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Police: Zimmerman said Martin attacked him

SANFORD, Fla., March 26 (UPI) -- The neighborhood watch volunteer who fatally shot Trayvon Martin said the Florida teen physically attacked him and tried to get his gun, ABC News reported.

The Orlando Sentinel reported Monday authorities said on the night of the Feb. 26 incident and in subsequent meetings George Zimmerman described and re-enacted what he said happened. He told police he had followed the youth because he was behaving suspiciously but turned around after losing sight of him.

He said he was walking back to his sport utility vehicle when the 17-year-old approached him from behind. The two exchanged words, with the teen asking the Zimmerman volunteer if he had a problem and when the man replied no, allegedly said something to the effect "Well, you do now," the Sentinel said.

Zimmerman said Martin knocked him to the ground with one punch, then jumped on him and slammed his head into the sidewalk several times so hard he was bloodied and battered, the Sentinel said. He said he then shot Martin, who was unarmed, once in the chest from close range in self-defense.

ABC News reported a police source quoted Zimmerman as saying the youth had tried to get his gun.

Zimmerman received medical attention at the scene and then was taken in a police cruiser to a police station for questioning.

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Healthcare challenge begins at high court

WASHINGTON, March 26 (UPI) -- U.S. President Obama's signature healthcare reform plan took center stage at the Supreme Court Monday, with justices indicating they're prepared to rule.

The first issue, in three days of scheduled arguments, was whether the high court could handle a challenge to the Patient Protection and Affordability Care Act now or have to wait until its provisions are fully implemented, which won't happen until 2014.

The question was whether the 19th century Anti-Injunction Act precludes court action now.

SCOTUSBlog reported questioning by justices indicated they do not believe the more than century-old law precludes action now, with Justice Antonin Scalia suggesting any restraint on the court should be interpreted narrowly and Justice Samuel Alito indicating he does not think the Anti-Injunction Act is applicable.

Justices Stephen Breyer and Sonia Sotomayor asked questions indicating they may not consider as taxes the law's individual mandate and penalties for not buying health insurance.

The main provision of the Affordable Care Act being challenged -- the requirement that everyone who can afford it obtain insurance or else pay a fine -- does not go into effect until 2014. If the act bans the current court case, it would be 2015 before the constitutionality of the individual mandate could be thrashed out in the courts.

Ilya Shapiro, senior fellow in constitutional studies at the Cato Institute and editor-in-chief of the Cato Supreme Court Review, described Monday's argument as "the calm before the storm."

"There were also hints that the court was skeptical of the government's backup merits argument that the individual mandate was justified under the Constitution's taxing power," he said.

Arguments continue Tuesday when the justices hear a 2-hour debate regarding the individual mandate.

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Santorum says he would consider V.P.

WASHINGTON, March 26 (UPI) -- Rick Santorum says he would consider joining Mitt Romney on the ticket if Romney wins the Republican U.S. presidential nomination.

In an interview Monday with the Christian Broadcasting Network's David Brody, the former Pennsylvania senator, who is trailing Romney in the race for delegates, said he will do whatever is necessary to help his country.

Santorum is standing by his clash Sunday with a New York Times reporter on the campaign trail in Wisconsin, The Washington Post reported.

"If you haven't cursed out a New York Times reporter during the course of a campaign, you're not really a real Republican, is the way I look at it," Santorum told Fox News. "I think it is high time that conservatives find the courage to expose the liberal press for what they are, a defender and enabler of Romney's and Obama's liberal agendas."

A New York Times reporter asked, "You said that Mitt Romney is the worst Republican in the country. Is that true?"

Visibly angered, Santorum fired back at the reporter and told him to "stop lying." Santorum said Romney is the "worst" on healthcare reform "because he fashioned the blueprint."

"I've been saying it in every speech. Quit distorting my words. If I see it, it's [expletive]. C'mon man, what are you doing?" he said.

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Terms need review, minister says

ISLAMABAD, Pakistan, March 26 (UPI) -- Pakistan's foreign minister said Thursday U.S. regret for a NATO airstrike in November that killed 24 Pakistani soldiers is insufficient.

In a wide-ranging interview with CNN in Islamabad, Hina Rabbani Khar said the incident, in which NATO jets fired on a Pakistani checkpoint near the Afghan border, triggered "a complete re-look at the terms of engagement with the United States of America," and new terms could help mend the eroded trust and respect between the two countries.

The U.S. government expressed regret but did not offer a direct apology.

Her comments came as Pakistani lawmakers begin to debate and vote on a reassessment of the relationship, with proposals that include charging fees to ship NATO goods through Pakistan, an end to U.S. drone strikes, and what Khar called "an unconditional apology" for the airstrikes.

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Russian man accused of cannibalism

PENZA, Russia, March 26 (UPI) -- A Russian man is accused of killing at least six people and eating their livers, police said.

Alexander Bychkov was arrested and charged in central Russia with murder and cannibalism, RIA Novosti reported Monday.

Police said Bychkov had been arrested for theft from a local store, but during questioning he allegedly began talking about corpses buried near his house in Russia's Penza region.

Six bodies were recovered and sent to a lab for examination.

Police said the suspect identified the photos of those who died.

Investigators said they believe Bychkov killed his victims with a knife, then cut them up and ate their livers.