

NATION/WORLD DIGEST

Michelle Obama, Jill Biden Both Visit Haiti

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (AP) — First lady Michelle Obama made a surprise visit Tuesday to the ruins of the Haitian capital, a high-profile reminder that hundreds of thousands remain in desperate straits three months after the earthquake.

The first lady and Jill Biden, wife of Vice President Joe Biden, took a helicopter tour of Port-au-Prince, where many people are still homeless, before landing at the destroyed national palace to meet President Rene Preval. They later talked with students whose lives have been upended by the disaster and walked along a vast, squalid encampment of families living under bed sheets and tents. "It's powerful," Obama told reporters. "The devastation is definitely powerful."

A number of past and present world leaders have visited since the earthquake, including former presidents Bill Clinton and George W. Bush. But few have the star power here of the American first lady, whose husband is widely popular in Haiti and throughout the Caribbean.

Toyota To Briefly Halt Sales Of Lexus GX 460

WASHINGTON (AP) — Toyota Motor Corp. is temporarily halting sales of the 2010 Lexus GX 460 after Consumer Reports issued a rare "Don't Buy" warning amid concerns the large SUV has handling problems that could cause it to roll over during sharp turns.

The Japanese automaker said Tuesday it had asked dealers to temporarily suspend sales of the SUV while it conducts its own tests on the GX 460.

"We are taking the situation with the GX 460 very seriously and are determined to identify and correct the issue Consumer Reports identified," said Mark Templin, Lexus vice president and general manager.

The decision to stop selling the SUV is the latest blow to Toyota's tarnished safety reputation after the recall of millions of cars and trucks over gas pedals that are too slow to retract or that can become stuck under floor mats. The GX 460 is not covered by the pedal recalls.

But it reflects Toyota's attempt to respond more quickly to safety concerns after federal investigators accused the automaker of dragging its feet on recalls to address the faulty gas pedals. Toyota faces a \$16.4 million fine from the Transportation Department and has until April 19 to decide whether to contest the penalty or accept it.

The magazine said the Lexus problem occurred during tests on its track. In a standard test, the driver approached a turn unusually fast, then released the accelerator pedal to simulate the response of an alarmed driver. This caused the rear of the vehicle to slide outward.

In normal cases, the electronic stability control should quickly correct the loss of control and keep the SUV on its intended path. But with the GX 460, the stability control took too long to adjust, which could cause a rollover accident if one of the sliding wheels were to strike the curb or another obstacle, said Gabriel Shenhar, Consumer Reports' senior auto test engineer who was one of four testers who experienced the problem.

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Dems Seek To Extend Jobless Benefits Even Further Ahead

WASHINGTON (AP) — A top Senate Democrat proposed Tuesday to give unemployed people jobless benefits through Memorial Day instead of risking another cutoff in just three weeks.

Max Baucus, D-Mont., proposed the additional time as the Senate officially began debate on legislation to revive a federal unemployment insurance program for people who have been out of a job for more than six months.

Ohio Republican George Voinovich emerged as a key figure as Democrats and Republicans continued to quarrel over whether federal jobless benefits for the long-term unemployed should be paid for with borrowed money. Voinovich signaled he will side with Democrats to provide a crucial vote that would ensure the measure's speedy advance into law — even though it would add about \$18 billion to the deficit.

Baucus said House-Senate negotiators need more time to iron out a separate and more complicated bill to extend jobless benefits through the end of the year and revive expired tax breaks enjoyed by both individuals and businesses. A pending bill would set a May 5 deadline.

Extending unemployment benefits for the long-term jobless has prompted a battle between Republicans promising to battle the deficit and Democrats insisting that the government continue to borrow the money to pay for benefit checks averaging \$335 a week.

The GOP move is unprecedented and more than half of Senate Republicans voted just last month for an earlier debt-finance extension of jobless benefits. But the issue of deficits and debt is of increasing concern to voters who in only seven months will determine if Republicans take back control of Congress.

Four Republicans helped Democrats defeat a GOP filibuster on Monday: Susan Collins and Olympia Snowe of Maine; George Voinovich of Ohio and Scott Brown of Massachusetts. But their votes are not guaranteed on subsequent procedural hurdles, including a vote to waive budget rules and add the cost of the jobless benefits to the \$12.8 trillion national debt.

Democrats need to pick up at least one Republican to advance the measure. Last month, in a similar situation, Collins was that single Republican as she helped Democratic leaders maneuver their way through a tight spot. Now she says she will insist that the temporary unemployment benefits bill be "paid for" so as to not increase the deficit.

NUCLEAR SUMMIT

Obama's Goal For Security Endorsed

BY ROBERT BURNS
AP National Security Writer

WASHINGTON — In full accord on a global threat, world leaders Tuesday endorsed President Barack Obama's call for securing all nuclear materials around the globe within four years to keep them out of the grasp of terrorists. They offered few specifics for achieving that goal, but Obama declared "the American people will be safer and the world will be more secure" as a result.

Obama had called the 47-nation summit to focus world attention on the threat of nuclear terrorism, a peril he termed the greatest threat facing all nations and a "cruel irony of history" after mankind had survived the Cold War and decades of fear stoked by a U.S.-Soviet arms race.

A terrorist group in possession of plutonium no bigger than an apple could detonate a device capable of inflicting hundreds of thousands of casualties, he said.

"Terrorist networks such as al-Qaida have tried to acquire the material for a nuclear weapon, and if they ever succeeded, they would surely use it," he told the opening session, which convened under tight security at the Washington Convention Center. "Were they to do so, it would be a catastrophe for the world, causing extraordinary loss of life and striking a major blow to global peace and stability."

The summit countries said they would cooperate more deeply with the United Nations and its watchdog arm, the

International Atomic Energy Agency. They also said they would share information on nuclear detection and ways to prevent nuclear trafficking.

Several countries, including Ukraine, Mexico and Canada, declared their intention to give up highly enriched uranium as a step toward making it harder for terrorist groups or criminal gangs to steal or acquire a key ingredient in the making of atomic weapons. Russia and the U.S. signed a deal to dispose of tons of weapons-grade plutonium, although that won't start for eight years.

While the summit focused on the threat from terrorists, attention was given to Iran, North Korea and other nations who are seeking or have succeeded in obtaining or developing nuclear weapons. Neither Iran nor North Korea was invited to attend the session, which the Obama administration billed as the largest gathering of world leaders on U.S. soil since the U.N. founding conference in San Francisco in 1945.

The leaders agreed to hold a followup nuclear security summit in South Korea in 2012.

In a concluding news conference, Obama said he was confident China would join other nations in pressing for tough new sanctions on Iran for continuing to defy the international community in seeking such weapons.

"Words have to mean something. There have to be some consequences," Obama said. Chinese President Hu Jintao met with Obama on Monday, then on Tuesday gave a speech to the group calling for "effective"

measures to safeguard nuclear weapons and materials. But he stopped short of mentioning Iran's program.

Iran denies it intends to build an atomic bomb, and despite widespread concern about its intentions, Obama is having difficulty getting agreement on a new set of U.N. sanctions against the country. He said Tuesday that Hu had assured him that China would participate in drafting sessions at the United Nations on strong sanctions.

Throughout his news conference, Obama set a realist's tone about the role of the United States in world affairs. That is, it is necessary for the U.S. to lead on matters such as nuclear security. But on getting countries in the Mideast to agree to peace, on getting the Chinese to move to a market-based currency, on getting Iran and North Korea to play by international rules on nuclear compliance, on getting countries to live up to their fresh pledges on nuclear security, Obama repeatedly said the U.S. can't be the enforcer of world order. Countries must act in line with their own interests, he said.

As applied to Iran, this means U.N. and other sanctions are designed to change Iran's calculations about what it would gain from giving up its nuclear ambitions, he said.

Asked about steps that have been taken against North Korea, Obama conceded that "sanctions are not a magic wand." Still, he said he hoped the pressure could lead North Korea's leaders to return to nuclear disarmament talks that they abandoned before Obama took office.

Obama Revives Capsule From Canceled Moon Program

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Barack Obama is reviving the NASA crew capsule concept that he had canceled with the rest of the moon program earlier this year, in a move that will mean more jobs and less reliance on the Russians, officials said Tuesday.

The space capsule, called Orion, still won't go to the moon. It will go unmanned to the International Space Station to stand by as an emergency vehicle to return astronauts home, officials said.

Administration officials also said NASA will speed up development of a massive rocket. It would have the power to blast crew and cargo far from Earth, although no destination has been chosen yet.

The rocket would be ready to launch several years earlier than under the old moon plan.

The two moves are being announced before a Thursday visit to Cape Canaveral, Fla. by Obama. They are designed to counter criticism of the Obama administration's space plans as being low on detail, physical hard-

ware and local jobs.

The president killed President George W. Bush's moon mission, called Constellation, as being unsustainable. In a major shift, the Obama space plan relies on private companies to fly to the space station. But it also extends the space station's life by five years and puts billions into research to eventually develop new government rockets for future missions to a nearby asteroid, the moon, Martian moons or other points in space. Those stops would be stepping stones

on an eventual mission to Mars.

First man-on-the-moon Neil Armstrong, veteran Apollo astronauts and former senior NASA managers have been attacking the Obama plan — before the latest revision — as the death of U.S. leadership in space. Armstrong in an e-mail to The Associated Press said he had "substantial reservations," and more than two dozen Apollo-era veterans signed a letter calling the plan a "misguided proposal that forces NASA out of human space operations for the foreseeable future."

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