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# Miami Herald

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H3

## THEWEEKHEAD IN THE KNOW

MONDAY

### BUSINESS MONDAY

Already an international air-transportation hub, South Florida is also emerging as a leader in flight training.

### MEDAL OF HONOR

Sgt. Ty Carter is honored at the White House for his heroism in Afghanistan.

### U.S. OPEN

The final Grand Slam in the annual tennis calendar, and the premier hard-court tennis tournament, opens in Flushing Meadows, N.Y.

TUESDAY

### EUROPE'S ECONOMY

Germany's Ifo Institute releases its monthly index of business confidence, a closely watched indicator for Europe's biggest economy.

WEDNESDAY

### 'I HAVE A DREAM'

President Barack Obama speaks on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial at a Let Freedom Ring event commemorating the 50th anniversary of Martin Luther King Jr.'s historic "I Have a Dream" speech.

### HOUSING ACTIVITY

The National Association of Realtors releases the Pending Home Sales Index, a leading indicator of housing activity that measures housing-contract activity based on signed real-estate contracts.

THURSDAY

### DOLPHINS END PRESEASON

The Miami Dolphins host the New Orleans Saints at Sun Life Stadium in what will be the team's final preseason game.

FRIDAY

### ONE DIRECTION

The popular British boy band's documentary, 'This is Us,' hits theaters. The film gives fans a behind-the-scenes look at their sold-out world tour.

SATURDAY

### PRINCESS DIES

Sixteen years ago Saturday, Diana, Princess of Wales, and her companion, Dodi Fayed, died in a car crash in Paris.

SUNDAY

### NEW WTO LEADER

Brazilian Roberto Azevêdo becomes the first Latin American to head the World Trade Organization, replacing Pascal Lamy of France.

## ENVIRONMENT

# Keys drone to buzz skeeters

Officials will test a new weapon against mosquitoes Monday. But the drone will just look for breeding areas; it won't blast the flying pests out of the air.

BY CURTIS MORGAN cmorgan@MiamiHerald.com

The drone, a powerful but controversial weapon against terrorism, is about to take on a new and seemingly inexhaustible enemy: the black salt marsh

mosquito. Seeking a high-tech edge in the daily battle to beat back the swarms, the Florida Keys Mosquito Control District on Monday will begin testing a next-generation drone developed by a small Gainesville robotics company.

The drone, about half the size of the ospreys commonly seen dive-bombing mullet in the

Keys, won't be equipped to spray or blast bugs. Instead, it will be rigged with a thermal camera designed to survey difficult-to-reach mangrove jungles that are the breeding grounds for the marsh mosquito, the most prolific biter in the island chain.

If the bird-size eye in the sky can accurately detect shallow pools where mosquitoes morph from tiny larval worms to buzzing bloodsuckers in just days, it could save mosquito fighters time,

• TURN TO DRONE, 2A



## EYE IN THE SKY:

The 2.6-pound, camera-equipped Maveric, developed by Prioria Robotics of Gainesville, can be launched by hand and fly for 70 minutes on battery power.

PRIORIA ROBOTICS

## CALIFORNIA

# A HELL ON EARTH



ELIAS FUNEZ/AP

Big Bear firefighter Jon Curtis keeps a close eye on a 'slop-over' fire that jumped a highway near the Stanislaus National Forest. Hundreds of firefighters were deployed Sunday to protect Tuolumne City and other communities in the path of the Rim Fire raging in California. The U.S. Forest Service says about 4,500 structures are threatened by the Rim Fire. **Story, 3A.**

## POLITIFACT FLORIDA

# Is marijuana less harmful than alcohol?

Pot could be the new beer, an ad argues. PolitiFact checks out the claim.

BY ROCHELLE KOFF Herald/Times Tallahassee Bureau

Just as fans were filing in to the Brickyard 400 NASCAR race last month in Indianapolis, a big screen by the entrance displayed a pro-marijuana ad with the headline: "A new beer?"

"If you're an adult who

enjoys a good beer," the ad said, "there's a similar product you might want to know about, one without all the calories and serious health problems. Less toxic so it doesn't cause hangovers or overdose deaths. And it's not linked to violence or reckless behavior. Marijuana



na. Less harmful than alcohol and time to treat it that way."

The ad is interesting in the context of the effort in Florida to get a proposed medical-marijuana constitutional amendment onto the 2014 ballot. People United for Medical Marijuana has col-

lected enough voter signatures to trigger a Florida Supreme Court review of the proposed amendment's language.

So is marijuana, in fact, "less toxic" than alcohol? "I don't see how this could be a more open-and-

• TURN TO POLITIFACT, 4A

PolitiFact.com/florida Watch the pro-pot advertisement

## SYRIA

# Obama appears to weigh military response

Even as Syrian leader Bashar Assad agreed to an inspection of an alleged chemical attack site, U.S. officials said it was too little too late.

BY HANNAH ALLAM, JAMES ROSEN AND JONATHAN LANDAY McClatchy Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON — U.S. officials on Sunday called Syria's decision to allow a United Nations team to investigate the site of a purported chemical attack "too late to be credible," signaling that the Obama administration was leaning toward a military intervention in the 2-year-old civil war.

But any strike against Syrian President Bashar Assad's regime would occur over the misgivings of a majority of Americans, according to a new poll, and with only limited support from Congress.

The fallout from such action includes likely retaliation from Iran, Russia and the Lebanese militant group Hezbollah — Assad's three chief foreign patrons — and could draw the United States deeply into a new Middle East conflict after years of entanglement in Iraq and Afghanistan.

However, many foreign policy analysts argue that after a Syrian death toll exceeding 100,000, President Barack Obama has a moral imperative to step in now because of the escalation from the regime's apparent

• TURN TO SYRIA, 2A

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Comics.....6B People.....6A  
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Lottery.....2B Television.....5B

110th year, No. 346 ©2013



## ENVIRONMENT

# Drone a new weapon in skeeter war?

• DRONE, FROM 1A

effort and money, said Michael Doyle, the district's executive director.

"Our people on the ground have to walk an hour to a marsh and find out what's there," he said. "It's hard to cover all those places at once. If something like this could allow them to map where the water is, we could move a lot more quickly."

## MORE AND MORE USES

Whether or not the drone proves to be an effective mosquito-hunter, the pioneering test shows how unmanned aerial vehicles, or UAVs, are quickly evolving. Drones have revolutionized warfare and have been adopted by law enforcement, raising muddy political and privacy questions that are still being sorted out. But they also are being employed for an increasing array of commercial and research uses.

They have helped track poachers in Africa, monitor wildfires in California and capture gases spewing from a volcano in Costa Rica. In coming years, researchers at the University of Florida hope to be able to dispatch squadrons of drones no bigger than paper airplanes to gather data from hurricanes, ice shelves or other extreme locations where manned aircraft can be at risk.

"I would have laughed two years ago if you would have told me this could help with mosquito control," said Derek Lyons, vice president of sales for Prioria Robotics, a company founded by UF engineering and business students, that builds the Maveric drone being tested in the Keys.

"You put it in people's hands and it becomes like the iPhone," he said. "You have no idea what the applications are going to be once you get it there."

In the Keys, the potential application is to help the largest and most challenging mosquito-control operation in the state.

Marsh mosquitoes are not public-health threats like *Aedes aegypti* — a carrier of dengue fever that readily breeds in developed areas — but they are the most common annoyance,



CONDOR AERIAL/REUTERS

**AERIAL SWAMP BUGGY:** The Prioria Robotics Maveric drone, with a wingspan of 2 1/2 feet, will be tested Monday in the search for mosquito-breeding areas that are difficult for human skeeter hunters to find.

fast and furious breeders that erupt with every rainstorm or tide change that floods mangrove thickets.

The key to controlling them, Doyle said, is directing the district's helicopters to hit breeding areas with bacteria granules that kill developing larva before they take wing.

## SPRAYING LIMITS

Doyle estimated the tactic eliminates about 80 percent of marsh mosquitoes. Those that escape are controlled by spraying, but with increasing restrictions to protect vanishing tropical butterflies, areas for that option are shrinking, he said.

"The noose is kind of tightening in terms of our ability to spray for adults," he said. "We have to improve the accuracy of killing them at the larval stage."

Doyle said the idea of trying a drone came from Patrick Kuhn, a district mechanic and remote-control plane enthusiast who had read about the increasingly smart and versatile machines.

The district contacted Condor Aerial, a North Carolina-based firm that handles commercial sales of the

*'You put it in people's hands and it becomes like the iPhone. You have no idea what the applications are going to be once you get it there.'*

— Derek Lyons, vice president of sales for Prioria Robotics, speaking about the potential uses of drones

Maveric, a camera-carrying drone originally built for the military that Prioria says has been used by SEAL teams overseas for scouting and surveillance.

The battery-powered drone weighs 2.6 pounds and has a wingspan of just over 2 1/2 feet. It can easily be launched by hand like a paper airplane or, thanks to wings made of flexible metal fabric, shot from a six-inch-diameter carrying tube. The drone can fly for as long as 70 minutes in a six-mile diameter, cruising at about 30 mph, with its rotating camera streaming live video to a laptop computer.

## PRICEY AS A PORSCHE

It looks like it would make one cool toy — but the microprocessors, guidance systems and exotic materials add up to a \$65,000 price tag, roughly the same as a

2013 Porsche Cayman S.

Fred Culbertson, Condor's chief executive officer, said a drone is a bargain compared to the cost of running and maintaining a full-size airplane, and should be well-suited to the needs of mosquito control.

"They can put it on their back, walk into the mangrove, get it into the sky, see where the water pools are and walk right to them," said Culbertson, who will pilot test flights that start Monday at Marathon Airport. "You are talking about a lot less manpower, a lot less expense for flying and a small team to do the job."

Doyle stressed that the district had not yet decided on buying a drone. He questions whether the infrared cameras, which detect temperature variations, will be able to differentiate pools only a few inches deep from surrounding soggy soils.

Culbertson acknowledged that mosquito hunting will be "a learning experience" on both sides. "But we feel that once we get down and work with them for a couple of days, we can probably tweak things to make it work."

The Federal Aviation Administration is still developing rules for the increasing array of unmanned aircraft systems. For safety's sake, Lyons said, drones fly below 400 feet — the same ceiling applied to hobbyists with remote-control airplanes. They also are not allowed over heavily populated areas.

Laptop pilots must undergo training and receive certification before launching drones. But the Maveric, Culbertson said, also has a sophisticated guidance system that allows it to "sense and avoid" objects and fly on its own in the event of signal loss.

After 10 minutes, the "autonomous" system returns it to the place it was launched, Culbertson said. It also can be programmed with GPS coordinates to fly specific routes. And in the event of a crash, he said, it wouldn't do much damage.

"It might put a dent in a car," he said. "It's a mix of Kevlar and carbon fibers. It's a pretty tough little bird."

For Prioria and Condor, the test is an opportunity to find a potentially promising new market and improve the image of drones.

## BEYOND COMBAT

"The public has such a negative connotation toward the word," said Culbertson. "When they hear drone, they think Afghanistan. They think high-altitude flights with weapons. That's not what we do."

While military and law enforcement remain the biggest buyers, the drone market is broadening. Some of it is security-related. He said he has fielded inquiries from port managers who want to look at ships before they dock, and from Haiti, India and other countries about using them for border patrols, and also from search-and-rescue agencies.

There also is increasing interest in "eco-drones." A survey earlier this year by the United Nations Environment Program published in the journal Environmental Development found an expanding use of drones in science and conservation use worldwide.

Police in Brazil purchased 14 to monitor illegal logging in the shrinking Amazon jungle, along with poaching and illegal mining. The World Wildlife Fund employed drones to track poachers in Africa and Asia. They have been used to map the Indonesian rain forest and erosion along a dangerously weak bank of the Missouri River in South Dakota. Early this year, NASA flew a large drone into the sulphur plume from a Costa Rican volcano to gather data that could help develop early-warning detection systems.

During testing in the Keys on Monday, federal wildlife managers will be on hand to see whether a drone might help monitor nesting birds.

As for privacy concerns, Doyle stressed that if drones are used, they would buzz only over uninhabitable swamp areas and mangrove islands. "To be honest, we're so mosquito-centric we aren't even thinking of that," he said.

## SYRIA

# U.S., allies consult on responses to latest Syrian deaths

• SYRIA, FROM 1A

use of chemical weapons in defiance of his warning that this would cross a "red line."

Statements from the administration over the weekend suggested that Obama's apparent reluctance to wade into the bloody crisis was easing, though there were no details on a course of action as U.S. officials continued consultations with European and Arab allies.

Obama appeared to be shoring up international support for action, speaking with a second ally in as many days, French President Francois Hollande. The White House said the two discussed "possible responses by the international community," and agreed to stay in touch.

Speaking Sunday in Malaysia, Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel reiterated that he had prepared "options for all contingencies" at Obama's request.

"We are prepared to exercise whatever option if he decides to employ one of those options," Hagel said.

U.S. officials have said repeatedly that Syria should allow U.N. inspectors into Ghouta, the eastern suburb of Damascus where hundreds were killed last week in a suspected chemical attack, if it didn't have anything to hide.

The Syrian government, via the state news agency SANA, said that it would allow the foreign inspectors into Ghouta after reaching an agreement with the U.N. that took effect "immediate-

ly." The report said Syria was ready "to cooperate with the U.N. investigators to expose the false allegations of the terrorist groups accusing the Syrian forces of using chemical weapons."

A senior U.S. administration official, speaking on condition of anonymity, dismissed Syria's "belated decision," saying that the regime obfuscated for so long that now "the evidence available has been significantly corrupted as a result of the regime's persistent shelling and other intentional actions over the last five days."

"There is very little doubt at this point that a chemical weapon was used by the Syrian regime in this incident," the official said, citing the large number of casualties, victims' symptoms, eyewitness accounts and the intelligence assessments of the U.S. and its allies.

Syria's agreement to an inspection seems to be aimed at buying time, said Salman Shaikh, director of the Brookings Doha Center, a research institute in Qatar. It remained unclear whether the U.N. team would be allowed to go to Ghouta because there was no agreement on a date and time for the visit, he said.

Chemical weapons policy expert Jean Pascal Zanders warned that any legitimate investigation would not be quick.

He noted that beyond getting experts on the ground, investigators would have to collect samples from soil, ammunition fragments and even from victims. After



HASSAN AMMAR/AP

**STRIFE CONTINUES:** A column of smoke rises after heavy shelling in the Jobar neighborhood, east of Damascus, on Sunday.

collection, the samples would have to be transported and studied in certified laboratories in three different nations.

If confirmed, the Aug. 22

attack in Ghouta would be the biggest chemical weapons incident so far. The administration previously had assessed that the regime had used such arms only on a

much smaller scale, and it did not respond forcefully. The number of dead remained undetermined Sunday. The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, generally considered the most authoritative chronicler of casualties in the war-torn country, said it had confirmed that at least 322 people had died in the attacks, including at least 90 rebel fighters, 86 women and 54 children.

Its director, Rami Abdul-Rahman, said he expected the final tally to be much higher.

The images of dead and dying Syrians do not appear to have changed the American public's opposition to a U.S. military intervention, according to the findings released Sunday from a Reuters/Ipsos poll conducted Aug. 19-23.

About 60 percent of Americans said that Obama should not intervene in Syria's civil war, while just 9 percent favored action, according to the survey. More Americans would support U.S. intervention if the use of chemical weapons were to be confirmed — with 25 percent in favor, 46 percent opposed — but that is actually a decline since Aug. 13, when a Reuters/Ipsos poll asked the same question and got responses of 30.2 percent in support of intervention to 41.6 percent.

In Congress, a prominent Republican and an influential Democrat sparred over whether Obama should be able to order military action without congressional authorization.

Sen. Bob Corker of Tennessee, the senior Republican on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, said he believes the Syrian government launched the chemical attacks.

"I think there are indications this is real," Corker told *Fox News Sunday*. "This was not contrived... This is the time for us to do this. I hope we will do it soon."

Corker said Obama should wait until Congress returns to Washington in two weeks and then seek lawmakers' authorization for possible military responses.

Rep. Eliot Engel of New York, senior Democrat on the House Foreign Affairs Committee, said the United States might not be able to wait until Congress reconvenes, and that the president should be able to act without first obtaining its permission.

"I think we have to act rather quickly," Engel said. "I think the horrific killings of people, murdering his own people, he's been doing it for a while now, but obviously the gas that was used to kill his own people. I think we have to respond... in conjunction with our NATO allies."

Engel said he did not believe Obama needs congressional authorization for the initial U.S. response.

*Lesley Clark contributed from Washington, Matt Schofield from Berlin and special correspondent Mitchell Prothero from Beirut.*