

# At least 28 killed in ambush attack on Christians

CAIRO (AP) — Masked gunmen ambushed a bus carrying Coptic Christians to a monastery south of Cairo on Friday, killing at least 28 people, and Egypt responded by launching airstrikes against what it said were militant training bases in Libya.

President Abdel-Fattah el-Sissi announced the retaliatory action hours after the bus was riddled with machine-gun fire on a remote desert road by suspected Islamic State militants riding in three SUVs.

“What you’ve seen today will not go unpunished. An extremely painful strike has been dealt to the bases. Egypt will never hesitate to strike terror bases anywhere,” el-Sissi said in a televised address to the nation.

He also appealed to U.S. President Donald Trump to lead the global war against terror.

The ambush of the bus was the fourth deadly attack against the country’s Christians since December. The dead included two little girls, ages 2 and 4, local officials said. Twenty-two others were reported wounded.

Trump, in Italy on his first trip abroad as president, blamed the bloodshed on a “thuggish ideology” and said it should bring nations together to crush “evil organizations of terror.”

Senior Egyptian officials said fighter jets targeted bases in eastern Libya of the Shura Council, an Islamist militia known to be linked to al-Qaida, not the Islamic State. There was no immediate word on damage or casualties.

The bus attack deepens the woes of the majority-Muslim nation, where El-Sissi’s government is struggling not only to crush a burgeoning Islamic insurgency but to revive the battered economy.

The country’s Christians have complained that the government is not doing enough to protect them from Islamic extremists, and hundreds of them reacted to the bus attack by staging angry street protests in two provincial cities, destroying at least six cars and briefly cutting off railway lines.

“Either we get retribution or die like them,” some chanted.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the ambush, which came on the eve of the start of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan.

But it bore the hallmarks of the Islamic State, which has been spearheading an insurgency that has carried out deadly attacks in Egypt’s Sinai Peninsula and, increasingly, on the country’s mainland.

The Interior Ministry said the assailants opened fire as the bus traveled to the St. Samuel the Confessor monastery in Maghagha, about 140 miles south of Cairo. The Coptic Orthodox monastery is reachable only by an unpaved route that veers off the main highway.

Security and medical officials quoted witnesses as saying they saw eight to 10 attackers in military uniforms. They said one of the assailants’ SUVs got stuck in the sand, so they torched it and hijacked a truck traveling the same road, killing its occupants.

Arab TV stations showed images of a bus riddled with bullet holes, with many of its windows shattered and bloodstains on the seats. Bodies lay on the ground, some covered with black plastic sheets. Children could be heard screaming hysterically in the background.

The officials, speaking on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to talk to reporters, said the death toll stood at 28 and could rise.

The government is likely to further tighten security around churches, monasteries, schools and pilgrimages to remote Christian sites, which may be suspended, the officials said.

# Leery of North Korea, U.S. plans first intercept test

By ROBERT BURNS  
AP National Security Writer

WASHINGTON — Preparing for North Korea’s growing threat, the Pentagon will try to shoot down an intercontinental-range missile for the first time in a test next week. The goal is to more closely simulate a North Korean ICBM aimed at the U.S. homeland, officials said Friday.

The American interceptor has a spotty track record, succeeding in nine of 17 attempts against missiles of less-than-intercontinental range since 1999. The most recent test, in June 2014, was a success, but that followed three straight failures. The system has evolved from the multibillion-dollar effort triggered by President Ronald Reagan’s 1983 push for a “Star Wars” solution to ballistic missile threats during the Cold War — when the Soviet Union was the only major worry.

North Korea is now the focus of U.S. efforts because its leader, Kim Jong Un, has vowed to field a nuclear-armed missile capable of reaching American territory. He has yet to test an intercontinental ballistic missile, or ICBM, but Pentagon officials believe he is speeding in that direction.

Marine Lt. Gen. Vincent Stewart, director of the Defense Intelligence Agency, said this week that “left unchecked,” Kim will eventually succeed. The Pentagon has a variety of missile defense systems, but the one designed with a potential North Korean ICBM in mind is perhaps the most technologically challenging.

## Missile test

The U.S. military will attempt to intercept an incoming intercontinental ballistic missile in a test meant to simulate a North Korean missile attack against the U.S.

1. Ballistic missile fired from test site in the Marshall Islands.
2. Interceptor launched from Vandenberg AFB, California.
3. Interceptor releases a “kill vehicle” which steers toward the missile, attempting to slam into and destroy it.



SOURCE: Defense Department

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The Pentagon has a variety of missile defense systems, but the one designed with a potential North Korean ICBM in mind is perhaps the most technologically challenging.

Critics say it also is the least reliable.

The basic defensive idea is to fire a rocket into space upon warning of a hostile missile launch. The rocket releases a 5-foot-long device called a “kill vehicle” that uses internal guidance systems to steer into the path of the oncoming missile’s warhead, destroying it by force of impact. Officially known as the Ground-based Midcourse Defense system,

the Pentagon likens it to hitting a bullet with a bullet.

The Pentagon’s Missile Defense Agency, which is responsible for developing and testing the system, has scheduled the intercept test for Tuesday.

An interceptor is to be launched from an underground silo at Vandenberg Air Force Base in California and soar toward the target, which will be fired from a test range on Kwajalein Atoll in the Pacific. If all goes as planned, the “kill vehicle” will slam into the ICBM-like target’s mock warhead high over the Pacific Ocean.

The target will be a custom-made missile meant to simulate an ICBM, meaning it will fly faster than missiles used in previous intercept tests, according to Christopher Johnson, spokesman for the Missile Defense Agency. The target is not a mock-up of an actual North Korean ICBM.

“We conduct increasingly complex test scenarios as the program matures and advances,” Johnson said Friday. “Testing against an ICBM-type threat is the next step in that process.”

Officials say this is not a make-or-break test.

While it wasn’t scheduled

with the expectation of an imminent North Korean missile threat, the military will closely watch whether it shows progress toward the stated goal of being able to reliably shoot down a small number of ICBMs targeting the United States. The Pentagon is thirsting for a success story amid growing fears about North Korea’s escalating capability.

“I can’t imagine what they’re going to say if it fails,” said Philip Coyle, senior science fellow at the Center for Arms Control and Non-Proliferation. He headed the Pentagon’s office of operational test and evaluation from 1994 to 2001 and has closely studied the missile defense system.

“These tests are scripted for success, and what’s been astonishing to me is that so many of them have failed,” Coyle said.

The interceptor system has been in place since 2004, but it has never been used in combat or fully tested. There currently are 32 interceptors in silos at Fort Greely in Alaska and four at Vandenberg, north of Los Angeles. The Pentagon says it will have eight more, for a total of 44, by the end of this year.

# Next for Montana’s new congressman: Day in court, then DC

BOZEMAN, Mont. (AP) — Montana’s new congressman hasn’t even been sworn into his first public office, but people are already talking about his prospects in 2018 and even 2020.

First things first though for Greg Gianforte, who has to deal with a misdemeanor assault charge he received the day before the election after witnesses said he slammed a reporter to the ground.

Gianforte could have appeared in court in Bozeman on Friday to



Rachel Leathe/Bozeman Daily Chronicle  
Greg Gianforte celebrates his win for an open congressional seat Thursday in Bozeman, Mont.

resolve the charge but did not and has a June 7 legal deadline to do so.

He faces a maximum of 6 months in jail and a \$500

fine if convicted. It’s rare for people to serve jail time for misdemeanors unless they have serious criminal records. The Gallatin County Attorney is also reviewing the case to see if additional charges are merited.

Montana Democrats on Friday quickly called for Gianforte to not be seated in Congress until his legal issues are resolved.

“The people of Montana deserve to finally have representation in the U.S. House,” party chairwoman Nancy Keenan said in a statement. “However,

they should not have to be represented by a man who is currently facing an assault charge for body slamming another person. Greg Gianforte should not be sworn in as a member of the House of Representatives while his assault case is still pending in court.”

There is no legal impediment to Gianforte becoming a member of Congress with a pending misdemeanor. Republican Rep. Michael Grimm of New York, for example, returned to Congress facing an indictment for federal

tax fraud and kept his seat even after he pleaded guilty, only leaving after voluntarily resigning. Sen. Robert Menendez, a New Jersey Democrat, remains in the upper chamber while under federal indictment for corruption.

It’s also unclear how quickly Gianforte can assume his seat. Montana has been without a congressman since Rep. Ryan Zinke became secretary of the U.S. Department of the Interior in March, creating the vacancy that sparked the special election.

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