

NATION/WORLD DIGEST

Pentagon Inquiry Clears Gen. McChrystal

WASHINGTON (AP) — A Pentagon inquiry into a *Rolling Stone* magazine profile of Gen. Stanley McChrystal that led to his dismissal as the top US commander in Afghanistan has cleared him of wrongdoing.

The probe's results released Monday also called into question the accuracy of the magazine's report last June, which quoted anonymously people around McChrystal making disparaging remarks about members of President Barack Obama's national security team, including Vice President Joe Biden.

At the time he dismissed McChrystal, Obama said the general had fallen short of "the standard that should be set by a commanding general." The Defense Department inspector general's report, however, concluded that available evidence did not support the conclusion that McChrystal had violated any applicable legal or ethics standard.

Last week the White House tapped McChrystal to head a new advisory board to support military families, an initiative led by First Lady Michelle Obama and Jill Biden, wife of the vice president. The selection of McChrystal was announced on April 12, four days after the inspector general's report was finished.

The inspector general's conclusions were first reported Monday by *The New York Times*, which obtained the report under a Freedom of Information Act request. The Pentagon subsequently posted the report on its website.

Syrian Protesters Challenge Authorities

BEIRUT (AP) — More than 5,000 anti-government protesters in Syria took over the main square of the country's third-largest city Monday, vowing to occupy the site until President Bashar Assad is ousted and defying authorities who warn they will not be forced into reforms.

The government, however, blamed the weeks of anti-government unrest in the country on ultraconservative Muslims seeking to establish a fundamentalist state and terrorize the people, in the latest official effort to portray the reform movement as populated by extremists.

The Egypt-style standoff in the central city of Homs followed funeral processions by more than 10,000 mourners for some of those killed in clashes Sunday that a rights group said left at least 12 people dead. It also brought a high-stakes challenge to security forces over whether to risk more bloodshed — and international backlash — by trying to clear the square.

In the past month, Syrian security forces in uniforms and plainclothes have launched a deadly crackdown on demonstrations, killing at least 200 people, according to human rights groups. Many Syrians also say pro-government thugs — known as Shabiha — have terrorized neighborhoods with tactics such as opening fire into the air.

The government has in the past blamed "armed gangs" seeking to stir up unrest for many of the killings, such as the ones who fatally shot seven people, including three army officers, on Sunday in Homs.

Motorcycle Deaths Drop, But Trend Worries

WASHINGTON (AP) — Motorcycle deaths dropped 2 percent in the first nine months of last year, but the report by state transportation officials may signal just a blip, not a lasting improvement in safety.

There were 80 fewer motorcycle deaths from January through September of 2010 than in the same time frame the previous year, said the report, scheduled for release Tuesday by the Governors Highway Safety Association.

But fatalities had started to climb back up during the last three of those nine months. And that has safety advocates worried.

"The drop is all in the front half of the year," said report author Jim Hedlund, a safety consultant. "It looks very much as if we've hit bottom and may be starting back up again."

Fatalities were down 25 percent during the first three months of last year, and still down 1 percent in next three months after that. Then they went up 3 percent in the third quarter of the year, the report said.

Los Angeles Times Wins Pulitzer For Exposé

NEW YORK (AP) — The *Los Angeles Times* won a Pulitzer Prize for public service Monday for a series revealing that politicians in the struggling, working-class city of Bell, Calif., were paying themselves enormous, six-figure salaries.

The newspaper's reporting that officials in the 37,000-resident town were jacking up property taxes and other fees in part to cover the huge salaries led to arrests and the ouster of some of Bell's top officials.

The *Times* won a second Pulitzer for feature photography, and *The New York Times* was awarded two Pulitzers for international reporting and for commentary.

But in a year in which the earthquake in Haiti and the disastrous Gulf oil spill were some of the biggest stories, the Pulitzer Board decided not to give an award in the category of breaking news — a first in the 95-year history of the most prestigious prize in journalism.

"No entry received the necessary majority," said Sig Gissler, administrator of the prizes. He wouldn't elaborate except to say that breaking news is a "deadline-driven category" that depends on news organizations' reporting of an event the moment it happens.

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YANKTON DAILY
Press & Dakotan

Killer Storms Moved Too Fast For Many In N.C.

BY BROCK VERGAKIS
AND MITCH WEISS
Associated Press

COLERAIN, N.C. — They aren't used to tornadoes in North Carolina, let alone 60 of them.

When a deadly storm system that had already unleashed twisters across the South was about to arrive, residents were out doing yard work, making plans for the Easter holiday or just gazing at the darkening skies.

Over four hours, they learned that a hurricane is not the only force of nature that can strike their state.

"The sky looks funny," Jean Burkett recalled saying, as she looked out of her window around dinner time on Saturday night.

Then she called out to her husband, Richard.

"Honey, come here," she said. "You've never seen this before."

Staring out her window, she saw a large tornado approaching her neighborhood in hardest-hit Bertie County. It would largely leave her home untouched, but demolished nearby houses and killed 11 people, Burkett's long-time friend among them.

At least 21 people died across the state, more than 130 were seriously injured and more than 800 homes were destroyed or damaged. At least 45 died across the South.

The conditions that created the deadly weather systems may appear once or twice a year in the tornado-prone Great Plains, but almost never in North Carolina. "Saturday's event will go down in history in North Carolina," said Matthew Parker, an associate professor of atmospheric science at North Carolina State University.

Initial reports said 60 tornadoes were spawned by the storm system. The worst of it was between roughly 2:53 p.m., when the first fatal twister touched down on the edge of Moore County in the central part of the state, and 6:55 p.m., when a tornado hit Bertie.

The first moved rapidly into a busy shopping and industrial area of Sanford, a town of nearly 25,000 about 40 miles southwest of Raleigh. It ripped the roof off a tractor supply store and flattened the front of a Lowe's home improvement store, but no one was killed.

The storm continued losing and gaining strength as it cut a path to the northeast, entering Raleigh 10 minutes before 4 p.m.

Again, luck or providence or planning kept people safe.

The twister whipped through crowded neighborhoods, felling trees, smashing crypts in a down-



SHAWN ROCCO/RALEIGH NEWS & OBSERVER/MCT
Allison Miller, center, reacts to her damaged home Monday in Raleigh, N.C. Many homes in Raleigh were badly damaged by trees felled from Saturday's tornado.

town cemetery and causing so much damage to Shaw University that the school canceled the remaining two weeks of its spring semester.

When the storm hit a trailer park about five miles north of downtown, it killed several people.

Cousins Daniel Nino, 9, and Osvaldo Coronado, 8, died along with Osvaldo's 3-year-old brother, Kevin, when a tree fell on a mobile home where they were huddled together.

A woman who had been in the trailer with the children raced around, screaming.

"Help me! Help me! I still have three boys in the house," park resident Tommy McCainzie, 39, remembered the woman calling. McCainzie started going door

to door looking for children, and a friend crawled into the trailer, but couldn't find the children. The children died in the closet where they had sought safety.

"One kid just had a party two weeks ago for his birthday," McCainzie said.

As the tornado was slamming into the Raleigh mobile home, another trailer park roughly 100 miles to the south was about 20 minutes from being smashed by a second storm.

Larry Tanner had heard the warnings on TV. At home with his wife and two of his three children, he looked outside and it was sunny. But his son, a volunteer firefighter, came home to alert him that a tornado had touched down nearby.

Arizona Gov. Vetoes Presidential 'Birther' Bill

PHOENIX (AP) — Arizona Gov. Jan Brewer on Monday vetoed a bill to require President Barack Obama and other presidential candidates to prove their U.S. citizenship before their names can appear on the state's ballot.

The bill vetoed by Brewer on Monday would have made Arizona the first state to pass such a requirement. The Arizona bill included proof-of-qualification for all candidates appearing on Arizona ballots, with those varying by the office sought.

Hawaii officials have certified Obama was born in that state, but so-called "birthers" have demanded more proof.

Brewer said in her veto letter that she was troubled that the bill empowered Arizona's secretary of state to judge the qualifications of all candidates when they file to run for office.

"I do not support designating one person as the gatekeeper to the ballot for a candidate, which could lead to arbitrary or politically motivated decisions," said Brewer, who was secretary of state until she became governor in 2009.

"In addition, I never imagined being presented with a bill that could require candidates for president of the greatest and most powerful nation on Earth to submit their 'early baptismal circumcision certificates' among other records to the Arizona secretary of state," she said. "This is a bridge too far."

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