

# Obama Defends Intel After Fatal Error

WASHINGTON (PRESS TV) – US President Barack Obama has defended the nation’s spying operations despite false intelligence that led to the death of an American and Italian hostage in Pakistan by CIA drone strikes.

During a speech on Friday at the Office of the Director of National Intelligence to mark its 10th anniversary, Obama praised the US Intelligence Community, calling it the most capable in the world.

“We all grieve when any innocent life is taken,” Obama told a couple of hundred intelligence officials gathered in an auditorium at the sprawling gray office building in Mclean, Virginia, just outside of

do,” he added.

The president also promised a review aimed at preventing future mistakes, a day after the White House revealed intelligence failure that caused the death of the two hostages.

American Warren Weinstein and Italian Giovanni Lo Porto were accidentally killed in January during a CIA drone strike against an al-Qaeda compound in Pakistan.

The intelligence that directed the drone strike turned out to have been tragically incorrect, US officials and lawmakers said Thursday.

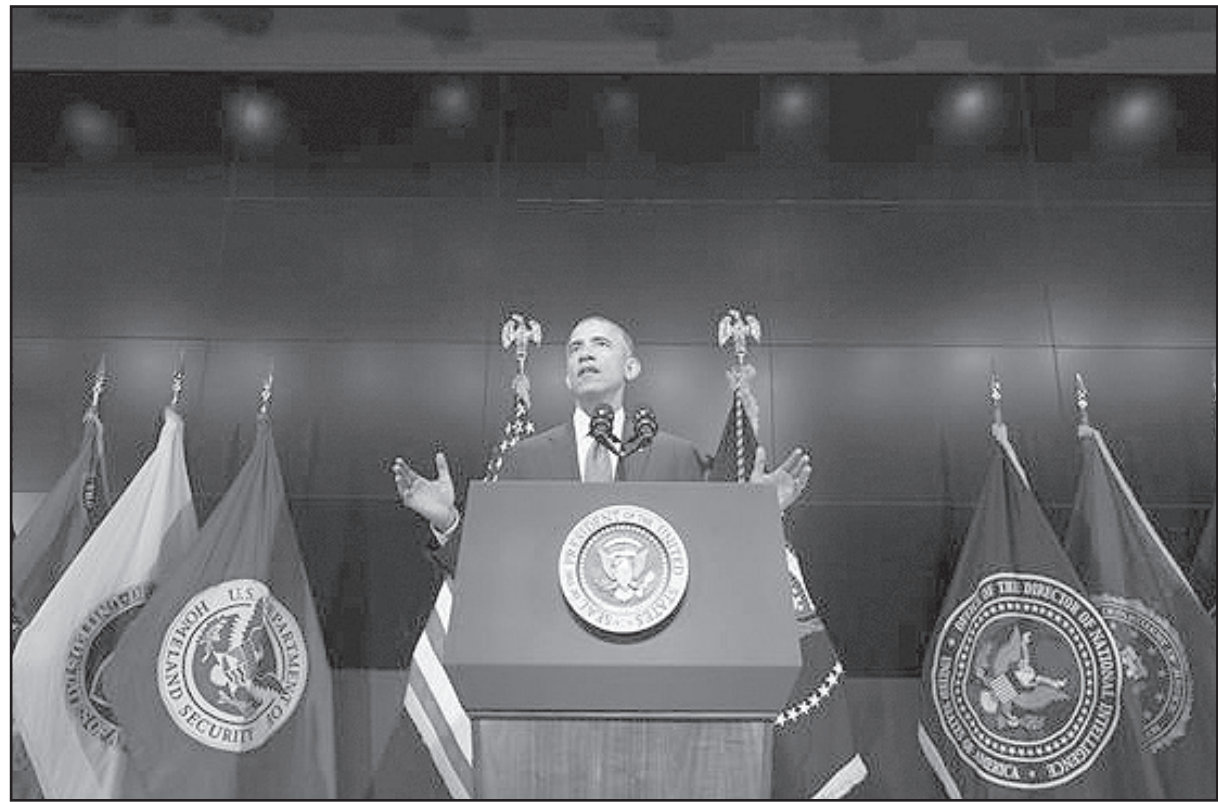
Obama, who has expanded the use of US drones, expressed his deep regrets Thursday and apologized on

ism strategy” which has provoked a strong backlash in the countries where drones have been used, from Pakistan to Yemen.

Critics say the incident highlights the troubling reality about the secret drone attacks that often result in civilian casualties because of the uncertainties about who is being targeted.

“These new disclosures raise troubling questions about the reliability of the intelligence that the government is using to justify drone strikes,” Jameel Jaffer, deputy legal director of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) said Thursday.

“In each of the operations ac-



US President Barack Obama

Washington.

“We don’t take this work lightly. And I know that each and every one of you understand the magnitude of what we do and the stakes involved and these aren’t abstractions and we’re not cavalier about what we

behalf of the US government for the death of 73-year-old Weinstein and 39-year-old Lo Porto.

Their deaths have created the biggest crisis yet for the Obama administration’s controversial program—a central part of US “counterterror-

knowledge today, the US quite literally didn’t know who it was killing,” he added.

Over 2,000 people have been killed in US drone strikes in Pakistan alone, according to official figures from Islamabad.

## UK Police Warn Public Against Attacks

LONDON (PRESS TV) – UK police have warned the public to remain vigilant during the London marathon and memorial events this weekend.

Scotland Yard has reviewed the security arrangements for events in the UK to mark the centenary of the First World War’s Gallipoli campaign and the 99th anniversary of Anzac Day, as well as the London marathon.

Scotland Yard’s Deputy Assistant Commissioner, Neil Basu, said: “Ahead of a number of major public events in the UK this weekend and in light of recent alleged plans to attack Anzac Day events and police officers overseas, we are reminding the public to be vigilant.”

The warning comes after Australian counter-terror police arrested five men in Melbourne in connection with an alleged plot to unleash Islamic State-inspired attacks against police at an event to mark Anzac Day, which commemorates all Australians and

New Zealanders who have served and died in war.

About 650,000 spectators are expected to line the streets of London for this year’s marathon, which winds its way past the capital’s major sights including Tower bridge, Big Ben and the houses of parliament.

ing British militants travelling to Iraq and Syria to learn terrorist “tradecraft”.

Fears of a terrorist attack on Britain’s streets heightened in the wake of the rise of ISIL, the extremist group that has taken over large swaths of Iraq and Syria and attracted thousands



Scotland Yard calls for public vigilance as security is reviewed for sporting event and anniversaries of Gallipoli campaign and Anzac Day.

The joint terrorism analysis centre raised the threat level last year against a backdrop of increasing concerns over hundreds of aspir-

of foreign militants to its cause, including more than 600 Britons, around half of whom have returned.

## Ukrainian Serviceman Killed in Rebel Attack

KIEV (Reuters) - One Ukrainian serviceman was killed and two were wounded in shelling attacks by pro-Russian separatists on Saturday near the port of Mariupol in Ukraine’s southeast, Kiev’s military said.

A military spokesman said rebels opened artillery fire on forces

the rebels.

Large quantities of heavy weapons with a caliber of more than 100 mm have been withdrawn by both sides under the Minsk agreements, brokered by the leaders of Ukraine, Russia, Germany and France in Belarus in February.

Both sides accuse the other of



A Ukrainian serviceman digs trenches on a beach in the port city of Mariupol on the Azov Sea, March 20, 2015.

from the government’s National Guard at Shyrokyne, a village to the east of Mariupol on the Sea of Azov, despite a ceasefire agreed in Minsk, Belarus, in mid-February.

“Today at 0625 hours, the adversary used 122 mm artillery. They are banned under the Minsk agreements,” spokesman Dmytro Gorbunov told 112 television channel, adding that a 42-year-old Kiev-born serviceman was killed as a result and two others were badly wounded.

The commander of the battalion which came under fire was separately quoted as saying the serviceman was killed when a medical vehicle taking him to hospital came under fire from

regularly violating the accord, however, and a monitoring mission from the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe says the ceasefire is fragile.

The Kiev military says rebels are keeping up pressure on Mariupol, a city of half a million and still controlled by the government, which lies strategically part-way between rebel-controlled eastern regions and Crimea which was annexed by Russia in March 2014.

More than 6,100 people have been killed in the conflict which erupted in the Russian-speaking east of Ukraine after Russia seized Crimea following the overthrow of a Moscow-backed president in Kiev.

## Gaps Remain in Probe of Baltimore Man’s Death in Police Custody

BALTIMORE (Reuters) - An investigation into the death of a black man in Baltimore police custody is still trying to figure out what happened, the police commissioner said on Friday as the city braced for a major protest over the incident.

Police Commissioner Anthony Batts said police would release surveillance camera photos involving the death of Freddie Gray, 25, who died on Sunday a week after being arrested. A preliminary autopsy report said he had suffered a spinal injury.

Gray’s death has sparked days of protests in the largely black city of about 620,000 people. More than 1,000 protesters are expected in Baltimore for a march from the site of his arrest to City Hall on Saturday, police said.

“We’re getting closer and the picture is getting sharper and sharper as we move forward,” Batts told a news conference, adding that “multiple gaps” still remained.

The incident was the latest in a string of deaths of black men at the hands of police, including in Ferguson, Missouri, and New York City, which have prompted waves of protest across the United States.

Gray and a second man fled when officers approached them in a high-crime area on April 12, police said. Gray was nabbed and arrested for carrying a switchblade knife.

Batts said Gray was put in a police van for transport to a police station and he was not buckled in at any time, as regulations required. Police also repeatedly failed to give him medical assistance, he said.

Deputy Commissioner Kevin Davis said the van stopped once to put Gray in leg restraints, followed by a second stop. “The facts of that interaction are under investigation,” he said.

The van stopped a third time to pick up a second suspect, who was put in the back of the vehicle with a metal barrier separating the men. A police witness has said Gray was talking then, Davis said.

“They pick him up off the floor and place him on the seat at that time. He says he needs a medic,” Davis said.

When the van arrived at the Western District police station, an ambulance was called and Gray was taken to a hospital.



RIGA (Reuters) - As the buses carrying European finance ministers left for a gala dinner in the Latvian capital on Friday night, one of the party hung back at the hotel and then wandered off alone into the dusk.

Greece’s Yanis Varoufakis had other dinner plans, he said, after a bruising first day of meetings in Riga that underlined his isolation as he tries to avert national bankruptcy.

While other ministers were feted by their entourages with food and warm clothing during the meeting in Riga, Varoufakis was seen alone at almost every turn, eschewing aides or any security detail.

“He is completely isolated,” a senior euro zone official told Reuters on condition of anonymity. “He didn’t even come to the dinner to represent his country,” the official said of the event where ministers, serenaded by a Latvian choir, ate salmon and sea bass.

At breakfast before the meeting, Varoufakis and European Central Bank President Mario Draghi avoided eye contact as they picked up food at the buffet, Reuters reporters observed.

The hardening of the mood against Varoufakis risks deepening the divide that Greece must bridge with its creditors if Athens is to avert default.

After three months of largely fruitless negotiations, euro zone ministers warned him on Friday that the radical leftist Greek government will get no more aid until it agrees a complete economic reform plan, before the end of June.

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DOHA (PRESS TV) – French construction giant Vinci faces allegations of using forced labor on building projects in Qatar, which is preparing to host the 2022 World Cup.

French prosecutor Catherine Denis said on Saturday that a preliminary investigation has been launched into the claim, which has been put forward by the non-governmental lobby group Sherpa.

The NGO has filed a claim in a French court against Vinci and its Qatari subsidiary QDVC for “forced labor,” “servitude” and “concealment.”

“The on-site investigations found the use by these companies of various threats to force vulnerable people into scandalous working and living conditions for a paltry salary,” Sherpa said.

The group added that the company has confiscated the workers’ passports and threatened them not to claim their right to better working conditions, housing, or seek to quit or change their employer.

The construction firm has dismissed all the allegations, filing a defamation claim in Paris against Sherpa in response.

Denis, meanwhile, said a wider query involving investigations in Qatar is possible to be subsequently launched if necessary.

Migrant workers account for nearly 75 percent of Qatar’s tiny population of nearly 2.2 million, but many of them have been employed under the so-called “kafalah” system, which stipulates that laborers cannot change jobs or leave Qatar without permission from their sponsor.

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WASHINGTON (Reuters) - An Indiana university gave the all clear early on Saturday after being locked down for several hours over a reported armed person, possibly with explosives, near the school’s administration building, officials said.

Manchester University spokeswoman Anne Gregory said in an email that police had swept all the buildings and residence halls on its North Manchester campus and found no credible threats or injuries.

The university had advised students at the campus, 36 miles (58 km) west of Fort Wayne, to shelter in place late on Friday night. “Barricade yourself in a room, stay away from windows. Be quiet, silence cell. Wait for police or All-Clear,” the school said in a campus alert.

Gregory said the administration building on the 120-acre campus of the liberal arts school, which has some 1,500 students, was locked and usually unoccupied so late at night.