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RELIGION

Pope of the poor arrives in U.S.

Francis denies
he's a liberalBY NICOLE WINFIELD
AND RACHEL ZOLL
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The pope of the poor arrived for his first-ever visit to the world's wealthiest superpower Tuesday denying he is a leftist and riding in a frugal little family car, windows rolled down.

Pope Francis' chartered plane from Cuba touched down at Andrews Air Force Base in Maryland, where President Barack Obama and his wife and daughters paid him the rare honor of meeting him at the bottom of the stairs on the red-carpeted tarmac. Presidents usually make important visitors come to them at the White House.

Emerging from the aircraft to loud cheers from a crowd of hundreds, the smiling 78-year-old pontiff removed his skullcap in the windy weather and made his way down the steps in his white robes.

He was welcomed by a military honor guard, chanting schoolchildren, politicians and Roman Catholic clerics in black robes with vivid sashes of scarlet and purple. Joe Biden, the nation's first Catholic vice president, and his wife were among those who greeted him.

Eschewing a limousine, the pope climbed into the back of a little Fiat sandwiched between huge black SUVs. He promptly rolled down the windows, enabling the cheering, whooping crowds to see him as his motorcade took him to the Vatican diplomatic mission in Washington, where he will stay while in the nation's capital.

The choice of car was in keeping with his simple



SUSAN WALSH | ASSOCIATED PRESS

Pope Francis walks with President Barack Obama after arriving Tuesday at Andrews Air Force Base in Maryland. The Pope is spending three days in Washington before heading to New York and Philadelphia. This is his first visit to the United States.

habits and his stand against consumerism. His decision to roll down the windows reflected his penchant for trying to connect to ordinary people despite the tight security around him.

During his six-day, three-city visit to the U.S., the pope will meet with the president today, address Congress on Thursday, speak at the United Nations in New York on Friday and take part in a Vatican-sponsored conference on the family in Philadelphia over the weekend.

The Argentine known as the "slum pope" for ministering to the downtrodden in his native Buenos Aires is expected to urge America to take better care of the environment and the poor and return to its founding ideals of religious liberty and open arms toward immigrants.

During the flight, Francis defended himself against conservative criticism that his condemnation of trickle-down economics makes him a communist.

"I am certain that I have never said anything beyond what is in the social doctrine of the church," he said. He said some may have misinterpreted his writings in a way that makes him sound "a little bit more left-leaning," but he said that's wrong.

Joking about doubts in some quarters over whether he is truly Catholic, he said, "If I have to recite the Creed, I'm ready."

Francis is the fourth pope ever to visit the United States.

Francis' enormous popularity, propensity for wading into crowds and insistence on using an open-sided Jeep

rather than a bulletproof popemobile have complicated things for U.S. law enforcement, which has mounted one of the biggest security operations in American history to keep him safe.

The measures are unprecedented for a papal trip and could make it nearly impossible for many ordinary Americans to get anywhere close to Francis.

For all the attention likely to be paid to Francis' speeches, including the first address from a pope to Congress, his more personal gestures — visiting with immigrants, prisoners and the homeless — could yield some of the most memorable images of the trip.

"What the pope does in the United States will be more important than what he says," said Mat Schmalz,

a religious studies professor at Holy Cross college in Worcester, Massachusetts. "There are a lot of things he will say about capitalism and about wealth inequality, but many Americans and politicians have already made up their minds on these issues. What I would look for is a particular gesture, an unscripted act, that will move people."

In Cuba, Francis basked in the adulation of Cubans grateful to him for brokering the re-establishment of diplomatic relations between the U.S. and the communist island.

On the plane, though, he told reporters he will not use his speech to Congress to call specifically for the U.S. to lift the Cold War-era trade embargo against Cuba.

PLEASE SEE POPE | A6

GOVERNMENT

County wants complex money returned

BY LISA SAVAGE
Times Staff Writer

In an unexpected twist, the Etowah County Mega Sports Complex Authority has been told it has to repay the \$34,619.07 received from the Etowah County Commission or the money will be withheld over the next three months because of a rarely used amendment that prevents disbursing funds in the middle of a fiscal year.

Kevin Dollar, chief financial officer for Etowah County, paid the funds after an act was signed into law by Gov. Robert Bentley on June 5.

Rep. Craig Ford, D-Gadsden, sponsored the legislation that established the Etowah County Mega Sports Complex Authority. The legislation specifies the Tennessee Valley Authority in-lieu-of-taxes payments, with the exception of the portion that goes to Sardis City, be directed to the authority. It's about \$140,000 a year. The County Commission is responsible for disbursement.

Ford said at a meeting in August that the money had not been paid after the law was signed and requested Dollar make the payments.

Dollar wrote three checks for \$11,539.69 each within a few days of the meeting.

After the checks were sent to the authority and deposited in its account, Dollar said Amendment 474 was brought to his attention. By law, the money should not have been paid until Oct. 1.

"It's to keep a governing body from having an unexpected shortfall in the budget midyear through the year," Dollar said.

He said the amendment has been place for several years, but is rarely used. He said that's why he believes he and others forgot about it.

However, Ford said he checked with the Legislative Reference Service and the amendment dates back to 1984.

"They say it has never been enforced," Ford said.

Jerry Bassett, director of the Legislative Reference Service, a nonpartisan service that tracks bills for the House and Senate, called the amendment "archaic." He said he doesn't know whether it should delay the authority's funding.

"Not a lot of people know about (the amendment)," he said.

While tracking the amendment, Bassett said he found one Attorney General's opinion relating to it, but it turned

PLEASE SEE MONEY | A6

CRIME

Marshall D.A. seeks help in murder case

BY DONNA THORNTON
Times Staff Writer

Investigators continue their probe into the murders of a Marshall County couple found dead Sept. 11, according to Marshall County District Attorney Steve Marshall.

Denie Oliver Tucker and his wife, Pamela Cordes Tucker, were found shot to death in their home in the rural Asbury/Martling community about 6:30 p.m. Sept. 11. The Marshall County Sheriff's Office has released no details.

An individual who wished to remain anonymous last week offered a \$10,000 reward for information leading to an arrest and conviction in the case, Marshall said. He said if

anyone was in the area of the Tuckers' residence on Pea Ridge Road on Sept. 10 or 11 — a Thursday and Friday — and saw anything suspicious, investigators would like to talk to them.

The Tucker family owns Tucker Milling in Guntersville, and Denie and Pamela Tucker were active in the Sand Mountain Saddle Club and the National Barrel Racing Association. People who knew the Tuckers recalled them as "good community people." They expressed shock at learning of the crime and were anxious to see the apprehension of whoever killed their neighbors and committed a brutal crime in their community.

LAW ENFORCEMENT

Headline prompts Southside chief to hold training session

BY DONNA THORNTON
Times Staff Writer

Southside Police Deputy Chief Philip Roberson said recent headlines led to the day-long training hosted Tuesday by the department.

In a recent case in the Birmingham area, a detective making a traffic stop was assaulted by the man he stopped — something captured by onlookers in cellphone photos.

A headline ran in the days just after the incident: "Pistol-whipped detective says he didn't shoot attacker because of headlines."

"This class is because of that headline," Roberson said.

He also offered a slide showing a comment from the officer. "I hesitated because I didn't want to be in the media like I am right now," he said.

The class, which included information from Etowah County District Attorney Jody Willoughby and District Judge Joe Nabors, was designed to inform officers about legalities when they are in confrontations, and how to better handle the fallout of such an incident, among other training.

"I wouldn't begin to second-guess an officer's actions," Willoughby said, referring to the kinds of confrontations with sus-

pects that have made news in recent months, "because I haven't been in their shoes."

Willoughby and Nabors talked to the officers about taking the right steps when situations go all wrong.

Willoughby said there is statutory law regarding what officers can do legally, and there is an ever-changing body of case law that develops as legal decisions are made in the courts.

"Statutory law gives us a baseline," he said. "Case law gives you the reality of it," by evaluating incidents and determining what officer actions are within the scope of the law.

PLEASE SEE TRAINING | A6

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ZUKE SOUP

Four ingredients and 20 minutes are all you need for great soup.

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TODAY'S WEATHER



Look for partly sunny skies on a mild afternoon.
 High 84 Low 62
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