

NATION/WORLD DIGEST

NTSB: Airline Jet Had Pre-Existing Damage

YUMA, Ariz. (AP) — Southwest Airlines mechanics were working Sunday to cut out a section of ruptured fuselage from a Boeing 737-300 that was forced to make an emergency landing at a southwestern Arizona military base.

The tear along a riveted "lap joint" shows evidence of extensive cracking that hadn't been discovered during routine maintenance before Friday's harrowing flight — and probably wouldn't have been unless mechanics had specifically looked for it, officials said.

National Transportation Safety Board investigators were overseeing the removal of the top section of the jetliner's roof around the 5-foot long tear and will send the structure to Washington, D.C., for analysis.

Meanwhile, Southwest said it had cancelled about 300 flights for the second day in a row Sunday as it inspected 79 similar planes in its fleet that it has grounded. The NTSB said it had not been notified of similar problems cropping up during those inspections. Southwest has not said if it has found other problems.

No one was seriously injured Friday as the aircraft carrying 118 people rapidly lost cabin pressure and made a controlled descent from 34,400 feet, landing safely at the airport in Yuma, 150 miles southwest of Phoenix.

Residents Await Ivory Coast's Final Battle

ABIDJAN, Ivory Coast (AP) — Residents barricaded themselves inside their homes Sunday, blanketing windows and pushing furniture against doors as this country on Africa's western coast tensely awaited the final battle between the two men who claim the presidency.

Fighters backing the internationally recognized president, Alassane Ouattara, amassed at a tollbooth on the city's northern edge, preparing for the final assault. Their leader was declared the winner of last November's election, but Ouattara has not been able to assume office because outgoing president Laurent Gbagbo is refusing to yield power.

Water has been cut off to much of Abidjan, and on the empty streets, a handful of women with basins could be seen hurriedly crossing the waterfront highway to reach the lagoon. Men ventured out with plastic bags to scoop up water, holding the bags high in the air to signal to soldiers in firing positions that they were not armed.

Only about 20 miles separates the thousands of pro-Ouattara foot soldiers readying for battle from the lagoonside district where the presidential palace and mansion are located.

A resident of the Cocody neighborhood where the mansion is located said around 700 Gbagbo supporters had gathered at the gates of the compound Sunday, after state television, still controlled by the entrenched ruler, called on the population to form a human shield to protect the presidential palace. The resident, who asked not to be named for fear of reprisal, said the supporters had been armed with AK-47 assault rifles.

Police: Woman Stabbed Boyfriend In Chest

DURHAM, N.C. (AP) — Authorities say the woman who falsely claimed she was raped by Duke lacrosse players has been accused of stabbing her boyfriend in the chest at a North Carolina home.

Durham police say 32-year-old Crystal Mangum was arrested Sunday morning several hours after the stabbing that seriously injured her 46-year-old boyfriend.

Investigators said the two were arguing but didn't release any other details.

Mangum is charged with assault with a deadly weapon with intent to kill. She is being held without bond, and jail officials did not know if she had an attorney.

Mangum was convicted in December of several misdemeanor charges, including child abuse, in a fire that nearly destroyed her home.

Leg Twitches May Be Sign Of Heart Trouble

NEW ORLEANS (AP) — The nighttime twitching of restless legs syndrome may be more than an annoyance: New research suggests that in some people, it could be a sign of hidden heart problems.

People with very frequent leg movements during sleep were more likely to have thick hearts — a condition that makes them more prone to cardiac problems, stroke and death, the study by Mayo Clinic doctors found.

"We are not saying there is a cause-and-effect relationship," just that restless legs might be a sign of heart trouble that doctors and patients should consider, said Dr. Arshad Jahangir, a heart rhythm specialist at the Mayo Clinic Arizona in Scottsdale.

He led the study and gave results Sunday at an American College of Cardiology conference in New Orleans.

Restless legs syndrome is thought to afflict millions, though there's argument about just how many. Some doctors think its seriousness has been exaggerated, possibly to help sell treatments.

1 Man Killed Falling Out Of Tour Bus Window

SHIRLEY, Mass. (AP) — One man was killed and another injured when the two fell out of a bathroom window of a tour bus in Massachusetts that was coming from a brewery in New Hampshire, Massachusetts State Police said Sunday.

Police said Thomas Johnson, 31, of Gardner was killed when he fell Saturday night onto Route 2 in Shirley. Seth Davis, 34, of Winchendon was in fair condition at a Worcester hospital, a nursing supervisor said Sunday.

The Colonial Tours bus was heading back to Gardner in central Massachusetts from the Red Hook Brewery in Portsmouth, N.H. The bus company and brewery did not immediately return calls Sunday.

Investigators were trying to determine what Johnson and Davis were doing that may have led them to fall out the window, state police Sgt. Matthew Murray said. Police believe alcohol was a factor.

"One of the avenues is whether it was some form of horseplay or a more aggressive interaction," he said.

Government Appeals Health Care Ruling

ATLANTA (AP) — The Obama administration has appealed a judge's ruling that found the federal overhaul of the health care system unconstitutional.

The Justice Department filed a 62-page motion Friday to the 11th Circuit Court of Appeals in Atlanta that said there's clear and well-established precedent that Congress acted within its authority in adopting the overhaul. It said Congress mad "detailed findings establishing a foundation" for exercising the authority.

Florida and 25 other states filed the lawsuit that said Congress exceeded its authority by requiring all citizens to purchase health insurance or face tax penalties. U.S. District Judge Roger Vinson agreed in a Jan. 31 ruling that said Obama's entire health care overhaul is unconstitutional. It is considered the most sweeping ruling against the health care law.

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U.S. Extends Airstrike Role In Libya

BY RICHARD LARDNER
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The U.S. agreed to NATO's request for a 48-hour extension of American participation in coalition airstrikes against targets in Libya and U.S. lawmakers cautioned Sunday that the allies need to know more about the rebels fighting Moammar Gadhafi's forces before providing them with weapons.

Two weeks into the assault on Gadhafi, Republican lawmakers expressed concern that a stalemate could leave him in control of portions of Libya and with access to stockpiles of chemical weapons.

The U.S. is shifting the combat role to Britain, France and other NATO allies, but American air power is still in demand. Air Force AC-130 gunships and A-10 Thunderbolts and Marine Corps AV-8B Harriers will continue to attack Gadhafi's troops and other sites through Monday evening. These aircraft are among the most precise in the American arsenal.

After Saturday, no U.S. combat aircraft were to fly strike missions over Libya unless NATO officials specifically asked and authorities in Washington gave their approval. NATO assumed full control last week from the U.S.-led international force for all aspects of the operation in Libya as authorized by U.N. resolutions that include an arms embargo, enforcing the no-fly zone, and protecting civilians from Gadhafi's forces.

In an emailed statement, NATO spokeswoman Oana Lungescu said Sunday that "poor weather conditions over the last few days" were the reason the alliance made the request. She would not elaborate.



Rebel fighters gather at the front lines near Port Brega, Libya, on Saturday.

"This is a short-term extension which expires on Monday," she said.

A senior U.S. military official said heavy cloud cover over Libya late last week curtailed allied airstrikes. Gadhafi took advantage of the lull, pushing east into the port cities of Ras Lanout and Brega, the official said on condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive military planning. The 48-hour extension is intended to roll back the progress made by Gadhafi's army, the official said.

A decision yet to be made by the Obama administration is whether to arm the rebels with the firepower they need to take and hold ground against Gadhafi's forces.

Rep. Mike Rogers, the Republican chairman of the House Intelligence Committee, said there may be strains of al-Qaida within the rebel ranks and that the coalition should proceed with caution before arming them.

LUIS SINCO/LOS ANGELES TIMES/MCT

"We know they're against Moammar Gadhafi remaining in power, but we don't know what they are for," Rogers said.

Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid advocated a "wait and see" approach to giving the opposition forces weapons.

"I think at this stage we really don't know who the leaders of this rebel group are," said Reid, a Democrat.

But Rogers also warned that if there were a stalemate in Libya, a cornered Gadhafi might resort to extreme measures against the opposition forces, such as the use of chemical weapons. Rogers said he has been to Libya and seen Gadhafi's chemical weapons.

"I think you have to worry that he's a terrorist threat," Rogers said.

Republican Sen. Lindsey Graham said the coalition needs to take the air war to Libya's capital where Gadhafi and his inner circle are located. Striking targets in Tripoli will further fracture

Gadhafi's government and push the Libyan leader from power, he said.

"The way to end this war is to have Gadhafi's inner circle to crack," Graham said. "The way to get his inner circle to crack is to go after them directly."

Like Rogers, Graham said he's concerned over the prospect of a stalemate in Libya. A member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, he faulted President Barack Obama for putting the U.S. into a supporting role and shifting the main combat burden to Britain, France and other NATO allies.

"To take the best air force in the world and park it during this fight is outrageous," Graham said. "When we called for a no-fly zone, we didn't mean our planes."

Allied military operations against Gadhafi's forces began March 19 with missiles and bombs targeting Libya's air defenses, communications networks, and ground forces. Obama has ruled out the use of U.S. ground troops in Libya. But the opposition lacks the proper organization and equipment to push back Gadhafi's army on its own.

Sen. John McCain, the top Republican on the Senate Armed Services Committee, said failing to arm the rebels could allow Gadhafi to maintain control over large swaths of Libya.

"We are concerned that regional support will waver if Western forces are perceived as presiding over a military deadlock," McCain and Sen. Joe Lieberman, a Connecticut independent, wrote Friday in *The Wall Street Journal*. "We cannot allow Gadhafi to consolidate his grip over part of the country and settle in for the long haul."

Japan: Engineers Pin Hopes On Polymer To Halt Radioactive Leak

BY RYAN NAKASHIMA
AND MARI YAMAGUCHI
Associated Press

TOKYO — Engineers pinned their hopes on chemicals, sawdust and shredded newspaper to stop highly radioactive water pouring into the ocean from Japan's tsunami-ravaged nuclear plant Sunday as officials said it will take several months to bring the crisis under control, the first time they have provided a timetable.

Concrete already failed to stop the tainted water spewing from a crack in a maintenance pit, and the new mixture did not appear to be working either, but engineers said they were not abandoning it.

The Fukushima Da-ichi plant has been leaking radioactivity since the March 11 tsunami carved a path of destruction along Japan's northeastern coast, killing as many as 25,000 people and knocking out key cooling systems that kept it from overheating. People living within 12 miles (20 kilometers) of the plant have been forced to abandon their homes.

The government said Sunday it will be several months before the radiation stops and permanent cooling systems are restored. Even after that happens, there will be years of work ahead to clean up the area around the complex and figure out

what to do with it.

"It would take a few months until we finally get things under control and have a better idea about the future," said Nuclear and Industrial Safety Agency spokesman Hidehiko Nishiyama. "We'll face a crucial turning point within the next few months, but that is not the end."

His agency said the timetable is based on the first step, pumping radioactive water into tanks, being completed quickly and the second, restoring cooling systems, being done within a matter of weeks or months.

Every day brings some new problem at the plant, where workers have often been forced to retreat from repair efforts because of high radiation levels. On Sunday, plant operator Tokyo Electric Power Co. announced it had found the bodies of two workers missing since the tsunami.

Radiation, debris and explosions kept workers from finding them until Wednesday, and then the announcement was delayed several days out of respect for their families.

TEPCO officials said they believed the workers ran down to a basement to check equipment after the magnitude-9.0 earthquake that preceded the tsunami. They were there when the massive wave swept

over the plant.

"It pains us to have lost these two young workers who were trying to protect the power plant amid the earthquake and tsunami," TEPCO Chairman Tsunehisa Katsumata said in a statement.

On Saturday, workers discovered an 8-inch (20-centimeter) crack in a maintenance pit at the plant and said they believe water from it may be the source of some of the high levels of radioactive iodine that have been found in the ocean for more than a week.

This is the first time they have found radioactive water leaking directly into the sea. A picture released by TEPCO shows water shooting some distance away from a wall and splashing into the ocean, though the amount is not clear. No other cracks have been found.

The radioactive water dissipates quickly in the ocean but could be dangerous to workers at the plant. Engineers tried to seal the crack with concrete Saturday, but that effort failed.

So on Sunday they went farther up the system and injected sawdust, three garbage bags of shredded newspaper and a polymer — similar to one used to absorb liquid in diapers — that can expand to 50 times its normal size when combined with water.

Obama Criticizes Quran Burning, Afghan Attacks

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Barack Obama is extending his deepest condolences to the families and loved ones of those killed in the northern Afghan city of Mazar-i-Sharif by protesters enraged by the burning of a Quran in Florida.

Obama says desecration of the Quran "is an act of extreme intolerance and bigotry."

But he says that does not justify attacking and killing innocent people, calling it "outrageous and an affront to human decency and dignity."

Eleven were killed Friday, including seven foreign U.N. employees.

And Afghans rioted for a second day Saturday, killing nine people in Kandahar and injuring more than 80.

Obama said in a statement that no religion tolerates "the slaughter and beheading of innocent people."

He said now was a time to draw upon the common humanity of all.

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