

INTERNATIONAL

As Negotiators Talk Peace In Geneva, Bombings Kill At Least 32 In Syrian City

A cluster of coordinated suicide attacks have claimed the lives of at least 32 people in the major Syrian city of Homs. The bombings, which targeted two separate security offices in the largely government-held city, killed one senior Syrian intelligence official and left another critically injured. Reports from Syria's official state news agency SANA do not specify how many of the dead were civilians and how many were security forces. The U.K.-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights places the death toll higher, saying at least 42 Syrian security members were killed in the attacks. Syrian state media report that Hassan Daeboul, head of the local Military Intelligence branch, was killed and State Security Branch chief Ibrahim Darwish was seriously wounded in the blasts, according to The Associated Press. The BBC reports the jihadi militant coalition Tahrir al-Sham, "known as the Nusra Front until it broke off formal ties with al-Qaeda last July," claimed responsibility for Saturday's bombings. The group's statement said five of its fighters took part in the attacks on security buildings in Homs' Ghouta and Mahatta neighborhoods, CNN says. "Both areas are heavily guarded by the state police and also military so it was a really big and organised twin attack," Al-Jazeera's Andrew Simmons reports from the Turkish border city of Gaziantep. Reuters reports Syria responded with airstrikes against a rebel-held enclave in Homs. "Besieged by Syrian soldiers and militiamen, [the rebel-held area] al-Waer has gone four months without a United Nations aid delivery." The violence comes just a day after an Islamic State-claimed car bomb killed at least 34 people in the town of al-Bab, which was recently taken back from ISIS by Turkish-backed rebels. The spate of killings in Syria are happening precisely as negotiators from President Bashar Assad's regime and opposition forces settle into renewed U.N.-led peace talks in Geneva. Those negotiations, which aim to shore up a shaky cease-fire brokered by Turkey and Russia, do not include the two militant groups that leveled the attacks on Friday and Saturday.

New Robot Patrols Chinese Airport

The airport in Shenzhen, China has a new intelligent robot trained to carry out security checks. It has facial recognition capabilities and can fire electroshock weapons. There's a new sheriff in town. China's first-ever security robot has been hired at the Shenzhen airport. It's been making round-the-clock patrols through the departure hall of one of the terminals and getting photographed by curious travelers. Developed by China's National Defense University, AnBot weighs in at 171 pounds and stands just under five-feet-tall. And it looks like a more conical R2-D2. It has facial recognition technology and four high-definition cameras. It can snap pictures of travelers' faces and then send them to human co-workers for analysis. AnBot can also give you directions if you're lost, spot fires and monitor air quality, which is important in China. It can also reportedly respond to riots by emitting a non-lethal electric charge. AnBot is capable of speeds up to 11 miles per hour, about the maximum speed of a domestic pig. So slow-moving criminals beware - AnBot might catch you.

2017 DISTRICT - RADIO SPEAKING SCRIPT^a ROUND 1



South Africa Xenophobic Attacks

MICHEL MARTIN, HOST: The United States is not the only nation dealing with tension over immigration and refugees. On Friday, a large anti-immigrant protest resulted in the arrest of 136 people in South Africa's capital, Pretoria, that according to The Associated Press. Police fired stun grenades and rubber bullets at protesters. It was the latest in a series of attacks against Somalis, Nigerians and other foreigners in Pretoria and in Johannesburg. NPR's Peter Granitz spoke with protesters marching in Pretoria, and he's joining us now to explain why this is happening. So are foreigners indeed the target? And if so, why?

GRANITZ: They are. And advocates will say they're the target because they're the scapegoat because people here, South Africans, are - they're actually upset with the government.

They're upset with roads that aren't paved. They're losing their power sporadically, and they're upset with, you know, a near-record unemployment rate. We're talking about a place with a 26 percent unemployment rate for the country. So people are angry, and they're excitable. And they want to have something to point their finger at. I spoke with somebody named Clifton Mnene (ph). Now, he's upset with the amount of heroin in Pretoria, and that is a very serious problem here. And he says the police don't do anything about it. And he's protesting because he thinks the heroin gets sold by outsiders, like people from Nigeria.

CLIFTON MNENE: It's foreigners. Foreigners are selling drugs here. Those fruits and vegetables there is so rotten. What they're doing there is they're selling drugs.

GRANITZ: There are people who represent the Nigerian community and who represent other African communities in the country who say yes, there are Nigerians who sell drugs. But not all drug dealers are Nigerian. Crime is crime. It's not fair to scapegoat certain people. And I should say that when Clifton and I were talking, we were doing this as protesters stormed into a mechanic's garage and pulled people out. Now, those protesters say that garage - it's nothing more than a front for a drug den.

MARTIN: Is South Africa a preferred destination for refugees?

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MARTIN: Is South Africa a preferred destination for refugees?

GRANITZ: South Africa is a major destination for asylum-seekers and for economic migrants. Millions have chosen to come southward instead of going to Europe. South Africa has a very liberal asylum policy. So if you get here and you apply to become a refugee, you have the right to work. You have the right to study. And perhaps most importantly, unlike other places that take in refugees, people here can live in the city. They just don't live in camps. They're not secluded from the rest of the population. That sets South Africa apart.

MARTIN: And what are South Africa's leaders saying about all of this?

GRANITZ: Obviously, they're calling for peace. But it needs to be said that they are doing that very meekly. On Friday, President Jacob Zuma recognized that the violence was happening, that the march was happening. But he called it a march against crime.

MARTIN: That's reporter Peter Granitz who joined us from South Africa's capital, Pretoria.



NATIONAL

Sharp vision: New glasses help the legally blind see

Jeff Regan was born with underdeveloped optic nerves and had spent most of his life in a blur. Then four years ago, he donned an unwieldy headset made by a Toronto company called eSight. Suddenly, Regan could read a newspaper while eating breakfast and make out the faces of his co-workers from across the room. He's been able to attend plays and watch what's happening on stage, without having to guess why people around him were laughing. "These glasses have made my life so much better," said Regan, 48, a Canadian engineer who lives in London, Ontario. The headsets from eSight transmit images from a forward-facing camera to small internal screens - one for each eye - in a way that beams the video into the wearer's peripheral vision. That turns out to be all that some people with limited vision, even legal blindness, need to see things they never could before. That's because many visual impairments degrade central vision while leaving peripheral vision largely intact. Although eSight's glasses won't help people with total blindness, they could still be a huge deal for the millions of peoples whose vision is so impaired that it can't be corrected with ordinary lenses. But eSight still needs to clear a few minor hurdles. Among them: proving the glasses are safe and effective for the legally blind. While eSight's headsets don't require the approval of health regulators - they fall into the same low-risk category as dental floss - there's not yet firm evidence of their benefits. The company is funding clinical trials to provide that proof. The headsets also carry an eye-popping price tag. The latest version of the glasses, released in mid-February, sells for about \$10,000. While that's \$5,000 less than its predecessor, it's still a lot for people who often have trouble getting high-paying jobs because they can't see.

Private Prisons Back In Mix For Federal Inmates As Sessions Rescinds Order

New Attorney General Jeff Sessions is rescinding an Obama-era memo that directed the Justice Department to reduce the use of private prisons, NPR's Carrie Johnson reports. Sessions writes in the order that returning to the Bureau of Prisons' earlier approach would provide flexibility. "The memorandum changed long-standing policy and practice, and impaired the Bureau's ability to meet the future needs of the federal correctional system," Sessions writes. Outside companies currently house about 21,000 inmates for the Justice Department, the agency reports, down from a peak of 30,000. The overall federal prison population has been falling in recent years because of changes in how some low-level offenders are sentenced. In announcing a phasing out of private-prison use in August, then-Deputy Attorney General Sally Yates wrote that the outside companies' facilities were less safe, more expensive, and "simply do not provide the same level of correctional services, programs and resources."

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White House to propose slashing agency budgets

The White House is moving to propose slashing cuts to longtime Republican targets like the Environmental Protection Agency in a set of marching orders to agencies as it prepares its budget for the upcoming fiscal year. Capitol Hill aides say the White House budget office on Monday will send agencies proposed levels for the 2018 budget year. The aides spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss nonpublic information and a sensitive process. The Pentagon is due for a huge boost, as President Donald Trump promised during the campaign, but many nondefense agencies and foreign aid programs are facing cuts. The specific numbers aren't final and agencies will have a chance to argue against the cuts as part of a longstanding tradition at the budget office. Trump's budget is expected in mid-March. In an interview with Fox News Channel's "Sunday Morning Futures," Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said cuts to Social Security and Medicare would not be part of the administration's first budget. Trump's priority is passing legislation to reduce middle-class and corporate taxes, he said. The White House budget office issued a statement confirming that an interim budget submission will be released in mid-March but declining to comment on an "internal discussion." "The president and his Cabinet are working collaboratively to create a budget that keeps the president's promises to secure the country and restore fiscal sanity to how we spend American taxpayers' money," said Office of Management and Budget spokesman John Czwartacki.

LGBTQ Advocates Fear 'Religious Freedom' Bills Moving Forward In States

There are renewed efforts at the state level to pass so-called religious freedom bills. LGBTQ rights advocates believe that's because local lawmakers are anticipating support from the Trump administration. In Alabama, there's a bill that allows adoption agencies that are religiously affiliated to hold true to their faith if they don't think same-sex couples should be parents. The psychiatric community has found no evidence that having same-sex parents harms children. The bill is called the Child Placing Agency Inclusion Act. When it was first introduced two years ago, the bill didn't go very far. But since the election that has changed. For the first time the bill is listed on the Alabama State Senate GOP agenda. "This bill has been fast-tracked through the House of Representatives with support from both Senate and House Republican leadership," says Eva Kendrick, the Alabama state manager for the Human Rights Campaign, an LGBTQ rights group. With the choice of Jeff Sessions to be attorney general, the Trump administration has picked someone who is likely to be an ally on these state bills. Back when Attorney General Sessions was a U.S. congressman, he referred to separation of church and state as something that was "recent," "unhistorical" and "unconstitutional." Sarah Warbelow, the legal director for the HRC, fears that the choice of Sessions as attorney general is a signal to local lawmakers. "A number of states have introduced bills for many years that would allow child welfare agencies to discriminate on the basis of religious belief," Warbelow says. "But since this particular executive order draft leaked out, we've seen a number of states really begin the process of moving those bills." In addition to the bill in Alabama, she says there are similar ones based on religious freedom that are moving more quickly in Texas, South Dakota and Oklahoma.

2017 DISTRICT - RADIO SPEAKING SCRIPT^a ROUND 1



STATE

Wisconsin Farmers Hope Trump Will Bring New Money To Rural Infrastructure

Some Wisconsin agriculture groups are hoping to see more federal funding for rural infrastructure under the Trump administration. More than 200 organizations from across the United States sent a letter to President Donald Trump this week, calling for a new focus on rural infrastructure needs. The organizations say recent transportation investments have been directed to urban areas, leaving out the smaller roads and lock and dam systems used by farmers.

"Transportation begins on a gravel road in the middle of nowhere, and if we can't cross that first bridge, if we can't travel that first road, we effectively took the efficiency out of the entire food chain," said Tom Bressner from the Wisconsin Agri-Business Association. Bressner said new infrastructure investments in South America have farmers worried about staying competitive.

"They're building everything new, and they're building everything as they go, and we're working with old infrastructure that's very slow and it's becoming more of a challenge to compete," Bressner said. Jim Zimmerman from the Wisconsin Corn Growers Association said everything from farm equipment to river barges have grown in size and weight since infrastructure systems were built 40 to 60 years ago. "We all recognize that we have outgrown the system that we have established for the last couple of generations, and it needs to be improved," Zimmerman said. While the letter calls for more interest on the federal level, farmers are hopeful leaders in state government are also paying attention to the issue. "Certainly the money needs to come from somewhere and hopefully they can find a way to work together on that," said Brad Kremer, president of the Wisconsin Soybean Association.

Wisconsin Reacts To New Immigration Policies

Wisconsinites have mixed reactions to the Department of Homeland Security's new plans for detaining and removing more undocumented immigrants. Last month, President Donald Trump issued executive orders calling for increased deportation of undocumented immigrants and strengthened border security. Now the DHS has announced how they will carry out those orders, including hiring 10,000 more immigration officers. The new memos also give officers the option to detain and deport any undocumented immigrants. Some Wisconsin Republicans celebrated the announcement, saying the reforms are needed to remove criminals who are in the country illegally. "What these new rules really are addressing is those people who are here illegally and then have continued to commit illegal acts. I don't know why there is much debate about what happens to those people," said Brian Westrate, chair of the 3rd Congressional District Republican Party. Westrate said officials still need to decide how to respond to undocumented immigrants who are not criminals. But he said Trump's aggressive approach to immigration enforcement is needed after years of inaction on the issue. But Grant Sovern from the Community Immigration Law Center in Madison said he's worried reforms are happening too fast, without consideration for individual's rights. "To go from having a judicial process for everybody to very little judicial process and to expand dramatically who will be deported is kind of a scary thing to be happening at the same time," said Sovern, an immigration lawyer.

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Walker's Budget Moves Forestry Division To Northern Wisconsin

The forestry division within the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources would move up north under Gov. Scott Walker's budget proposal, and one northern Wisconsin lawmaker said he believes the move will help with recruitment. The governor's 2017-2019 budget requires the headquarters for the state's chief forester to move by January 2018 to an existing DNR facility north of state Highway 29, which runs from Eau Claire to Green Bay. State Sen. Tom Tiffany, R-Hazelhurst, supports the move. He said some foresters don't want to work in Madison. "They like to hunt. They like to fish. They like to be in rural Wisconsin, small town Wisconsin. It was limiting the pool of people that would apply for some of those jobs," Tiffany said. "I think it's really good to move the division headquarters to northern Wisconsin, and hopefully that will be accomplished here." The governor's budget would allow current DNR forestry staff in Madison to relocate to other northern Wisconsin state facilities in phases. The current Madison headquarters employs 56.5 full-time employees in the forestry division. Walker's proposal also authorizes the agency to pay for their moving expenses. "No timetable has been set, but eventually, (the) existing division of forestry staff located in Madison will have the opportunity to relocate to state-owned or leased space north of Highway 29, as designated by the chief forester," wrote Chief Forester and Forestry Division Administrator Fred Souba Jr. in a recent message to staff. "Such a move will allow division leadership to be closer to the resources we manage and provide more opportunities for direct contact with division field staff, forestry partners and the forest industry." Bayfield County Forest Administrator Jason Bodine said the move may make state interactions more convenient, although he noted it wouldn't have an impact on county forest management.

Wisconsin Citizens Demanding Policies To Protect Water Resources

People across the state are hopping a bus to Madison for Citizen's Water Lobby Day. They're calling on lawmakers to support policies that protect the state's water resources. Bayfield's Mary Dougherty said 400 people are making the trip to the state capitol, but she expects to see 600 people at the event. Dougherty, president of the Sustain Rural Wisconsin Network, said they'll speak with lawmakers on a variety of issues. "Our common ground is that we are demanding responsible water policy," she said. "As far as what are people going to ask, it is truly up to them. We have given some guidelines on how to act with your elected officials. We have asked them to write their own stories to create a specific ask." Dougherty said she's concerned about the state's oversight of concentrated animal feeding operations or CAFOs. "There is a proposal for a 26,000 hog CAFO in the Lake Superior basin and that 26,000 hog CAFO is going to produce upward of 10 million gallons of manure a year," she said. "And I'm very concerned and alarmed at the amount of manure and the lack of DNR regulation, lack of DNR enforcement that we have seen across the state as it relates to CAFOs." Dougherty said she hopes to see more people take part in civic engagement. "The democracy goes off the track because the elected officials aren't aware what our wishes are," she said. "And so the hope of this action or Citizen's Water Lobby is to bring citizens back into this conversation, to have a communication with our elected officials, to give them the most information they can."

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SPORTS

For Basketball Player Quinn Cook, A Big Step Closer To The Dream

The world of professional sports is a revolving door – athletes come and go. Sunday, there was an arrival in the NBA that resonated a bit more. Twenty-three-year-old Quinn Cook signed a 10-day contract with the Dallas Mavericks. For Cook, a personable and popular player, it's his first regular season call up to the NBA. For the past season and-a-half, he's been playing in the D League — pro basketball's minor league. NPR chronicled Cook's season last year with the D League's Canton Charge on the podcast "Embedded." Cook, a guard, became nationally known to basketball fans when he helped Duke win the 2015 men's college basketball championship. He was a senior starter on that team. After winning the title, three members of Duke's starting lineup were picked in the first round of the NBA draft. Cook wasn't drafted. In "Embedded," he talked about breaking down after watching the draft at his mom's house and not hearing his name called. But Cook has made the most of his D-League experience. Last year, he was named Rookie of the Year, an honor that earned Cook praise from LeBron James, the superstar for Canton's parent club, the Cleveland Cavaliers. Cook also had some near, late season call up's to the NBA. This season, Cook was second in scoring and, at the recent D League All-Star game, he won the Most Valuable Player award. Speaking Sunday from Dallas, Cook said he "definitely" has played better this season – the result of hard work, a year of experience as a professional and the fact that he didn't get called up to the NBA his first season. "I had the motivation of not getting where I wanted to," he said, "and I trusted myself to go back to the D-League."

Badgers women's basketball: Finale ends in loss; will be seeded 11 in Big Ten tournament

The University of Wisconsin women's basketball team had a sniff of some rare air Sunday. And then the Badgers came back to earth. Nearing the midway mark of the fourth quarter the Badgers were in position to break a couple streaks of futility, only to see Iowa go on an 11-0 run and pull away to a 71-60 victory in the final game of the Big Ten Conference regular season. The Badgers (8-21, 3-13 Big Ten) finished in a four-way tie for 11th place. They will be the No. 11 seed in the Big Ten tournament and will face No. 14 Rutgers in the first round on Wednesday at about 3 p.m. in Indianapolis. The winner will face No. 6 Michigan State on Thursday night. While the Badgers weren't in position to improve their seeding, they had a chance to snap a 16-game losing streak against the Hawkeyes and record their third straight Big Ten win for the first time in five seasons. Redshirt senior Avyanna Young, who finished with a team-high 22 points, gave the Badgers a 58-54 lead with a layup with 6 minutes, 34 seconds left in the game. That would be the last field goal for UW, which only added two free throws by Young the rest of the way. Sophomore Megan Gustafson, Wisconsin's all-time leading prep scorer from South Shore High School, got the 11-0 run started with a layup. Senior Ally Disterhoft then gave Iowa the lead with a three-point play and senior Alexa Kastanek hit back-to-back 3-pointers to put Iowa (17-12, 8-8) ahead 65-58. "I thought our kids fought the whole game," UW coach Jonathan Tsipis said.

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Arizona recruit to be first openly gay scholarship player

University of Arizona recruit My-King Johnson is set to become the first active openly gay scholarship player in major-college football history. "I do feel like when I say that (I'm gay), it can put a target on my back. But whatever," Johnson told The Arizona Daily Star for a story Saturday. The 6-foot-4, 225-pound defensive end starred at Tempe High School. He signed with the home-state Wildcats after verbally committing to Pac-12 Conference rival UCLA. The Daily Star said Johnson said he was gay to Arizona defensive line coach Vincent Amey during the recruiting process. Johnson said Amey replied that "we want you to be a Wildcat." Now 17, Johnson said he was 12 when he came out to his friends and family.

WEATHER

- **Today:** Scattered flurries before 3pm. Partly sunny, with a high near 18. West wind around 10 mph, with gusts as high as 15 mph.
- **Tonight:** Increasing clouds, with a low around 12. West wind around 5 mph becoming south after midnight.
- **Wednesday:** Cloudy, with a high near 29. Breezy, with a south wind 5 to 15 mph becoming southwest in the afternoon. Winds could gust as high as 20 mph.
- **Wednesday Night:** Mostly cloudy, with a low around 23. Breezy, with a west wind around 15 mph, with gusts as high as 25 mph.
- **Thursday:** A 20 percent chance of snow after 7am. Cloudy, with a high near 28. Blustery, with a northwest wind 15 to 20 mph, with gusts as high as 30 mph.
- **Thursday Night:** A 20 percent chance of snow before 7pm. Mostly cloudy, with a low around 12. Blustery.

COMMERCIAL

Woodland Windows

Anncr: You love your home...

SFX: woman struggling to open window

Anncr: But those old...

SFX: tapping on wood, struggling to open

Anncr: Outdated... inefficient windows...

SFX: glass smashing

Anncr: need to be replaced.

Anncr: Let Woodland Windows and Doors help you add value and a beautiful finish to your home...with new windows from Marvin, Pella and Anderson. Or their exclusive custom vinyl line: Signature Woodland Windows. Their in-house installers and five year craftsmanship guarantee, will seal those drafts out. Find the design you're looking for in their 15-thousand square foot state of the art showroom, or contact Woodland for a free in-home estimate. Visit woodlandwindows.com.