

Rebels on Run, Aleppo Is Close To Syrian Rule

Pleas for Help From Trapped Civilians

By ANNE BARNARD

BEIRUT, Lebanon — The siege in Aleppo is almost over.

Advances by Syrian government forces and their allies have squeezed the fighters and civilians remaining in rebel-held parts of the city into a sliver of territory, spokesmen for the government and the opposition forces said on Monday. The last civilians caught in the shrinking antigovernment enclave issued panicked calls for help.

Late Monday, several residents reported via text and voice messages that they were crowded into abandoned apartments and rainy streets, exposed to shelling and afraid they would be killed or arrested if pro-government forces reached them, as antigovernment activists circulated reports of scores of summary killings in retaken areas.

The United Nations secretary general, Ban Ki-moon, said in a statement on Monday that he was alarmed by reports of atrocities against a large number of civilians, including women and children.

It appeared increasingly likely that the government would gain control of the whole of Aleppo, the largest city in Syria, within days, if not hours. Videos from government-held districts showed people celebrating in the streets, waving flags and honking horns.

That would be a turning point in the civil war, cementing government control over all of Syria's most important cities and forcing the opposition and its backers to

Continued on Page A10

Tiniest Victims Of Opioids Tax Rural Hospitals

By CATHERINE SAINT LOUIS

As the opioid epidemic sweeps through rural America, an ever-greater number of drug-dependent newborns are straining hospital neonatal units and draining precious medical resources.

The problem has grown more quickly than realized and shows no signs of abating, researchers reported on Monday. Their study, published in JAMA Pediatrics, concludes for the first time that the increase in drug-dependent newborns has been disproportionately larger in rural areas.

The rising rates are due largely to widening use of opioids among pregnant women, the researchers found.

From 2004 to 2013, the proportion of newborns born dependent on drugs increased nearly sevenfold in hospitals in rural counties, to 7.5 per 1,000 from 1.2 per 1,000. By contrast, the uptick among urban infants was nearly fourfold, to 4.8 per 1,000 from 1.4 per 1,000.

"The problem is accelerating in rural areas to a greater degree than in urban areas," said Dr. Veeral Tolia, a neonatologist who works at Baylor University Medical Center in Dallas and was not involved in the new report.

Other recent studies have un-

Continued on Page A22



ABDALRHMAN ISMAIL/REUTERS

A man fleeing to rebel-held areas of Aleppo, Syria, on Monday, carrying a child with an IV drip.

Trump Adviser Is Harsh Judge Of C.I.A.'s Role

Flynn's Sway Is Seen in Derision of Leaders

By MATTHEW ROSENBERG

WASHINGTON — Long before Lt. Gen. Michael T. Flynn became Donald J. Trump's choice for national security adviser, he believed that the Central Intelligence Agency had become a political tool of the Obama administration — a view now echoed by the president-elect in his mocking dismissals of C.I.A. assessments that Russia sought to tip the election in Mr. Trump's favor.

"They've lost sight of who they actually work for," Mr. Flynn said in an interview with The New York Times in October 2015. "They work for the American people. They don't work for the president of the United States." He added, speaking of the agency's leadership: "Frankly, it's become a very political organization."

Mr. Flynn's assessment that the C.I.A. is a political arm of the Obama administration is not widely shared by Republicans or Democrats in Washington. But it has appeared to have been internalized by the one person who matters most right now: Mr. Trump.

In the past few days, Mr. Trump
Continued on Page A18

G.O.P. FEUD LOOMS AS LEADERS BACK RUSSIA INQUIRIES

DIFFERING WITH TRUMP

McCConnell and Ryan Denounce Possible Election Breaches

By JENNIFER STEINHAUER

WASHINGTON — The top two Republicans in Congress said on Monday that they supported investigations into possible Russian cyberattacks to influence the American election, setting up a potential confrontation with President-elect Donald J. Trump in his first days in office.

"Any foreign breach of our cybersecurity measures is disturbing, and I strongly condemn any such efforts," said Senator Mitch McConnell, Republican of Kentucky and the majority leader, adding, "The Russians are not our friends."

Mr. McConnell's support for investigating American intelligence findings that Moscow intervened in the election on Mr. Trump's behalf could presage friction between the Republicans who control Congress, and who have long taken a hard line against Russia, and the president-elect, who has mocked the findings.

Mr. McConnell also went out of his way to address Mr. Trump's claim that the C.I.A. could not be trusted because of flawed intelligence before the Iraq war.

"Let me say that I have the highest confidence in the intelligence community," Mr. McConnell said, "and especially the Central

Continued on Page A18

An Alabama Prosecutor Sets the Penalties and Fills the Coffers

By SHAILA DEWAN
and ANDREW W. LEHREN

DOTHAN, Ala. — It was a run-of-the-mill keg party in an open field, until one guest, Harvey Drayton Burch III, objected to paying for his beer. Witnesses said Mr. Burch fired a gun over the crowd and began spraying Mace. With partyers fleeing, Mr. Burch jumped into the back seat of a car as it drove away.

The driver had a name well known in Henry County: Douglas

NO MONEY, NO MERCY
Justice in the Wiregrass

A. Valeska II, the son of the local district attorney. When the car was stopped, a deputy found a loaded magazine and knife in Mr. Burch's pocket, a gun and pepper spray in a backpack, and a pink pill on the floorboard. After Mr. Burch admitted to firing his weapon, he was arrested. The district attorney arrived to take his son and two other passengers home.

Mr. Burch, then 28, was charged with gun and drug possession, but not with firing a weapon or spraying Mace. He did not face prosecution. Instead, District Attorney Douglas A. Valeska granted him pretrial diversion, an alternative to court that is usually reserved for nonviolent offenses. After Mr. Burch paid \$2,396 in fees and stayed out of trouble for two years, the case was dismissed in 2011.

The same year, Mr. Valeska gave the Henry County Sheriff's Office \$2,300 from his pretrial diversion fund to pay for scuba gear. The department's dive team was led by Lt. Troy Silva, the arresting officer in the Burch case. Lieutenant Silva said in an interview that the money was not related to the case and that Mr. Valeska routinely allocated diversion funds for police equipment.



WILLIAM WIDMER FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

For Jarvis Bracy (with his wife, Khadijah Ross), pretrial diversion was priced out of reach.

Diversion was created nationwide to spare first-time or low-risk defendants the harsh consequences of a criminal record and to give prosecutors more time to go after dangerous offenders. But things have played out differently in places like southeast Alabama's Wiregrass Country, where an investigation by The New York Times found that diversion resembles a dismissal-for-sale scheme, available only to those with money and, in some cases, favor.

Mr. Valeska has proved exceedingly adept at using diversion, generating more than \$1 million for his office in the last five years.

The money has helped him consolidate his singular power over the justice system in Houston and Henry Counties, where he has presided as the chief prosecutor for three decades.

Dothan, the seat of Houston County and, with 70,000 residents,

With Criminal Justice in One Man's Grip, Many Pay Dearly

the regional hub, can feel like it is caught in a Southern time warp, immune to change and defined by racial division. Dothan, where one in three residents is black, has never had a black mayor, police chief, circuit judge or school superintendent. Meetings of the city commission are held in a room adorned with 28 portraits of city leaders, all of them white men. An old photograph shows police officers, including the current chief, posing beside a Confederate flag.

Many black residents say they are at a significant disadvantage in the criminal justice system, complaining of nearly all-white juries and harsher sentences. Last

year, two-thirds of those arrested in Dothan were black.

In the 1990s, Mr. Valeska had a string of convictions overturned for illegally striking blacks from the jury pool — a practice critics say continues to this day. He referred to one black defendant as "the yard boy." He has never hired a black prosecutor.

"If you take Doug Valeska personally, I don't think he's racist — I don't agree with that," said the Rev. Kenneth Glasgow, a black ex-convict and longtime advocate for criminal justice reform. "But he represents and endorses and enforces and upholds a racist system."

Mr. Valeska declined repeated requests for an interview.

Though he is a prodigious user of diversion, he has shown little inclination toward its goals of mercy and rehabilitation. At 65, with a
Continued on Page A14

Chief of Exxon Is Trump's Pick For State Dept.

By MICHAEL D. SHEAR
and MAGGIE HABERMAN

WASHINGTON — President-elect Donald J. Trump settled Monday on Rex W. Tillerson, the chief executive of Exxon Mobil, to be his secretary of state, transition officials said. In naming him, the president-elect is dismissing bipartisan concerns that Mr. Tillerson, the globe-trotting leader of an energy giant, has a too-cozy relationship with Vladimir V. Putin, the president of Russia.

Mr. Trump planned to announce the selection on Tuesday morning, bringing to an end his public and chaotic deliberations over the nation's top diplomat — a process that at times veered from rewarding Rudolph W. Giuliani, one of his most loyal supporters, to musing about whether Mitt Romney, one of his most vicious critics, might be forgiven.

Instead, Mr. Trump has decided to risk what looks to be a bruising confirmation fight in the Senate.

In the past several days, Repub-

Continued on Page A19

No Deals for a Deal Maker

Donald J. Trump pledged that there would be no new deals by his real estate business while he was president. Page A20.



INTERNATIONAL A4-10

Challenge for Italian Populists

As the anti-establishment Five Star Movement, led by Beppe Grillo, above, gains in popularity, some members worry that it may be drifting away from its founding ethos. PAGE A4

SCIENCE D1-6

Obesity Presents a Challenge

Obesity and being overweight can't be treated as a single disease, researchers say, which makes treatment difficult and results wildly variable. PAGE D1

How to Choose the Perfect Gift

Researchers have come up with useful advice for gift giving, and it may sound too good to be true. Namely, you don't have to worry much because most people aren't hard to please. PAGE D1

NATIONAL A12-22

Inside the Deadly Oakland Fire

A visualization of the contributing factors that made the blaze at the Ghost Ship warehouse one of the worst structure fires in the United States in over a decade. PAGE A12

NEW YORK A25-29

Child Welfare Head Leaving

The leader of the city's Administration for Children's Services departed after several deaths had renewed concerns about vulnerable children. PAGE A25



Making Integration Work

The school district in Morristown, N.J., created for racial balance in 1971, has a "remarkable can-do attitude" and is a model of "diversity and togetherness," a report concluded. PAGE A25



ARTS C1-8

Jealousy and Lies in 'Othello'

Daniel Craig, above, is the Iago to David Oyelowo's Othello in a breathless interpretation of Shakespeare's tragedy. A review by Ben Brantley. PAGE C1

SPORTSTUESDAY B8-11

N.F.L. Concussion Settlement

The Supreme Court denied a request to review the agreement, meaning retired players with brain ailments can begin receiving up to \$5 million. PAGE B8

EDITORIAL, OP-ED A30-31

David Leonhardt

PAGE A31



0 354613 9

HARRY WINSTON
RARE JEWELS OF THE WORLD

#BrilliantlyInLove

800 988 4110
HARRYWINSTON.COM