

PENTAGON CHIEF SEEKS BETTER USE OF US FORCES IN AFGHANISTAN

BAGRAM AIR FIELD, AFGHANISTAN: US Defense Secretary Ash Carter said yesterday that the decision to give US commanders more authority to work with Afghan troops and strike the Taliban will maximize the use and effectiveness of American forces in Afghanistan.

Carter is in Afghanistan to meet with US commanders in the wake of a pledge by NATO allies to keep troop levels stable as they battle a resilient Taliban.

Speaking during a press conference with Afghan President Ashraf Ghani, Carter also said that progress by the Afghan government on economic and anti-corruption reforms "is central" to the continued international support for the country.

Ghani said his government is working to remove corruption and also on the economic reforms. This is Carter's second stop in a war zone in as many days, part of a weeklong trip that has underscored America's growing commitment to two wars that President Barack Obama inherited but has not been able to end.

Carter meetings

Carter was scheduled to meet with both Ghani and chief executive officer Abdullah Abdullah, as well as his top US commander in Afghanistan, Army Gen. John W. Nicholson. On Monday in Iraq, Carter announced that the US would be sending 560 additional troops there in the coming days and weeks.

Obama announced last week that he would keep 8,400 US troops in Afghanistan after this year, rather than cut their numbers to 5,500 as he once planned. In addition to taking part in the NATO advisory-and-assist mission, the US

has special operations forces in the country that conduct counterterrorism missions.

The planned force levels allow NATO allies to remain in regional hubs around Afghanistan, with Germany in the north, Italy in the west, Turkey in the capital of Kabul and the United States in the east and south.

Earlier plans to consolidate forces in Kabul and Bagram were scrapped amid resurgent Taliban fighting and the growing presence of Islamic State militant, including many that simply switched allegiance from one insurgent group to another.

US Army Gen. Curtis Scaparrotti, the top NATO commander, told reporters at the NATO meeting that the Afghan mission is key to global security. "We know that there are al-Qaida and (Islamic State) components in Afghanistan," he said. "If we fail there we will certainly see that impact in our global counterterrorism campaign that we're executing. It will make it harder."

Obama came into office pledging to extract America from the nearly 15 year conflict. But with the Taliban gaining ground and it becoming clear that Afghan forces still needed US and coalition support, he urged his fellow NATO leaders in Warsaw to expand their support for the war against the Taliban.

The US has pledged to provide \$3.5 billion annually to fund Afghan forces, and the government in Kabul is expected to contribute as much as \$500 million. Allies would provide the remaining \$1 billion. The funding would maintain a total of 352,000 Afghan Army troops and police officers. —AP



DALLAS: Candles and flowers placed in honor of slain Dallas police officers sit in front of a makeshift memorial in honor of the slain Dallas police officers in front of police headquarters on Saturday. —AP

OBAMA TO OFFER DALLAS 'SOME MEASURE OF COMFORT'

PRESIDENT TO BRIDGE ISSUES WITH TRIBUTE TO FALLEN FIVE

WASHINGTON: President Barack Obama will be in a different city but still in an all-too-familiar place when he leads the nation in honoring more lives cut short by gun violence, this time by a black man who said he wanted revenge for the killings of blacks by police.

Obama will try to help grief-stricken Dallas begin to heal less than a week after five of its police officers were slain and others wounded by an Army veteran-turned-sniper. Obama has denounced the violence as a "vicious, calculated and despicable attack on law enforcement" by a "demented" individual.

Just a few weeks ago, Obama spent hours in Orlando, Florida, consoling the loved ones of 49 people who were killed in a shooting rampage at a nightclub.

In what has become an unwelcome but regular duty of his presidency, Obama was preparing to address an interfaith memorial service in Dallas for the officers. They were killed last Thursday while standing guard as hundreds of people peacefully protested the

police killings of black men in Louisiana and Minnesota earlier in the week.

The attack

The attack ended with the gunman, Micah Johnson, 25, blown up by a bomb delivered by a police robot. The black Army veteran portrayed the attack on the white officers as payback for the fatal police shootings of black men in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, and suburban Minneapolis. Portions of both shootings were videotaped and broadcast nationwide, leading to fresh outrage, protests and scores of arrests. The killings also put the country on edge, heightened racial tensions and pushed the issue of the use of deadly force against black males by white police officers to the forefront.

Obama will seek to bridge those issues with his tribute to the fallen five, which include a former Army Ranger, a Navy veteran and a newlywed starting a second family.

The president, joined by his wife, Michelle, and Vice President Joe Biden and his wife, Jill, will also meet privately with the families of the

slain officers as well as the injured to convey the support and gratitude for their service and sacrifice that has been expressed around the country. At least nine other officers and two civilians were injured in the attack.

Former President George W. Bush and his wife, Laura, will also attend. Bush, who settled in Dallas after leaving office in 2009, will also speak at the service.

White House spokesman Josh Earnest said Obama recognizes that people across the US join Dallas in grieving over the recent, troubling events. "The president is hoping to offer some measure of comfort," Earnest said.

Obama and Biden met Monday with police chiefs, sheriffs and rank-and-file officers to discuss adopting a series of reforms that were drafted by a White House task force on policing, as well as how to restore trust between police officers and the communities they are sworn to serve and protect.

Obama planned a meeting for today with a broader group that includes law enforcement, activists and academics. —AP



KABUL: US Secretary of Defense Ash Carter, left, speaks as Afghan President Ashraf Ghani, right, listens during press conference at the Presidential Palace yesterday. —AP

INMATE WHO KILLED 2 AT COURTHOUSE WAS HANDCUFFED

ST. JOSEPH, MICHIGAN: A jail inmate was handcuffed when he wrested a gun from a sheriff's deputy and killed two bailiffs as he was being escorted from a holding cell to the courthouse at a southwestern Michigan courthouse, a sheriff said yesterday.

Berrien County Sheriff Paul Bailey said he had wrong information Monday night when he told reporters that Larry Darnell Gordon was not restrained during his deadly escape attempt in St. Joseph, about 100 miles northeast of Chicago. "After further investigation from the crime

known them for over 30 years. It's a sad day," Bailey said Monday. Bailey said Gordon took hostages for a short period before trying to leave through another door. The inmate then was fatally shot "by two other bailiffs who came to render aid, along with several other officers," Bailey said. "He was trying to escape," the sheriff said. Zangaro was head of court security. He retired from the Michigan State

Police as commander of the Bridgman Post. Kienzle retired as a sergeant in the Benton Township police department after serving in the US Army. In 2011, Zangaro told The Herald-Palladium newspaper that security staff had a "ton of experience," more than many police departments.

"Probably 90 percent of the people who are here don't want to be," he said of people with business in the courthouse. "They have either a criminal issue, a civil issue or a family issue, and those become very emotionally charged sometimes."

The courthouse was closed yesterday but is expected to reopen today. Gordon's ex-wife, Jessica Gordon, told WOOD-TV and the Detroit Free Press that he likely was trying to escape to see his family. She added that he was "not a monster," but "an amazing man that got mixed up with the wrong people."

Jessica Gordon said they divorced earlier this year but he remained close with his 6-year-old daughter. His ex-wife said she spoke with him Sunday and had no indication he was planning an attack. Gov. Rick Snyder cut short a visit to Midland and traveled across the state to St. Joseph - a city of about 8,300 people - to meet with investigators and victims' families.

Snyder called it a "terrible day in a wonderful community. ... This is a particularly tough time for law enforcement. So I ask that everyone reach out and try to be as supportive of law enforcement across the state and across the country as possible in a difficult case like this."

Marcus Muhammad, mayor of nearby Benton Harbor, said "together, we can pull through it and hopefully come out stronger." —AP



MICHIGAN: This undated photo provided by the Michigan Department of Corrections shows Larry Darnell Gordon. —AP

scene techs, the suspect in this incident was handcuffed in the front," Bailey said.

Bailey said a fight broke out in a non-public area of the courthouse Monday afternoon, giving Gordon, 44, the opportunity to disarm Deputy James Atterberry Jr. He provided no information on how that happened except to say that "it's not an easy thing to do."

Sheriff's comments

People scrambled for cover after Gordon, who was locked up on several felony charges, shot Atterberry, then killed Joseph Zangaro, 61, and Ronald Kienzle, 63, both retired police officers. He also shot a woman in the arm, the sheriff said.

"Our hearts are torn apart. ... I have

SANDERS ENDORSES CLINTON FOR WHITE HOUSE IN SHOW OF PARTY UNITY

SET TO JOIN ON CAMPAIGN TRAIL

PORTSMOUTH, NEW HAMPSHIRE: Democrat Bernie Sanders endorsed former rival Hillary Clinton for president in a show of party unity yesterday, saying she was the best candidate to fix the country's problems and beat Republican Donald Trump in the Nov. 8 election.

With Clinton nodding in agreement beside him, Sanders put their bitter primary campaign behind them and said Clinton would take up the fight to ease economic inequality, make college more affordable and expand healthcare coverage for all Americans.

"This campaign is about the needs of the American people and addressing the very serious crises that we face, and there is no doubt in my mind that, as we head into November, Hillary Clinton is far and away the best candidate to do that," he told a raucous crowd in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, that included plenty of vocal Sanders supporters.

Sanders intent

"I intend to do everything I can to make certain she will be the next president of the United States," the US senator from Vermont said. His endorsement, coming five weeks after Clinton became the presumptive Democratic presidential nominee, brought the most prominent holdout in the party's liberal wing into Clinton's camp. Sanders threw his support to Clinton less than two weeks before the Democratic National Convention in Philadelphia, where she is expected to be formally nominated.

"I can't help but reflect on how much more enjoyable this election will be now that we are on the same side," Clinton said of Sanders. "Thank you

Bernie for your endorsement, but more than that, thank you for your lifetime of fighting injustice."

In a statement, the Trump campaign said Sanders was now officially part of the rigged system he had criticized during the long primary battle with Clinton. "Bernie's endorsement becomes Exhibit A in our rigged system the Democrat Party is disenfranchising its voters to benefit the select and privileged few," said Stephen Miller, a senior policy adviser to Trump.

Clinton hopes the joint appearance

work to do. "I am absolutely certain I will not vote for Hillary Clinton," said Gale Bailey, a Sanders supporter and an unemployed graphic designer from Rochester, New Hampshire, who attended the rally in a Sanders T-shirt. "She's a crook, and I'm not going to vote for a crook," Bailey said, adding that she would write in Sanders' name on the November ballot.

Sanders victories on platform

The appearance in Portsmouth concluded weeks of negotiations between

include an array of liberal policy positions in the Democratic platform, which a committee approved on Saturday.

Sanders did not win all of his policy fights, most notably failing to win support for blocking a vote in Congress on the Trans-Pacific Partnership trade deal.

But he told the rally in Portsmouth that "our job now is to see that platform implemented by a Democratically controlled Senate, a Democratically controlled House and a Hillary Clinton presidency - and I am going to do everything I can to make that happen."

Top Democrats, including President Barack Obama and Senator Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts, a favorite of the party's liberal wing, have already announced their support for Clinton, leaving Sanders at risk of being left behind in the Democratic battle against Trump.

"I think all signs point to the fact that we're going to have a very united party going into Philadelphia," Clinton campaign spokesman Brian Fallon said on CNN earlier on Tuesday, "and when you compare it to the Republicans, we're going to be miles ahead of them."

Trump has struggled to unify the Republican Party after alienating many establishment figures with his stances on immigration, Muslims and women. A number of prominent Republicans are skipping the party's convention in Cleveland next week.

In another sign of the Democrats' growing unity, two prominent liberal groups that had backed Sanders, the Communications Workers of America labor union and the Congressional Progressive Caucus PAC, announced their support for Clinton on Monday. —Reuters



ALBANY, NEW YORK: Bernie Sanders, I-Vt. Speaks. —AP

will help her win over Sanders supporters, some of whom carried Sanders signs into the rally and frequently drowned out her backers. In recent Reuters/Ipsos polling, only about 40 percent of Sanders backers said they would back Clinton, and the crowd at Tuesday's rally made it clear she still had

the two camps as Sanders pressed for concessions from Clinton on his liberal policy agenda.

It came after Clinton last week adopted elements of Sanders' plans for free in-state college tuition and expanded affordable healthcare coverage. Sanders also successfully pushed to

NORTH CAROLINA POLICE OFFICER CHARGED WITH ASSAULTING WOMEN

GARNER, NORTH CAROLINA: A police officer in North Carolina has been placed on administrative leave after being arrested and charged with attacking two women.

Several local media outlets reported that 26-year-old Silvestre Mendoza, an officer with

the force in Garner, was arrested by Johnston County sheriff's deputies Sunday and charged with two counts of assault on a female.

An arrest warrant says Mendoza was accused of hitting a woman Friday. The warrant says he is charged with biting another

woman Saturday. The reports say Mendoza on Monday declined to talk about the charges.

He says he does not yet have an attorney. Garner police say Mendoza was hired March 21 and was assigned to the patrol division. —AP