes spread the virus in parts of southern Florida and Texas last year, where health officials remain on guard.

But while Zika largely disappeared from the headlines over the winter, mosquito season is fast approaching — and the risk persists internationally.

"It is imperative that public health research continue to work to contain the spread of the virus," Dr. Anthony Fauci, director of NIH's National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, said Friday in announcing the \$100 million study.

Three airliners in near-misses with drones in London

LONDON (AP) — Three planes narrowly missed colliding with drones near London's Heathrow Airport in the space of three weeks last year, underscoring increasing concerns about the devices being used near aircraft, a report Friday said.

The report by the U.K. Airprox Board, which catalogs air safety incidents, offered new details on the close calls that took place in October and November. In the most unusual incident, the pilots of an A320 passenger plane descending into Heathrow noticed a gadget with multiple arms and rotors passing below the plane's right wing at 10,000 feet.

"Was that a drone?" the pilots exclaimed. "At 10,000 feet!"

The separation between drone and plane was just 100 feet vertically and 656 feet horizontally. The pilot said there was no time to react, the report said.

While actual collisions are rare, the number of near-misses has increased dramatically in recent years as the popularity of drones has grown. There were 70 near-misses between objects identified as drones and aircraft in 2016, compared to 29 in 2015 and six in 2014, the board said.

The A320 incident was one of three near-misses involving planes near Heathrow in the February report. In the other two cases, the board said it was either good luck or divine providence that no serious accident had taken place.

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