

November 2012

Balkan war crimes

Nov. 16—A UN appeals court in The Hague, the Netherlands, overturns the war crimes convictions of 2 Croatian generals, Ante Gotovina and Mladen Markac, for a 1995 offensive that killed hundreds of Serb civilians and displaced 150,000. The pair return to a heroes' welcome in Zagreb hours after their acquittal. Serbian leaders criticize the verdict.

Nov. 29—A UN war crimes tribunal for a 2nd time acquits Ramush Haradinaj, former prime minister of Kosovo, on charges of torturing and killing Serb civilians during Kosovo's 1999 war for independence from Serbia. Two of his former lieutenants in the Kosovo Liberation Army are also acquitted.

European Union

Nov. 15—The EU statistics agency reports that the euro zone fell back into recession in the 3rd quarter of 2012, as combined gross domestic product contracted 0.1% from the previous quarter, after shrinking 0.2% in the 2nd quarter.

Israeli-Palestinian conflict

Nov. 10—Palestinian militants in the Gaza Strip fire a missile at an Israeli vehicle patrolling the border, wounding 4 Israeli troops. Israel responds with artillery and air strikes, killing 4 Palestinian civilians. Palestinians fire a barrage of more than 50 rockets at southern Israel the next day. Israel threatens severe retaliation against Hamas, the Islamist movement that controls Gaza, including a possible ground assault, which would be the 1st by Israel in Gaza since a 3-week offensive in 2008–09 that left 1,000 Palestinians dead.

Nov. 14—An Israeli air strike kills Hamas's military commander, Ahmed al-Jabari, as Israel sharply escalates its bombardment of Gaza. Egypt recalls its ambassador from Israel in protest of the escalation.

Nov. 21—Israel and Hamas agree to a cease-fire brokered by Egypt and the US, ending 8 days of heavy fighting that left more than 150 Palestinians and 5 Israelis dead. Earlier that day, a bomb exploded aboard a bus in Tel Aviv, but no one was killed. Israel had massed tanks and troops on the border, but they did not invade.

Nov. 29—The UN General Assembly votes, 138 to 9, with 41 abstentions, to recognize Palestine as a nonmember observer state, over the objections of Israel and the US. Mahmoud Abbas, the head of the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank, a rival of Hamas, had sought the vote.

Nov. 30—Israel says it will prepare for construction of new housing in a section of the West Bank adjacent to East Jerusalem, known as E1. The US has opposed settlement construction in E1, warning that it could derail a potential peace agreement because it would separate major Palestinian population areas in the West Bank from Jerusalem.

BANGLADESH

Nov. 24—More than 100 workers are killed in a fire at a garment factory outside Dhaka. Hundreds of workers in recent years have died in fires at Bangladeshi garment factories, many of which supply Western clothing labels.

BRAZIL

Nov. 12—The Supreme Court sentences José Dirceu de Oliveira e Silva, who served as chief of staff to former President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, to 10 years and 10 months in prison, after he is convicted of running a vote-buying operation.

CAMBODIA

Nov. 20—Barack Obama becomes the 1st US president to visit Cambodia. He attends an East Asian regional summit in Phnom Penh, the capital.

CHINA

Nov. 15—Xi Jinping formally succeeds Hu Jintao as general secretary of the Chinese Communist Party and chairman of the military. Xi, 59, and the other 6 members of the new Politburo Standing Committee, the top governing body, are unveiled at the end of the 18th Party Congress in Beijing. Hu's predecessor, Jiang Zemin, 86, reportedly exerts strong influence over the selection of the committee, which is reduced from 9 to 7 members.

Nov. 29—State news media report that Hainan Province authorities have authorized the navy to board and search foreign ships that "trespass" in areas of the South China Sea that China claims as its own. China's claims to most of the sea have led to disputes with Vietnam, the Philippines, and other rival claimants.

CONGO, DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF

Nov. 20—The March 23 Movement (M23) rebel group seizes the major eastern city of Goma. UN peacekeeping forces days earlier had launched helicopter air strikes against the M23 fighters in an effort to halt their advance and protect civilians in the area, but stand by as they enter the city, while Congolese troops flee. Congo officials accuse neighboring Rwanda of supporting the rebels.

EGYPT

Nov. 22—President Mohamed Morsi issues a decree claiming broad new powers for himself, including freedom from judicial oversight until a new constitution is ratified. Morsi also orders a retrial of former President Hosni Mubarak and other ex-officials accused of responsibility for the deaths of protesters during a 2011 uprising that led to Mubarak's ouster. Members of the secular opposition to Morsi's Islamist Muslim Brotherhood hold rallies over the next several days to protest the decree in Cairo's Tahrir Square, the epicenter of the 2011 uprising, clashing with police and Morsi's supporters.

Nov. 29—Islamists dominating a constituent assembly vote to approve a new constitution they have drafted, despite a walkout by secular and Coptic Christian delegates. Morsi says he will call a referendum on the charter.

GREECE

Nov. 7—The parliament votes to approve a new round of €13.5 billion (\$17 billion) in austerity measures. The EU and IMF demanded the budget cuts in return for more aid, despite Greece being caught in a deep recession that has lasted more than 5 years.

Nov. 26—Euro zone finance ministers and the IMF agree to release €43.7 billion in bailout loan installments for Greece. They stipulate that Greece's debt must be cut to about 124% of GDP by 2020, through measures including buybacks of government bonds at discounted prices.

INDIA

Nov. 18—Police in a district on the outskirts of Mumbai arrest a young woman, Shaheen Dhada, on hate-speech charges for

posting a comment on Facebook asking why businesses in the city had to shut down that day in observance of the death of Bal Thackeray, leader of far-right Hindu nationalist group Shiv Sena. They also arrest a friend of hers for “liking” the Facebook post. The women are sentenced to 14 days in prison.

Nov. 20—Ajmal Kasab, the only surviving Pakistani terrorist from a group of 10 that carried out attacks in Mumbai in 2008 that left more than 160 dead, is hanged. It is the 1st execution in India since 2004.

Nov. 29—After the Nov. 18 arrests of Facebook posters provoke free-speech protests, the charges are dropped and the government says the police will be directed not to arrest people for social-media commentary unless under orders of senior officials.

IRAN

Nov. 9—Defense Minister Ahmad Vahidi confirms US allegations that Iranian jet fighters fired at a US surveillance drone the previous week. Vahidi says the drone entered Iranian airspace over the Persian Gulf; US officials say it was in international airspace.

Nov. 16—International Atomic Energy Agency inspectors report that Iran has completed installation of centrifuges at its Fordo nuclear complex. The centrifuges could allow the government to increase production of enriched uranium, which could be used to build nuclear weapons.

ISRAEL

Nov. 11—After a Syrian shell lands across the border in an Israeli military outpost on the Golan Heights, Israeli forces fire a warning shot. The next day, another Syrian shell lands and Israeli tanks return fire, claiming a direct hit on a Syrian artillery unit. It is the 1st time Israel has fired into Syria since the 1973 Arab-Israeli war. The Syrian shelling was said to be stray fire from fighting between Syrian forces and rebels inside Syria.

JORDAN

Nov. 16—Thousands of protesters rally in Amman, the capital, calling for the ouster of King Abdullah II before they are dispersed by police. The latest protests, set off by a fuel price increase, have been the most direct challenge to the king's rule since the beginning of the Arab Spring revolts across the region in early 2011.

MALI

Nov. 11—At a summit of the Economic Community of West African States in Abuja, Nigeria, leaders agree to send a joint force of 3,300 troops into northern Mali to retake control from Islamist militias who seized power in the spring.

MEXICO

Nov. 14—The Senate gives final approval to a major labor reform bill that will make it easier for businesses to hire and fire workers, a measure supported both by outgoing President Felipe Calderón and by his successor Enrique Peña Nieto.

MYANMAR

Nov. 19—Obama becomes the 1st US president to visit Myanmar. He meets with President U Thein Sein, who has led a transition away from military rule over the past year. Thein Sein promises to review the cases of remaining political prisoners by the end of the year, act to stop violence against the Rohingya Muslim population, and allow international human rights groups more access to the country. Obama also visits pro-democracy leader Daw Aung San Suu Kyi at her home in Yangon, where she spent many years under house arrest.

PAKISTAN

Nov. 20—The Islamabad High Court dismisses blasphemy charges against a Christian girl, Rimsha Masih, 14, who was arrested in August, accused of burning a textbook used to teach the Koran to children. She had faced a potential death penalty. The girl's defenders argued that she should be exempt from the blasphemy law because she has Down syndrome. Human rights groups say the law has been used to discriminate against religious minorities.

RUSSIA

Nov. 6—President Vladimir Putin fires Defense Minister Anatoly Serdyukov, reportedly in connection with a corruption investigation.

SYRIA

Nov. 11—Leaders of Syrian opposition factions meeting in Doha, in the United Arab Emirates, sign an agreement to form a united organization. Such a step has been urged by the US and other nations that back the uprising against President Bashar al-Assad but have been reluctant to provide financial or military support to a divided opposition. Sheikh Ahmad Moaz al-Khatib, a former imam, is chosen as president of the new group, the National Coalition of Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces.

Nov. 12—Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states recognize the new coalition as Syria's legitimate representative. France does so the next day, followed by Turkey Nov. 15, and Britain Nov. 20.

UNITED STATES

Nov. 6—President Obama, a Democrat, wins reelection to a 2nd 4-year term, defeating former Massachusetts Gov. Mitt Romney, his Republican challenger. Obama wins 332 electoral votes, to Romney's 206, and 51% of the popular vote, to Romney's 47%.

Nov. 12—The International Energy Agency (IEA) projects that the US will become the world's largest oil producer by 2020, temporarily overtaking Saudi Arabia. It says the US will produce 11.1 million barrels of oil a day by 2020, up from the current 6.7 million barrels, and import 2 million barrels a day by 2035, down nearly 75 percent from the current figure. A boom in US oil and gas production has been driven by new techniques such as hydraulic fracturing, also known as fracking, and horizontal drilling, to reach energy deposits trapped in shale and other rock formations. However, the IEA warns that the heavy use of water in fracking could lead to increased water competition and costs that could impede its use in drilling. ■