



A Day (and Month, and Year) They Won't Forget
A bride and groom on the subway. The bride, Amanda, and the groom, Michael, are smiling after their wedding in Manhattan on 12/12/12.

Fed Ties Rates To Joblessness; 6.5% Is Target

By **BRYAN BURROUGHS**

WASHINGTON — The Federal Reserve made it plain on Wednesday that joblessness had become the primary focus, and meaning that it planned to continue expanding interest rates as long as the unemployment rate remained above 6.5 percent. It was the first time the nation's central bank had published such a specific economic objective, underscoring the depth of its concern about the persistence of what the Fed chairman, Ben S. Bernanke, called "a world of less-than-ambitious potential."

To help reduce unemployment, the Fed said it would also continue monthly purchases of \$40 billion in Treasury securities and mortgage-backed securities until job market conditions improved, extending a policy announced in September.

But the Fed reduced new economic projections showing that the rate of sector officials did not expect to reach the goal of 6.5 percent unemployment until the economy's recovery conditions of early 2014 and not moving to expand its economic stimulus campaign.

At a news conference after a two-hour meeting of the bank's top policy committee, Mr. Bernanke suggested that the Fed was approaching the limits of its

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A Halfway House Built on Exaggerated Claims

By **SARAH BRIDGE**

Leading an operator for a major halfway house in Brooklyn, the federal government awarded a \$10 million contract to a nonprofit group with a growing name, Community First Services, and expensive credentials.

On its Web site and in its bids for contracts, Community First presented the extensive experience doing work for government agencies, including New York City's Department of Juvenile Justice and the federal Department of Health and Human Services.

But none of those claims are true, an investigation by The New York Times showed.

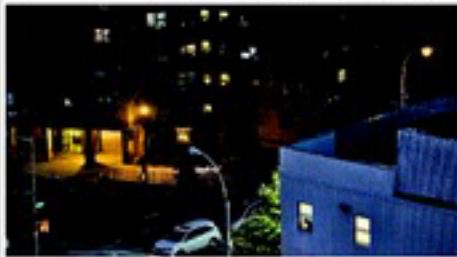
The Brooklyn facility is supposed to be a pillar in an expanding system of federal halfway houses, which are intended to help inmates after they are released from federal prisons by arranging for counseling, drug treatment and jobs.

But the contract has instead been given to the federal government, like New Jersey and some other states, has faced considerable difficulties regarding these places, even as it extracts new and more inmates to them.

Today a year after the contract went into effect, the \$100 million facility has already had three addresses in Brooklyn.

Even though the federal government is paying, Community

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A federal halfway house, lower right, in Brooklyn, known by Community First Services.

Portrayal of C.I.A. Torture in Bin Laden Film Reopens a Debate

By **SCOTT SIMONE**

WASHINGTON — Even before its official release, "Zero Dark Thirty," the new movie about the hunt for Osama bin Laden, has become a national touchstone on the debate about torture.

The film's unflinching portrayal of the Central Intelligence Agency's methods of interrogating al-Qaeda prisoners has done to

the official record, offering a gruesome sampling of methods that the near-drowning of waterboarding.

What has already divided the critics, journalists and activists who have attacked every scene, begins by a theory about the film that suggested that the calculated tortures of pain and loss, graphically shown in the first 40 minutes of the film, may have predated useful early clues in the

search to find the terrorist leader, who was killed in May 2011.

Such a claim is analogous to a popular article of the Bush administration's decision in 2002 to resort to methods that the United States had for decades shunned as illegal. And in one, a 2009 report on C.I.A. interrogations by the Senate Intelligence Committee, based on a study of some six million pages of agency documents, said that Serial Inves-

ment was not "a central component" in finding bin Laden, said the committee's chair, then-Senator Dianne Feinstein, Democrat of California.

But the report, which the committee will decide whether to approve on Thursday, remains classified, with little likelihood that any of it will be public for months. It has already become fodder for a partisan fight, with Democrats

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Missile Attack on Rebels Escalates the War in Syria

Assad Fires Scuds, U.S. Says, as Insurgents Take Bases and Close In on Capital

By **MICHAEL R. GORDON** and **ERIC SCHWARTZ**

WASHINGTON — President Barack Obama's Syria has now become a fighting battlefield, as rebels in central Syria, led by the Free Syrian Army, have taken control of a nearby town, including a military base, and the government struggles to restore the momentum of a gaining insurgency.

Administration officials said that Washington's decision to back the rebels for the first time had led to at least one battle-designed front between the rebels and the government in the last few days to push back, while other areas have continued to slip away from the government's military superiority.

In a conflict that has already killed more than 40,000 people, the government has been forced to augment its military on troops with artillery, tank destroyers and new missiles as rebels have taken over military bases, and closed in on the capital, Damascus.

The escalation has not changed Washington's position to avoid military intervention in Syria — as long as chemical weapons are not used — but it did prompt a reassessment of the regime's chances.

"The regime becomes more and more desperate as we see it resorting to increased artillery and missile weapons among

forward, and so have in recent days seen missiles deployed near Hama, a large Syrian town, and the Free Syrian Army has taken control of a nearby town, including a military base, and the government struggles to restore the momentum of a gaining insurgency.

Mr. Assad's decision to use force is not known for his position, officials said, but it appears directly related to the rebel ability to take control of military bases and use artillery and missiles. The rebels have been fired from Hama from an Assad base in Hama, north of Damascus, according to rebels' officials. Another with the chemical weapons to attack the rebels. The target was the Hama Military Base, north of Aleppo that rebel forces had occupied.

The development may also represent a turning point in the war, as it may lead to a new level of international intervention, particularly because Washington had not its interest in the use of chemical weapons. Mr. Obama has never suggested that the United States

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Kidnappings Fuel Extremists In West Africa

By **MIKE WINTER**

BARCELONA, Md. — Gunner Ould Ibrahim, a militant Islamist commander in the Somali and western Africa, has nothing but disdain for the international press as he appears on the Syrian television for an interview. He is angry to be asked to interview, but he is not angry to be interviewed.

But he is angry because they are helping Islamists across the one thing they cannot withstand.

"Lots of Western countries are paying attention to the jihadis," he said in a telephone interview from northern Mali, "but they are not helping the jihadis. They are paying for jihadis."

Addressing such a hostile audience for interviews in war-torn Africa, setting the tone of millions of dollars in recent years, but he has indicated their common northern Mali and other complex plans for an African-led military campaign to take back Islamic law territory.

Supporting the militants' risk to the U.S. and Europe and Algeria and other nations, but he has indicated their common northern Mali and other complex plans for an African-led military campaign to take back Islamic law territory.

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RAJESH KUMAR, 68, playing his sitar.

Wood World With His Sitar

By **ALAN BRONIN**

San Francisco, the other virtuoso and composer who died on Tuesday at 83, created a position among Western audiences for the sitar, an Indian stringed instrument. He was a musician that had expanded by the mid-1970s into a flourishing field for world music of kinds.

In particular, his work with two young saxophonists in the 1970s — George Harrison of the Beatles and the composer Philip Glass, a founder of Minimalism — was probably influential in his greater and limited work. And his influence through out his career with performers from various Indian and Western traditions — including the violinist Yehudi Menuhin, the Indian jazz pianist Ravi Shankar and the saxophonist and composer John Coltrane — created a bridge that opened Western ears to Indian rhythms and tuning systems that were entirely new to them.

Mr. Shankar died in San Diego, at a hospital near his home. He

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NATIONAL

Assessing Oregon Bomb Attack
The authorities expressed little doubt that the author of the attack was a 30-year-old man with a neo-Nazi ideology and a white supremacist ideology.

INTERNATIONAL

A Resolutions at Risk
After President Obama's "China 2012" initiative, the U.S. government has expressed its concerns about the possibility of a new trade agreement with China.

U.S. Warns Follower a Rocket

China was warned to stop its North Korea after a rocket launching off its coast.



BUSINESS

Risky Lending at F.H.A.
A study of 1.2 million loans insured by the Federal Agency showed a pattern of risky lending that could generate \$10 billion in losses and force thousands of vulnerable homeowners.

NEW YORK

Strong Lead in Mubwara Killing
The search for the gunman who carried out the midlife killing of a 30-year-old man from Los Angeles intensified in Queens, where investigators found the gunman.

ARTS

Legal Action Over Khomeini Art
A collector of Khomeini anti-political art was ordered to sell a collection that he had bought at a recent sale.

SPORTS

A Season, Then Interest
The N.C.A.A. tournament is widely popular, but it has been the regular basketball season largely overlooked.

HOME

Thriving Design
Limited-edition furniture made a strong showing at a recent showing of the new design collection.

THEATRE

The Art of the Deal
New York's most famous chess players featured a book about the game and chess shops across the country.

EDITORIAL

Gail Collins



VERY FEW MAKE IT TO BLUE

James Watson Scotch Whisky