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Bahrain troops 'fire on crowds'



Bahraini security forces have opened fire on anti-government protesters, witnesses and opposition activists say.

The protesters were fired on after they had streamed into the centre of the capital Manama from the funerals of protesters killed in a security crackdown earlier this week.

Witnesses said the army fired live rounds and tear gas, and officials said at least 25 people had been hurt.

Many of the protesters are calling for the overthrow of the royal family.

Crown Prince Sheikh Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa appeared on state TV on Friday to promise a national dialogue once calm has returned.

The prince, who is also deputy supreme commander of the army, called for everyone to withdraw from the streets.

Sectarian divide

The funeral procession of one of the dead protesters turned into another anti-government demonstration. The mourners were trying to make their way to the Salmaniya Hospital,

Pearl Square



where their injured colleagues are being treated.

But they came under fire as they passed close to Pearl Square, which has been sealed off by the army for the past day to prevent further large-scale demonstrations.

An eyewitness told al-Jazeera TV that the authorities gave no warning.

"They just started shooting us. Now there is more than 20 injured in the hospital. One guy has already passed away because he got shot in his head," said the witness

One protester, 27-year-old bank clerk Ali al-Haji, told AP news agency that live ammunition was used. "People started running in all directions and bullets were flying, I saw people getting shot in the legs, chest and one man was bleeding from his head," he said.

AP earlier reported that soldiers had fired anti-aircraft guns over the heads of the protesters. Medical officials say 25 people were wounded, but other reports from witnesses said many more had been hurt.

Bahrain is ruled by a royal family and a Sunni Muslim elite, but has a Shia majority who make up the bulk of the protesters.

International concern

Earlier, the country's most senior Shia cleric Sheikh Issa Qassem described attacks on protesters as a "massacre" and said the government had shut the door to dialogue.

* King Hamad, 61, has been in power since 1999

* Population 800,000; land area 717 sq km, or 100 times smaller than Irish Republic

* A population with a median age of 30.4 years, and a literacy rate of 91%

* Youth unemployment at 19.6%

* Gross national income per head: \$25,420 (World Bank 2009)

As he spoke at emotionally charged Friday prayers in the Duraz neighbourhood, supporters shouted "victory for Islam", "death for Al Khalifa [the ruling family]" and "we are your soldiers".



Western countries have urged Bahrain to show restraint in dealing with protesters and called for meaningful reform in the small Gulf state kingdom.

The UN's rights chief Navi Pillay condemned the use of force by governments across the region, and singled out the Bahraini authorities for targeting medical workers while they were treating protesters.

"The nature and scope of the human rights violations taking place in several countries in the region in response to those who are largely demonstrating peacefully for their fundamental human rights and freedoms is alarming," she said.

Since independence from the UK in 1971, tensions between the Sunni elite and the less affluent Shia have frequently caused civil unrest. Shia groups say they are marginalised, subject to unfair laws and repressed.

Washington is watching with growing concern as unrest and violence spread across the Middle East, threatening its regional interests, correspondents say.

While Bahrain is tiny, with a population of less than one million, it is home to the US Navy's Fifth Fleet and is near another key US ally in the region, Saudi Arabia.

Iran opposition: Will Arab uprisings spread?

Iranian opposition leader Mehdi Karroubi was placed under house arrest. But Iranian opposition groups rallied in support of the uprisings in Egypt and Tunisia. The authorities had refused the permit. Instead, they put both men under house arrest and detained about a dozen of their key advisers. The opposition groups have defied the ban and staged a very successful rally in Tehran despite threats from



officials that any protesters will be punished.

In recent days, there has been much talk of Egypt's political contagion wending its way through the Arab world and into Iran - the first non-Arab country to be caught up in the revolutionary fever.

"If Egypt and Tunisia can do it, why can't we?" you hear in hushed conversations at street corners, marketplaces and cafes across the capital.

Even Iranian internet sites had been buzzing with reports of the 14 February "Iranian day of rage", which took its name and inspiration from the Egyptian uprisings which toppled President Hosni Mubarak after almost 30 years in power.

There have also been widespread problems

connecting to the internet in recent days, and reports of much slower internet speeds. Officials have denied that any such problems exist, and dismissed claims of an internet clampdown.

The possibility of homegrown protests pose clear dilemma for the Iranian authorities, who have publicly backed the events in Cairo as an "Islamic awakening" similar to Iran's 1979 revolution.

Ayatollah Ali Khamenei - who has led Iran as either president or supreme leader for as long as Hosni Mubarak has been the man in charge in Cairo - has personally hailed the "Islamic" uprisings in Egypt and Tunisia.

Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood, the country's main Islamic opposition group, has dismissed the characterisation, and the White House has instead likened Egypt's uprising to Iran's 2009 rebellion against President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's disputed re-election.

Ardeshtir Arjomand, an adviser to Mr Mousavi, says the "day of rage" is a test for the leaders of the Islamic Republic.

Many observers in Iran say the Arab uprisings have breathed new life into the Iranian opposition.

The once-powerful movement that drew millions onto the streets after President Ahmadinejad's 2009 re-election, which they say was rigged, has all but disappeared.

Dozens of protesters were killed, and thousands arrested in the immediate aftermath of the street protests. Others were put on trial and sentenced to long jail terms.

Hillary Clinton to urge Taliban to reject al-Qaeda

US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said the Taliban made "the wrong choice" to back al-Qaeda after the 9/11 attacks

US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton will say on Friday that Taliban fighters in Afghanistan face a stark choice between war and peace, as US pressure mounts on them.

"They cannot defeat us. And they cannot escape this choice," Mrs Clinton will say in a speech in New York.

The US plans to begin withdrawing troops from Afghanistan this summer, with full withdrawal expected by 2014.



Currently, the US has about 78,000 troops there.

Mrs Clinton is also expected to announce that retired diplomat Marc Grossman will replace the late Richard Holbrooke as chief US envoy to Pakistan and Afghanistan.

'Wrong choice'

Speaking at the Asia Society research organisation, Mrs Clinton is to reiterate US's three-track strategy in Afghanistan: a military offensive against al-Qaeda and the Taliban; a civilian-led effort to strengthen the Afghan and Pakistani governments, economies and civil societies; and a diplomatic effort to end the Afghan war.

She will say the US aims to bolster an Afghan-led effort to split the Taliban from its al-Qaeda allies and reconcile those willing to renounce violence with the Kabul government.

"In 2001, after 9/11, the Taliban chose to defy the international community and protect al-Qaeda," she is to say, according to excerpts of the speech released on Friday.

"That was the wrong choice, and they have paid a heavy price. Today, the escalating pressure of our military campaign is sharpening a similar decision for the Taliban: break ties with al-Qaeda, give up your arms, and abide by the Afghan constitution and you can rejoin Afghan society; refuse and you will continue to face the consequences of being tied to al-Qaeda as an enemy of the international community."

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ENTERTAINMENT LIVE

By Dionysia Rekoumis



Prosecutors recently charged a woman with trespassing outside the home of comedian Ellen DeGeneres and actress Portia de Rossi.

Karen Grace Sjoden, 49, pleaded not guilty in Beverly Hills Superior Court and faces a trial on March 7. Sjoden was detained last week by private security at the Hollywood couple's home and was turned over to police, who arrested her. She was originally jailed on \$5,000 bail, but the judge on Monday raised that amount to \$200,000.

DeGeneres hosts a hit daytime talk show and was a judge last year on top-rated TV program "American Idol." In 2008, she married de Rossi, an actress whose TV credits include "Arrested Development" and "Nip/Tuck."

And

Lauren Conrad may be headed back to the small screen after all. Though her MTV reality series was recently dropped for being "too high brow," the 25-year-old *Hills* alum told UsMagazine.com that several other networks have expressed interest in picking up the show.

"The amount of offers I've gotten has been very flattering," Conrad told Us while celebrating her birthday at Pure nightclub in Las Vegas. "We all worked really hard on it and I'm really proud of it. It turned out fantastic, so stay tuned."

Prior to being scrapped by MTV, the proposed program aimed to be the antithesis of what made *Laguna Beach* and *The Hills* so popular: a drama-free look at Conrad's life as a fashion designer.

Also

Los Angeles newscaster Serene Branson suffered speech difficulties on the air Sunday night while covering the Grammys, causing the audience watching the broadcast to wonder about her condition.

In the disturbing video, Branson started off her report by saying "a very, very heavy," but then devolving into gibberish. The network cut to an earlier report while they sought medical attention for Branson.

"Serene Branson was examined by paramedics on scene immediately after her broadcast," Branson's station, KCBS, said in a statement. "Her vital signs were normal. She was not hospitalized. As a precautionary measure, a colleague gave her a ride home and she says that she is feeling fine this morning." If Branson did not suffer a stroke — the symptoms of which include confusion and trouble speaking — it's not clear what caused her condition on the red carpet.

Music

Sharon Osbourne and a former contestant on her VH1 show "Rock of Love Charm School" have settled a battery and negligence lawsuit on the eve of trial.

Attorneys for Osbourne and Megan Hauserman confirmed they settled the case, which was about to begin with opening statements on Monday.

Hauserman sued Osbourne in March 2009,

claiming she was struck and had her hair pulled by the wife of musician Ozzy Osbourne during an episode of the show. VH1 promoted the fracas as "Sharon and Megan's big fight."

In the video, the women exchange insults, Osbourne pours a drink on Hauserman and then the two are surrounded by a rush of people.

Both Osbourne's attorney, Howard Weitzman, and Hauserman's attorney, Roderick Lindblom, said they could not discuss the settlement.

And

Tiger Woods was fined by the European Tour on Monday for spitting on the 12th green in the final round of the Dubai Desert Classic, ABC News reports.

"The tournament director, Mike Stewart, has reviewed the incident and feels there has been a breach of the tour code of conduct and consequently Tiger Woods will be fined," the European Tour said in a statement.

According to the tour's code of conduct, when a player becomes a member, he "voluntarily submits himself to standards of behavior and ethical conduct beyond those required of ordinary golfers and members of the public."

Woods, who began the final round just one stroke behind the leader, spit after missing a putt for par. He ultimately shot a 75 (three over par) for the round and finished the tournament tied for 20th place. The tour did not disclose the amount of the fine.

Also

Just call it Baby Bellamy-Hudson for now! Dad-to-be Matthew Bellamy was effusive about his "beautiful pregnant girlfriend" Kate Hudson while accepting a Grammy onstage in L.A. on Sunday.

And the Muse rocker, 32, opened up on the red carpet about how he and Hudson, 31, are prepping for their baby's arrival — and keeping things mysterious!

For starters, the baby's gender "will be another surprise," he told Entertainment Tonight, explaining that they opted out of finding out if it's a boy or girl prior to the big day.

That, of course, makes picking names a little tricky for the couple of 10 months (they reportedly have no plans to marry). "We're starting to agree on names," Bellamy said. "Hopefully we'll think of something last minute."

The little boy or girl will join big brother Ryder, Hudson's 7-year-old son with ex Chris Robinson. "She is happy for Ryder to finally have a brother or sister," a Hudson insider told Us Weekly last month.

Finally in local news

President Barack Obama's proposed budget for 2012 calls for cuts likely to affect the Chicago area, including fewer dollars for the Great Lakes, water infrastructure projects and poor people hit by high heating bills.

The budget, unveiled Monday for the fiscal year beginning Oct. 1, targets more than 120 programs for elimination or cuts, with savings of about \$23 billion. That's a fraction of the \$100 billion in cuts some Republicans urge.

Obama would reduce grants to large airports by \$1.1 billion; pare community development block grants by 7.5 percent, or \$300 million; and quit buying C-17 transport planes, which are built by Chicago-based Boeing Co.

His budget calls for the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program to be funded at \$2.57 billion, a 50 percent cut from fiscal year 2010. Illinois received more than \$240 million through the program in the current fiscal year, the Department of Health and Human Services said. Obama aides justified the cut by saying the federal program doubled in 2009 after energy prices spiked, but that prices now are lower.



Russian doctors like the game of cup and ball, swing the babies up towards them and catch them in their chest. The Russians call this dynamic baby gymnastics. The practice is legal in Russia and widespread across the country.



The Colombian navy has seized a submarine believed to have been built to smuggle cocaine to Mexico. The 31m-long (100ft) fibreglass vessel was found hidden in a jungle area in Timbiqui, in south-western Colombia.Navy officials said it was the most sophisticated submarine they had found so far, capable of travelling 9m (30ft) below water.The officials said it could carry four people and up to eight tonnes of cargo, and was ready to launch. Commander of the Pacific Naval Force Adm Hernando Wills Velez said it was one of the biggest homemade submarines ever found. He said it was equipped with sophisticated navigational equipment, which would have allowed the crew to sail as far as Mexico.Officials estimated the cost of the vessel at more than \$2m.



Egypt faces bumpy ride towards democracy .Protests over pay and jobs have continued despite army calls for them to cease. Just take a drive down some of the main avenues in central Cairo and you can see one of the biggest problems facing Egypt’s new military administration. The economy is more or less at a standstill, and so is the civil service. Outside almost every government building at one time or another in the last few days has been a crowd of disgruntled employees. Grievances that people were forced to swallow during the repressive Mubarak years are pouring out. Badly paid rank-and-file staff want more money. Often, they are also burning with resentment about bosses they say have enriched themselves. The armed forces’ fifth communique called for the strikes to stop. If polite requests don’t work, the generals will have to decide what they do next. If they want to keep people on their side, using force to break strikes will not be a good idea.

The First Time Property Owner Has 60 Days to Pay, Pappas Says

April 1 Due Date for Current Property Tax Bills

More than 1.7 million property tax bills with a due date of April 1 are being mailed to Cook County owners of homes, businesses and land, the first time they have had 60 days to pay a tax installment, Cook County Treasurer Maria Pappas said today.

The bills are for the First Installment of Tax Year 2010, and are calculated to be 55 percent of the previous year’s total bill.

The due date for First Installment bills usually is March 1 or the first business day of March. However, Pappas noted, the state Legislature changed the First Installment due date to April 1 for this year only. The due date is to revert to March 1 in future years.

Pappas said payment can be made:

- * Electronically, at cookcounty-treasurer.com.
- * At some 400 Chase Bank locations.
- * From personal accounts at 208 partici-

pating community banks.

Mortgage companies making payments for property owners out of escrow accounts must commit by February 25 to pay by April 1, Pappas said.

Late payments – those received after the April 1 due date – receive a penalty of 1.5 percent per month.

Property owners can visit cook-countytreasurer.com and enter their Property Index Number to see how much their bills are, whether they have received proper exemptions, and whether they are due a refund.

Owners also can call 312.443.5100 for information in English, Polish and Spanish.

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Our food should be our medicine.

Hippocrates, the father of medicine, suggested "Leave your drugs in the chemist's pot if you can heal the patient with good food....Our food should be our medicine. Our medicine should be our food." Two millennium later, in the 1940's, Ancel Benjamin Keys, a scientist that studied the epidemiology of cardiovascular disease became famous for two discoveries--"K Rations"-the balanced meal given to every U.S. combat soldier in the field and the Mediterranean diet--which Ancel and his wife Martha popularized. It must have worked since Ancel Keys lived in a village in Italy until 2004, just shy of his 101st birthday.

Today the secrets of the Greek Mediterranean diet been passed on from generation to generation have been studied ad naseum, and extolled as critical to disease prevention, nutrition and well-being. The natural and exquisite taste of Greek Mediterranean cuisine makes it even more attractive to the palate rather than the bland taste associated with prescribed diets. With each new study the benefits of the Greek Mediterranean diet are affirmed. The components such as virgin olive oil, honey, nuts, fresh fish, organic yogurt and feta cheese, fresh organic vegetables and fruit, natural herbs and spices, chamomile tea and of course wine comes a lifestyle as well. A lifestyle left behind in the xorio or village--a more carefree life filled with exercise and work, with less stress

and more communal and social interaction with one another whether at Church at a festival or wedding. This balance in life extends longevity and promotes inner harmony and peace and although most of us are married to a clock and deadlines, perhaps embracing the diet that "Yiayia" passed-on is a good first step toward better health.

Greek restaurants are sprouting up everywhere--Greek wine is also making a splash in the mainstream. Stylish packaging, presentation and consistency translate to Greek wine being "in." Join My Parea's cadre of Greek wine experts & ambassadors.

How about a new baklava recipe, or your Yiayia's "gemista" (stuffed tomatos/peppers/



zucchini)? Recipe Traders is your one-stop-shop for proven and new. Stay tuned for guest celebrity chef visits with My Parea.



Skiing and trekking on Mt Falakro

For geological reasons and in contrast to Drama’s Virgin Forest, Mt Falakro retains little water and has few trees. It is not surprising, therefore, that its name means “bald mountain.” But locals call it the “mountain of flowers” in spring, when it is covered by millions of yellow and purple crocuses in concentrations rarely seen anywhere else. The mountain collects a lot of snow from December to April and its treelessness is a boon for skiers. The skiing center, at 1,720 meters, is considered one of the best in Greece, with 20 runs at a total length of over 22 km and ample infrastructure covering the requirements of both beginners and experienced skiers. It has not yet opened this season due to the lack of snow. The ski center also operates chalets for guests. Two of these chalets are on the foothills, while the third is at an elevation of 2,110 m, offering breathtaking views. From there, one can see Bulgaria and its villages, the west ends of West Rodopi, the Aegean Sea, Thassos island, Mount Olympus, the valley of Drama and the magnificent canyon of Pyrgi. One of the chalets operates a large restaurant. You will also find a ski and snowboarding school as well as shops to rent and buy skiing equipment.

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To Reverse the Loss of Greece's Forests

Someday our descendants will see the rich, lush mountains of Greece, and that will be our living legacy to them. Make the dream a reality... "Plant Your Roots in Greece"

Since ancient times—even more so now—the value of trees to Greece has been immeasurable and their loss has been heartbreaking. "Plant Your Roots in Greece" offers you a unique opportunity to become an integral part of this splendor now and forever.

Today the enemy of Greece's forests is not warfare but forest fires which, with subsequent erosion, create a vicious cycle of forest and loss soil. Where mountains were once lush, they are now barren, the rich soil washed away, the once plentiful flora and fauna gone. The Greek government has recognized the critical problems and is committing major resources to this reforestation effort.

The Plant Your Roots in Greece Foundation

The program will be a magnitude unmatched since the Greek American community came to Greece's assistance after the devastation of World War II and the subsequent Civil War. The program centers around the ability of anyone, of Greek descent or not, or anyone who is concerned and wishes to restore Greece's natural splendor, to plant a tree in Greece in their name or in the name of a loved one or friend.

Be a Part of History

At a minimum donation of \$20 for two trees, including an inscribed certificate, the program is affordable to all. It is expected that millions of trees can be planted through this program and there will be vast forests in the name of individuals, associations and corporations as a manifestation of their love for Greece.

In addition to tree planting, an aggressive program of fire-fighting has been instituted and in 1999, for the first time in millennia, reforestation exceeded destruction from fires.

The first forest was planted in Sounion in 1999 with the help of the Federation of ENOSIS and was named the "Forest of Illinois." Since then, several plantings have taken place in the area of Sounion. Trees have also been planted on the island of Samos, Samothrace, at Ancient Olympia, Vouliagmeni, Kalavryta, Arcadia, Delphi, Maniaki, Thraki, Crete, Messinia, Serres, Arta, Dion Pierias, Penteli and Patras.

Matching Funds from the European Community

It is the single largest environmental program in the European Union for Greece and will be one of the most massive efforts in history involving the planting and cultivation of seedlings.

The government of Greece has also arranged with the European Union for the EU to match on a one-to-one basis the dollars generated through the Plant Your Roots program. Thus, for every tree we plant, the EU will match funds for four additional trees.

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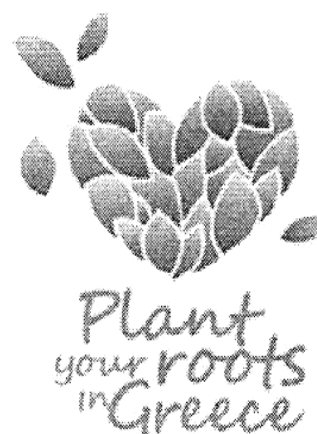
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Plant Your Roots in Greece Foundation is a not-for-profit, tax exempt organization under the auspices of SAE / USA and HANC, offers contribution opportunities both to those who wish to support primarily victims of fire and those who wish to contribute to reforestation.



NEWS FROM GREECE

Troika: Regret, 'deep respect'

The European Commission (EC), European Central Bank (ECB) and International Monetary Fund (IMF) 'troika' inspectors issued a statement early Sunday, noting that their role is to advise and support the Greek government in its efforts and expressing regret "if a different impression was perceived", while also expressed "deepest respect" and continued support for the Greek people's "tremendous efforts".

The statement said that the troika noted that Greece's economic program remains on track and also indicated "our continuing strong support" for the government's efforts to meet the objectives of fiscal consolidation and restoring growth and competitiveness.

The collaboration in this effort "has always been, and continues to be, based on mutual trust", the statement said, adding that the three institutions (EC, ECB, IMF) "have full respect for the prerogatives and initiatives of the government in all areas of economic decision-making", noting that their role is to advise and support the government.

The full text of the troika statement appears below:

"At the conclusion of our joint mission yesterday, we noted that Greece's economic program remains on track. We also indicated our continuing strong support for the Government in meeting its objectives of fiscal con-

solidation and restoring growth and competitiveness, as reflected in the Memorandum on the program. Our collaboration in this effort has always been, and continues to be, based on mutual trust. Our three institutions have full respect for the prerogatives and initiatives of the Government in all areas of economic decision-making, and our role is to advise and support the Government while considering options during the decision-making process. It is regrettable if a different impression was perceived at any time. We recognize the difficult challenges facing the Greek economy and we have the deepest respect for the tremendous efforts being made by the Greek people. We continue to support those efforts."

Statements by the troika chiefs during a press conference on Friday at the conclusion of the delegation's inspection sparked a sharp retort by the Greek government, which accused the troika of interfering in Greece's domestic affairs.

Criticism was also forthcoming throughout Friday from the opposition parties as well as several government officials, while the complaints over the troika's "unacceptable attitude" were conveyed by prime minister George Papandreou personally on Saturday in a telephone conversation with IMF managing director Domin-

ique Strauss Kahn.

No measures like 2010

No measures of the breadth of those introduced in 2010 will be taken, Finance Minister George Papaconstantinou said on Saturday, and called on Parliamentary political parties to consent to a three-year rolling fiscal programme, adding that this was a unique opportunity for the government as well as the entire political system to prove that "we can enter a new era of political ethos and practice".

In an interview with a financial newspaper, Papaconstantinou said that as long as the country's deficit continues to exist, the country continues to be in recession, the debt continues to rise and Greece continues to be dependent on borrowing, "we cannot stop the effort...this means that we need other interventions, deep changes and not measures similar to those we were obliged to take in 2010".

FM on illegal migration

The joint operation "Poseidon", held in cooperation with EU border agency Frontex since 2006 for the protection of the external borders of Greece and the EU, will continue in 2011.

A document signed by Foreign Minister Dimitris Droutsas, conveyed to Parliament in response to a question by main opposition New Democracy (ND) MP Theodoros Karaoglou on the problem of illegal migration, reminded that

"operation 'Poseidon' is in underway at Greece's sea borders with Turkey and at the land borders with Albania and Turkey, as well as along the borders shared by Bulgaria and Turkey".

The foreign minister stressed that this is the largest joint operation coordinated by FRONTEX currently underway at European level and stated that is plan-ned to continue on a permanent basis (throughout



2011) along Greece's sea and land borders with Turkey.

Droutsas underlined, however, that "the rapid increase recorded in 2010 in the number of illegal migrants coming from Turkey made necessary the adoption of additional measures to tackle the deteriorating situation."

Keratea landfill protest reaches Poseidon's temple

Police say patrol car also attacked on Sunday. Protestors held up a banner in front of the Temple of Poseidon. Residents of Keratea, southeastern Attica, on Sunday took their protest against the construction of a landfill near their village to the Temple of Poseidon at Sounio

The protestors help up a banner demanding that the facility not be constructed



at the proposed location as it is near the ancient site of Ovriokastro. Police in Keratea said that a group of some 50 people set upon a police patrol car at about 1 p.m. on Friday.

They threw Molotov cocktails at the vehicle and stole a police riot shield, which was later abandoned, officers said. Police used tear gas to disperse the crowd. Nobody was hurt.

Locals have been clashing with police since December, when authorities attempted to start constructing a waste management center near Keratea village.

H1N1 death toll rises to 62

Fourteen new victims diagnosed with swine flu have died since Friday Experts are advising people to get the H1N1 vaccine, even at this late stage. Fourteen people diagnosed with the H1N1 virus have died since Friday, Health Ministry officials said on Monday, noting that the total number of fatalities attributed to swine flu in Greece now stands at 62. None of the 14 victims of the past few days had been administered with a flu jab, the officials said, noting that the spread of swine flu has peaked.

Another 223 people infected with H1N1 are in intensive care, they added.



Sotiris Tsiordas, an official at the Center for Infectious Diseases Control (KEEL) and a lecturer on infectious diseases at the Athens Medical School, stressed that people belonging to vulnerable social groups - including the elderly, children and those with underlying illnesses - should immediately get inoculated against the virus.

This also applies to citizens who do not belong to vulnerable social groups but display symptoms of infection with H1N1 such as a high fever and sharp chest



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The American Empire

1945 - 2015?

History has no shortage of great empires that rose to conquer much of the world through military dominance, political maneuvering, and economic supremacy.

- * Ancient Rome, 201 BC - 476
- * The Ottoman Empire, 1299 - 1923
- * Spain, 1493 - 1899
- * Great Britain, 1583 - 1945
- * France, 1605 - 1947

And due to nearly identical mistakes, the fall of these dynasties was just as grandiose as their unanimous rise . . .

Is it possible that less than 70 years after claiming our status as empire during World War II, America is now on the cusp of an economic, political, and social crisis?

That our great nation is not just on the verge of another recession, but of a complete collapse into bankruptcy?

And with inflation and the near death of the dollar aiding in our demise, will much of the wealth of Americans, who weren't prepared for this untimely fate, disappear in the aftermath?

All dynasties follow a similar cycle and . . . The United States is Marching in Step with the Historic Pattern That Has Led to the Demise of Every Great Empire in History.

Will we soon succumb to a fall of such epic proportions that America could lose its status as the leading superpower in the world?

Written by David Skarica, the book: "The Great Super Cycle" is going to create a serious conversation concerning the steps our elected officials need to take in the days and years ahead to save our economy, our country, and your wealth. The Great Super Cycle Will Give You a Thorough Analysis of History's Most Powerful Empires.

Because as the saying goes, "those who do not learn from the past are doomed to repeat it." The Great Super Cycle explores how possibly irreversible economic, social, and political decisions made decades earlier and across party lines now have America on the verge of bankruptcy as early as 2015. And most alarmingly, how this series of events mirrors the fall of many of the greatest empires in history.

Can the United States right the ship? Let's take a look back at history and see:

The fall of the French Empire in 1788 and the Ottoman Empire in 1875 was caused in large part by an interest rate explosion. Could the United States soon be paying 20%, 30%, even 40% of our GDP just in interest payments?

A Roman Tragedy: The Fall of the Middle Class. The empire that laid the foundation for modern democracy saw its proudest days when it built a thriving middle class. And when that middle class fell, Rome soon crumbled. Can America's middle class be saved before it's too late?

Worse Than the Great Depression? — Unreported by the mainstream media, America is suffering through a crisis that is over 2.5 times worse than during the Great Depression. This "secret" attack on our economy has already great effects on our nation.

Has the Once-Mighty Dollar Become the British Pound of Yesteryear? — When it was the reserve currency of the world, the British pound was so formidable that it took five U.S. dollars to match it. With the dollar losing 50% of its value since 1985, will we lose reserve currency status as our allies across the Atlantic did?

China and the United States: a 21st Century Suez Canal Scenario — In the 1950s the United States stopped Great Britain and France from attacking Egypt by threatening to call in their debt. Will China use its \$1 trillion in leverage to protect Iran?

The Most Dangerous Immigration Threat: 1970s Latin American Economic Policies! — Mexico, Brazil, Argentina, Bolivia, and most of Latin America were struck by unbelievable levels of inflation in the 1970s and 1980s. The United States is making some of the exact same decisions these nations did that led to their economic firestorms.

Is 20th Century German Hyperinflation Coming to the United States? — In 1900 Germany was staking its claim to a global empire across Africa, Asia, and Europe. A bout of hyperinflation created an avenue for reckless leaders . . . is America ignoring a lesson to be learned?

The One True Reason the American Empire Will Fall — Every empire followed one principle during the height of its reign. Is the U.S. now ignoring this one principle? And will China, and even India, step up and overtake us?

It's important we learn from the past. Hopefully those in power will learn . . . and learn quickly before it's too late. But even if they don't,

you can still invest successfully. Investments, just like empires, run in cycles. To quote David Skarica's prophetic book "Market cycles are like gravity . . . you can't see them but they bind your fate regardless."

If you can learn to identify patterns in the stock and commodities markets, you can target the precise moments to capitalize on downtrodden companies plus upticks in gold, silver, and other natural resources. In fact, cycles are present in every security.

Investing in the 21st Century. Two Impervious Investments That Can Protect You From The Bond Bubble Bursting — If we are hit with fierce inflation and the dollar weakens further, once-safe bonds could quickly become unstable. — International population growth is an unstoppable trend. And an inflation storm will cause food prices to soar.

Two Undiscovered Avenues for Cashing in on the Green Energy Bonanza — More electric cars are being built in factories . . . wind turbines erected on coastlines . . . and solar panels aligned in the desert. Two unheralded opportunities could corner their respective "green" markets. The big gains are to be had now before word of these stocks spreads.

China is a burgeoning superpower. It is building major cities. Its middle class is growing. And it exerts influence across the globe. If you have yet to tap into this vast and growing market, get started with this one simple and diversified investment.

Your Backdoor to Indian Riches! — India is starting to stake its claim to world economic dominance. Indian funds allow you to get in on the ground floor and reap the benefits of being ahead of the curve.

Is Australia the Cure for the U.S. Dollar? — Invest in the one currency whose economy is so closely tied to the precious metal — Australia's. But if you find FOREX investing too risky for your taste, try out this simple investment you can buy on a U.S. exchange.

Find Your Fortune in the "Secret" Latin American Powerhouse — Brazil is the darling of the investment community, but another South American nation may have the greatest opportunities for your portfolio. Get an in depth tour of the nation, its major industries.

Every American, regardless of net worth, needs sound guidance on how to empower themselves in the days ahead to take control of their investing.

We live in a time when nations and economies are interconnected unlike any other point in history. And with America's reign at the top in jeopardy, it has never been more important that you build an impervious wall around your net worth.

Each brick in this wall should offer diversity. Some offering protection. Some offering aggressive income and gain potential. And some of these "investment bricks" should be spread across all corners of the globe.

But our lives are busy. Without help we don't have the time to hunt down every lucrative opportunity as well as pinpoint the exact moment to strike.

You don't have to be a world traveler to have a diversified portfolio of the most powerful international investments. You do not have to be wealthy to add the most profitable plays from all corners of the globe. .

It May Be Out of Our Hands. But We Can Control How We Prepare For It! Whether or not its most serious predictions come to pass, it's important you take in as much information as possible so you can make up your own mind. To paraphrase the famous quote I used earlier, "Those who do not learn from the past are doomed to repeat it." But those who do see the writing on the wall can make shrewd decisions with their money now to prepare and prosper.

You owe it to yourself and your family to take the necessary steps to protect your wealth while discovering new avenues to profit in the coming days, weeks, and years.

PICTURES OF THE WORLD



Protesters have taken over the centre of the Egyptian capital Cairo on the sixth day of demonstrations against the rule of President Hosni Mubarak. The police, who have been involved in violent clashes with protesters in recent days, have largely disappeared from the streets. There is a heavy military presence in the city, but soldiers are not intervening.



Receiving advance payments for concessions is one solution the government is exploring to raise 50 billion euros through privatizations in the coming years, to reach the target that has been set in association with the European Union and the International Monetary Fund.



Europe is dead. Long live Europe. The demise of the political and economic union, as we knew it, became evident at the recent meeting of European Union leaders in Brussels. What is less apparent is which Europe will replace it. A rapidly changing world has forced the once-untroubled Europeans to think again about where their continent is heading and how it will get there. The decisions taken over the next few weeks and months will determine whether a brave new world lies ahead or whether we will be left clutching the remnants of a flawed past.

The February 4 summit confirmed that the European project, built on the expectations of decent salaries, respectable retirement ages and an abundance of jobs, mostly in the service sector, has reached its expiry date. The "social Europe" envisioned by, among others, former European Commission President Jacques Delors, where workers' rights were protected and adequate public services were available to all, has fallen victim to circumstances. The sovereign debt crisis has been a major catalyst in this, but the Union faces much wider challenges than just how to deal with debt and deficit problems.



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Egyptian military dissolves parliament

Egypt’s new military authorities say they are dissolving parliament and suspending the constitution. In a statement on state TV, the higher military council said it would stay in power six months, or until elections. Egypt’s current parliament is dominated by supporters of President Hosni Mubarak, who was ousted on Friday after 18 days of mass protests. A statement was read out on state TV from the higher military council, saying it would suspend the constitution and set up a committee to draft a new one, before submitting it to a popular referendum. The opposition’s Ayman Nour, who challenged Mr Mubarak for the presidency in 2005, described the military leadership’s steps as a “victory for the revolution”, Reuters news agency reported. Meanwhile, caretaker Prime Minister Ahmed Shafiq said his main priority was to restore the country’s security.

Speaking earlier at a news conference, he said: “Our main concern now as a cabinet is security - we need to bring back a sense of security to the Egyptian citizen.

“Parallel to that we also want to ensure that the daily life of all Egyptians goes back to normal and that basic needs like bread and healthcare are available.”

He said that the country had enough reserves to weather the economic crisis, but that if instability continued there could be “obstacles”. “Our internal economic position is solid and cohesive,” he said.

This sweeping announcement was made on state television less than 48 hours after the departure of President Mubarak.

The constitution is being suspended, a committee is being set up to redraft it, and parliament has been dissolved.

In some ways this was expected. The military are already disregarding the constitution - there is no president at the moment, for example. The opposition will almost certainly welcome the dissolution of parliament - it was elected in a vote last autumn that was widely condemned as rigged.

But the opposition will want to know who will be on the commission to amend the constitution. And they will be uneasy about the announcement that the military will be in charge for the next six months.

Although there were reports of scuffles between soldiers and die-hard protesters in the square recently morning, our correspondent said the operation to clear the area had previously been conducted gently.

A hardcore of several hundred protesters had remained marooned on a traffic island in the heart of the square, saying they would not move until a full timetable of reform was drawn up.

Meanwhile, it has emerged that 18 antiquities have been stolen from the Egyptian Museum during the unrest.

The Antiquities Ministry said they included a gilded wood statue of Tutankhamun being carried by a goddess and parts of another statue of him harpooning.

Assets freeze

Earlier, Mr Obama welcomed the new military leadership’s statement aired on state TV on Saturday, which implicitly confirms that the country’s 1979 peace treaty with Israel will remain intact.

Military statement

- * Constitution suspended
- * Council to hold power for six months or until elections
- * Both houses of parliament dissolved
- * Council to issue laws during interim period
- * Committee set up to reform constitution and set rules for referendum
- * Caretaker PM Ahmed Shafiq’s cabinet to continue work until new cabinet formed
- * Council to hold presidential and parliamentary elections
- * All international treaties to be honoured

South Sudan referendum: 99% vote for independence

There was a vast turnout for the vote, which lasted a week. Sudan: Set for divorce.

Some 99% of South Sudanese voted to secede from the north, according to the first complete results of the region's independence referendum.

A total of 99.57 percent of those polled voted

of conflict between the black Christian-dominated south and the mainly Arab Muslim north.

"The prayer I say the people of Southern Sudan have been waiting for for 55 years, the prayer of a country," Episcopalian Archbishop Daniel Deng said as he opened the ceremony.

"Bless the name of this land, Southern Sudan," he said.

According to the commission website, 3,851,994 votes were cast during the week-long ballot. Five of the 10 states in Sudan's oil-producing south showed a 99.9% vote for separation, the lowest vote was 95.5% in favour in the western state of Bahr al-Ghazal, bordering north Sudan, Reuters reports.

North and south Sudan have suffered decades of conflict driven by religious and ethnic divides. Southern Sudan is one of the least developed areas in the world and many of its people have have long complained of mistreatment at the hands of the Khartoum government. Independence for the South now seems inevitable.

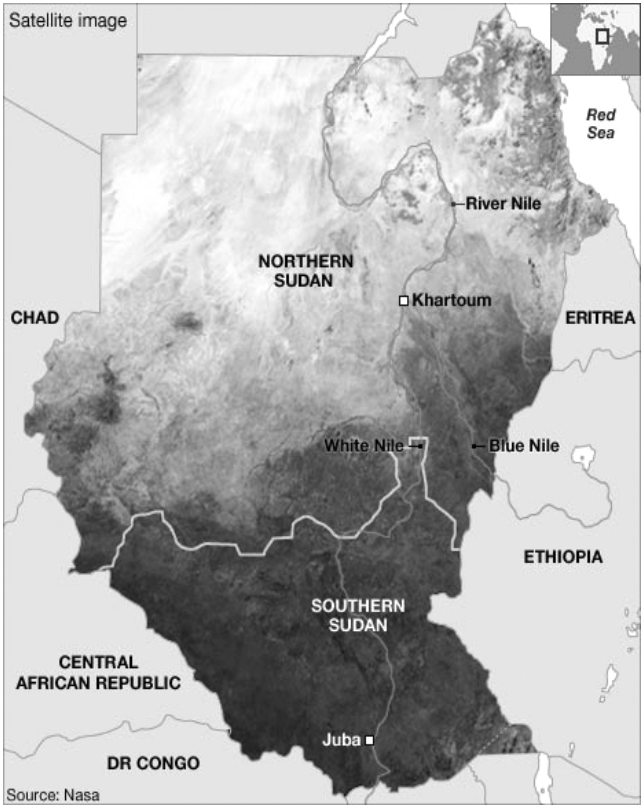
Though the South Sudanese are celebrating that their dream of having their own country is a massive step closer there are still issues to resolved - including underdevelopment

and inter-ethnic conflict.

Tough negotiations remain on how to divide up economic resources between north and south - which has the bulk of oil, he adds.

Sudan's Historic Vote

- * Voted: 9-15 January
- * Vote a condition of 2005 deal to end two-decade north-south conflict
- * Most northerners are Arabic-speaking Muslims
- * Most southerners Christian or follow traditional religions
- * Final result due 6 February or 14 February if there are appeals
- * South will become continent's newest nation on 9 July 2011
- * National anthem and flag chosen, but not new country's name
- * Sudanese voters: Your stories



for independence, according to the referendum commission.

Early counting had put the outcome of the ballot beyond doubt, indicating Southern Sudan had secured a mandate to become the world's newest nation.

The poll was agreed as part of a 2005 peace deal to end two decades of war. Final results from the 9-15 January vote, which Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir has said he will accept, are expected early next month.

If the result is confirmed, the new country is set to formally declare its independence on 9 July.

Hundreds of officials and diplomats gathered in Juba at the grave of rebel leader John Garang for the first official announcement of the results.

'The prayer of a country'

The revered South Sudanese leader died in a plane crash just days after signing the January 2005 peace agreement ending more than 20 years

Davos 2011: Will big banks be allowed to fail?

After two years of catastrophic bank and insurance failures and bailouts, are financial regulators at long last better prepared for the next big banking collapse?

Banks must not be too big to fail, governments across the G20 group of leading nations have promised.

So can taxpayers rest easy now, or are they still on the line to cough up the "ransom payment", as one official closely involved in the US bailouts put it.

The World Economic Forum in Davos - packed with regulators, central bankers, and big bank and insurance bosses - is a pretty good place to find the answer.

"What if another megabank fails?," asked a dinner session, and came up with a fairly depressing answer (under Davos rules I can report what was said, but not who said it).

Orderly resolution

Let's be clear: the failure or near-collapse of another huge financial institution like Lehman Brothers, AIG or Royal Bank of Scotland is highly unlikely declared all experts loud and clearly at the start of the session...

But let's assume the worst, said the session leader: "We wake up one morning, and MBB - or Mega Big Bank - is gone. What would we do?"

Here's the dilemma: do we have the right tools for an "orderly resolution" of MBB and allow it to go bankrupt or is the systemic risk so high that we just HAVE to bail it out?

The Lehman lesson

To understand the problem, the participants reminded themselves of what went wrong during the Lehman Brothers collapse.

When Lehman was allowed to collapse, the consequences for the global financial sector were dire. Credit markets froze from one day to the next, pushing several other financial institutions to the brink.

AIG CEO Edward Liddy faced by protesters There was anger at the fact US taxpayers had to bail out struggling AIG

So why had the US authorities not done another Bear Stearns? After all, when that investment bank had gotten into trouble a few

months earlier, the US Federal Reserve organised its firesale to JP Morgan Chase.

Well, for a couple of weeks the Fed tried to sell Lehman, but one potential bidder after another dropped out. When Bank of America finally walked away, US officials tried to drop Lehman into the lap of UK bank Barclays, explained one participant with intimate knowledge of the negotiations.

However, at the time Barclays itself was too fragile to take on the whole of Lehman. The problem, the experts in Davos agreed, was not a lack of legal authority to nationalise Lehman. The collapse also was not a not-so-clever attempt to send a stark warning to Congress to reform the financial sector.

And so, Lehman collapsed.

Post-Lehman traumatic shock syndrome Politicians and regulators suffer from post-Lehman traumatic shock syndrome, said one expert on banking regulation.

Washington Mutual facade Other banks failed, including Washington Mutual which went defunct in 2008

But they are still paralysed, and the ingredients for an orderly and successful "resolution" for Mega Big Bank are still missing, he said. "I came in [this session] pessimistic. Now I'm terrified."

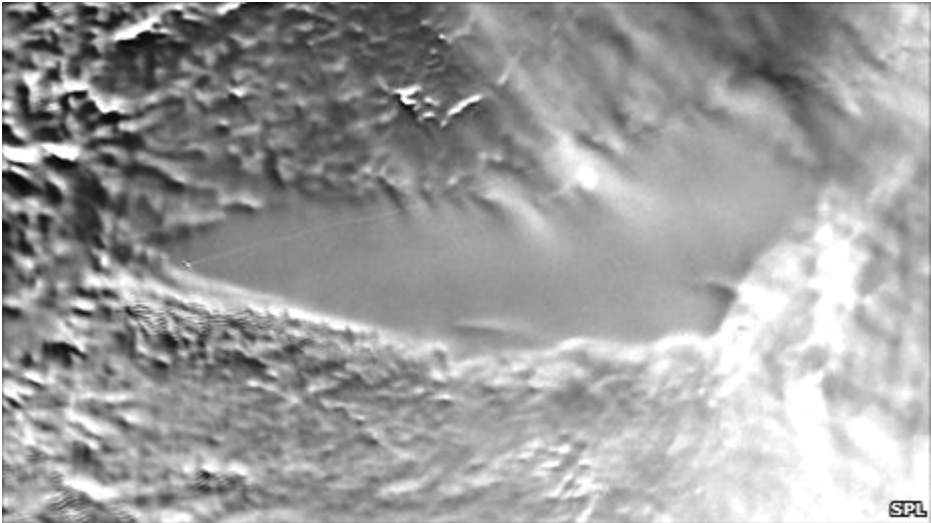
"If we really think megabanks can't be allowed to fail, and governments have to try to bail them out, then all policy has failed," he said.

Two years after the crisis started, regulators still don't know who sits where in the chains of financial instruments, and who is leveraged (financed through debt) and how.

And a harmonisation of bankruptcy laws or regulation is not even on the horizon. "We won't have crossborder liquidation rules for at least another 10 years," said an international banker.

"National regulators don't want to deal with derivatives that have been written in New York," said an adviser to a European government. "Everybody is ringfencing and nationalising the problem."

Lake Vostok : The hidden lake beneath Antarctic ice



The sub-glacial lake is located underneath the remote Vostok station in Antarctica.

Overlaid by nearly 4km of ice, it has been isolated from the rest of the world for millions of years. Some scientists think the ice cap above and at the edges has created a hydrostatic seal with the surface, preventing lake water from escaping or anything else from getting inside. It was at the Vostok station that the coldest temperature ever found on Earth (-89°C) was recorded on 21 July 1983. Normally, water in such extreme conditions exists only in one state: ice. And when, in the 1970s British scientists in Antarctica received strange radar readings at the site,

the presence of a liquid, freshwater lake below the ice did not instantly spring to mind. It was not until 1996 that the discovery was formally acknowledged, after satellites sent in the images outlining the lake's contours. Space radar revealed that the sub-glacial body of fresh water was one of the largest lakes in the world . At 10,000 square km and with depths reaching 800m, it is similar to Lake Baikal in Siberia or Lake Ontario in North America. Since the lake has remained sealed off from the rest of the world, scientists estimate that conditions in it have probably remained unchanged for some 15 million years.