

World

IRAQ: A wave of attacks against Shiite Muslims killed at least 68 people on Thursday, the worst toll in nearly five months, as Iraq grappled with a weeks-long political row that has stoked sectarian tensions.

EGYPT: A prosecutor in Hosni Mubarak's trial on Thursday demanded the death sentence for him and his former security chief, saying the fallen Egyptian president had ordered the killings of anti-regime demonstrators. "The law foresees the death penalty for premeditated murder," prosecutor Mustafa Khatert told the court during the trial of Mubarak.

PHILIPPINES: At least 25 people were killed in the southern Philippines on Thursday when a landslide buried gold prospectors who had refused to leave an area declared too dangerous for habitation.

IRAN: Iran said on Thursday it was "unconcerned" about an imminent EU ban on its oil, saying it would endure the extra sanctions even though they amounted to "an economic war."

SYRIA: The Free Syrian Army on Thursday called on the Arab League to admit its observer mission to the country is a failure, urging the bloc to seek UN help to end almost 10 months of bloodshed.

AFGHANISTAN: The Afghan government, angry at being sidelined over peace talks, flexed its muscles Thursday by ordering the takeover of a US military prison and parading British detainees at a news conference.

Obama touts strategy for leaner military

President Barack Obama unveiled a strategy on Thursday for a leaner military focused on countering China's rising power while signaling a shift away from large ground wars against insurgents. The plan calls for preparing for possible challenges from Iran and China with air and naval power while downplaying any future massive counter-insurgency campaigns like those in Iraq and Afghanistan. The "defense strategic review" sets out an approach for the military in an era of austerity, as Obama's administration prepares for \$487bn in defense cuts over the next 10 years. But Obama, anticipating attacks from his Republican rivals in an election year, said defense reductions would be limited and not come at the expense of America's military might. "So yes, our military will be leaner, but the world must know - the US is going to maintain our military superiority with armed forces that are agile, flexible and ready for the full range of contingencies

and threats," Obama said at an unusual appearance at the Pentagon. White House officials stressed Obama was deeply involved in the strategy review and sought to portray the president as taking a responsible approach to defense spending informed by the advice of commanders. Saying the country was "turning a page" on a decade of war, Obama said military strategy would increasingly focus on Asia, where commanders worry about China's growing military punch. "We'll

be strengthening our presence in the Asia Pacific, and budget reductions will not come at the expense of this critical region," he said. Defense Secretary Leon Panetta said the strategy envisages a "smaller and leaner" force that will expand the military's role in Asia while maintaining a military presence in the Middle East. According to the strategy document, the military would work with allies in the Middle East to ensure security in the Gulf and counter Iran's "destabilizing policies."

Romney says would seek to 'influence' Pakistan

Republican White House hopeful Mitt Romney said that diplomacy was like dealing with a teenage child and vowed to find ways to "influence" Pakistan to advance interests. "I don't want to suggest that a country is like a child, but in the way that when you deal with another person we think of all these dimensions on which we try to influence them, we have to influence Pakistan," he told voters here. The former Massachusetts

governor said he would "find how we can get those (Pakistani) institutions that are with us and will work towards modernity and peace and prosperity" to counter those that will not. "In a place like Pakistan, you have the elected government, but then you also have the military - and the military in some respects has more power than the elected government," said Romney, the front runner for his party's nomination.

One policeman killed, five wounded in Utah shooting

A police officer in a narcotics strike force was shot dead and five of his colleagues seriously wounded when they tried to serve a search warrant in the western state of Utah, police said Thursday. "During the service of the warrant, six police officers as well as one suspect were shot and have been taken to local hospitals," the Ogden Police Department said in a statement. A seven-year agent of the force, Jared

Francom, died from wounds he suffered in the late-Wednesday shooting, while the other five officers remained in hospital with serious to critical injuries. "The suspect remains at a local hospital under guard, with non-life threatening injuries," police said. Ogden, a city of some 80,000 people at the foot of the Wasatch Mountains, was the site of alpine skiing events at the 2002 Winter Olympics, held in nearby Salt Lake City.

BRIEF United States in

ARSON: A German man arrested after a four-day arson spree in Los Angeles appeared in court Wednesday charged with 37 counts of starting fires which "terrorized" Hollywood, prosecutors said. Harry Burkhardt, 24, launched a "binge" of over 50 arson attacks over the New Year holiday weekend, fired up by anti-American "hatred" fueled by his mother's fight against deportation to Germany, they said.

ENVOY: Three leading senators Thursday voiced concern over Pakistan's treatment of its former envoy to Washington accused of crafting a controversial memo which has triggered a scandal. Husain Haqqani resigned over the affair and a Pakistani commission is probing the unsigned memo said to have sought Washington's help to head off a feared military coup in May in exchange for overhauling the country's powerful security leadership.

KENNEDY: Joseph P. Kennedy III, a 31-year-old Massachusetts prosecutor, will run for Congress this year in a bid to resurrect the dynasty of America's most famous political family, reports said Thursday. Kennedy is in the final stages of preparing a Congressional run, with hopes to succeed retiring Democratic Representative Barney Frank, the Boston Globe and Rhode Island Public Radio reported, quoting family and Democratic sources.

INTRUDER: No charges will be laid

against a teen mother in Oklahoma who rang 911 on New Year's Eve and asked if it might be OK for her to gun down an intruder at her mobile home, prosecutors said Thursday. Sarah McKinley, 18, shot and killed Justin Martin, 24, with a 12-gauge shotgun after calling police and asking in a near-whisper: "I've got two guns in my hand. Is it OK to shoot him if he comes through the door?"

DISPUTES: The government on Thursday warned Cambodia about potential "instability" over land disputes, after a violent forced eviction this week sparked a series of protests and arrests.

SERVICE SECTOR: Activity in the economy's service sector expanded slightly December, with companies reporting cautious gains in business, according to a monthly survey released Thursday.

TABLOID: The former head of defunct British tabloid the News of the World is taking the helm of the New York Daily News, the longtime rival of Rupert Murdoch's New York Post, reports said Wednesday.

BIN LADEN: The military and CIA are probing claims that classified information about the killing of Osama bin Laden was given to Oscar winning filmmaker Kathryn Bigelow, a Republican lawmaker said Thursday.

Sports

WEDNESDAY'S SCOREBOARD COLLEGE FOOTBALL Orange Bowl
West Virginia 70, Clemson 33

NBA:
Toronto 92, Cleveland 77
Orlando 103, Washington 85
Charlotte 118, New York 110
Chicago 99, Detroit 83
Miami 118, Indiana 83
Boston 89, New Jersey 70
Memphis 10, Minnesota 86
Philadelphia 101,
New Orleans 93
San Antonio 101,
Golden State 95
Dallas 98, Phoenix 89
Denver 110, Sacramento 83
L.A. Clippers 117, Houston 89

NHL:
Boston 6, New Jersey 1
Montreal 7, Winnipeg 3
Vancouver 3, Minnesota 0
San Jose 3, Anaheim 1

COLLEGE BASKETBALL: Men's Top 25
Syracuse (1) 87,
Providence 73
Temple 78, Duke (5) 73
Georgetown (9) 73,
Marquette (20) 70
Kansas (14) 67,
Kansas St. (23) 49
Murray St. (19) 76,
E. Kentucky 67

NBA: Miami and Chicago each improved to an NBA-best 6-1 with lopsided victories on Wednesday while the Washington Wizards remained the NBA's only winless club by being routed at Orlando. LeBron James scored 33 points, passed out 13 assists and grabbed eight rebounds to spark host Miami over Indiana 118-83. Chris Bosh added 22 points while Dwyane Wade did not play because of injury.

NHL: Chicago Blackhawks forward Daniel Carcillo was suspended for seven games and Calgary Flames forward Rene Bourque was suspen-

ded for five games by the National Hockey League. In addition, the league fined New York Rangers coach John Tortorella an undisclosed amount for his comments on Monday after a 3-2 victory over Philadelphia in the NHL Winter Classic outdoor game.

GOLF: Tiger Woods chasing Jack Nicklaus, World No. 1 Luke Donald seeking his first major title and Rory McIlroy eyeing an encore to his first major triumph are golf's top storylines as the 2012 season begins. "If I have a good year I should be on the ballot for comeback Player of the Year," Woods said.

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