

## NATION/WORLD DIGEST

## Obama Signs Bill To Help Teachers

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Barack Obama has signed a bill that he says will save hundreds of thousands of teachers and other public workers from unemployment.

Obama signed the measure into law just hours after the House passed it in a special one-day session during what would normally be the lawmakers' summer break.

The \$26 billion bill would protect 300,000 teachers, police and others from election-year layoffs. Obama and Democrats said quick action was necessary before children return to classrooms minus teachers laid off because of budgetary crises in states that have been hard-hit by the recession.

Republicans called the bill a giveaway to teachers unions and an example of wasteful Washington spending.

## No New Safety Defects In Runaway Toyotas

WASHINGTON (AP) — Government investigators have found no new safety defects beyond problems with accelerator pedals that explain reports of sudden acceleration in Toyotas, according to preliminary findings by the Transportation Department.

Safety experts have said vehicle electronic systems could be to blame for the massive recalls but the initial review by the government has found no evidence of those problems.

Toyota has recalled about 9.5 million cars and trucks since October.

The Transportation Department says it has not found any new causes of the problems beyond two previously identified problems — floor mat entrapment and sticking accelerator pedals.

## Tropical Depression Forms, Heads For Spill

MIAMI (AP) — The National Hurricane Center says a tropical depression has formed in the Gulf of Mexico and it is heading toward the oil spill site off the coast of Louisiana.

BP and Coast Guard officials had already decided to stop drilling on a relief well on Tuesday, before forecasters declared the storm off the southwestern part of Florida was a depression.

A tropical storm warning was issued for much of the Gulf coast affected by the oil spill, from Destin, Fla., to Intracoastal City, La.

The center of the storm was located about 375 miles (600 kilometers) southeast of the mouth of the Mississippi River. It was moving northwest about 6 mph (9 kmh) with winds of 35 mph (55 kmh).

It was expected to strengthen slowly and become a tropical storm on Wednesday.

## Fed Takes Small Step To Bolster Recovery

WASHINGTON (AP) — Worried about the economy, the Federal Reserve is taking a small step to bolster the sputtering recovery.

At the end of its meeting Tuesday, the Fed said it will use money from its investments in mortgage securities to buy government debt on a small scale. That could help nudge down long term rates on mortgages and corporate debt but wouldn't have a dramatic impact.

The Fed says economic growth will be "more modest" than it had thought just seven weeks ago.

Economists doubt the Fed can turn around the economy on its own. Some believe additional help from Congress is needed. Others are skeptical that easier credit or even more government aid will persuade Americans to shop more and hire more.

## Rangel Not Quitting Despite Ethics Case

WASHINGTON (AP) — New York Democrat Charles Rangel says he's not resigning, despite 13 charges of ethical wrongdoing.

In a rambling floor speech Tuesday, Rangel told colleagues: "I am not going away."

The former Ways and Means Committee chairman pleaded with the ethics committee, "Don't leave me swinging in the wind."

Rangel told the House that he made mistakes but that he is not corrupt. He said, "I'm not asking for leniency. I'm asking for exposure of the facts."

## House Approves More Agents On Border

WASHINGTON (AP) — The House has approved \$600 million to pay for more unmanned surveillance drones and about 1,500 more agents along the troubled Mexican border.

The House passed the bill by an unrecorded voice vote after brief debate. Both parties agree on tougher security on the border but they are deeply divided over a more comprehensive approach to the illegal immigration issue.

The bill would offset the costs by raising fees on foreign-based personnel companies that use U.S. visa programs to bring skilled workers to the United States. These include the popular H-1B visa program. India says higher fees would discriminate against its companies and workers.

Final passage is unlikely to happen until after Congress's summer recess.

## Son Of Convicted Stealth Expert Vows Appeal

HONOLULU (AP) — The son of a former B-2 stealth bomber engineer who was convicted of selling military secrets to China is vowing an appeal.

Ashton Gowadia told The Associated Press on Tuesday an appeal is already in the works. But he says it can't be submitted until his 66-year-old father, Noshir Gowadia, is sentenced in November.

The elder Gowadia was found guilty Monday on charges that he designed a cruise missile component for China and pocketed at least \$110,000. The decision came after six days of deliberations at a federal court in Honolulu.

The 44-year Ashton Gowadia, who lives in Laguna Beach, Calif., says the jury ignored exculpatory evidence that should have cleared his father.

He says his dad, who remains jailed, was devastated by the guilty verdict, and his family was stunned.

## Wholesale Inventories Up In June; Sales Drop

WASHINGTON (AP) — Inventories at the wholesale level edged up slightly in June but sales fell by the largest amount in 15 months.

The Commerce Department says wholesale inventories rose 0.1 percent in June. Sales fell 0.7 percent. It marked the second straight drop in sales, providing further evidence that the economy was slowing in the spring.

Businesses helped drive the early stages of the recovery last year by building up their stocks after slashing them during the recession. The worry is that if consumer demand falters, business could cut back on their inventory restocking and deal a blow to manufacturing production.

## Nurses Fear Even More Assaults With Cuts

COLUMBUS, Ohio (AP) — Violence against nurses and other medical professionals appears to be on the rise around the country — as more and more drug addicts, alcoholics and psychiatric patients visit emergency rooms.

And nurses have responded, in part, by seeking tougher criminal penalties for assaults against health care workers.

An Associated Press review has found the downturn in the economy has made the problem worse. Cash-strapped states are closing state hospitals, cutting mental health jobs, eliminating addiction programs and curtailing other services.

Federal figures show ER visits related to drugs and alcohol rose from about 1.6 million in 2005 to nearly 2 million in 2008. Violence reports shot up from more than 16,000 in 2006 to more than 21,000 in 2008.

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## Former Alaska Sen. Stevens Dies In Crash

## NASA Chief Injured In Accident

BY MARK THIESSEN AND BECKY BOHRER

Associated Press Writers

DILLINGHAM, Alaska — An amphibious plane carrying former Sen. Ted Stevens crashed into a remote Alaska mountainside, killing the state's most beloved political figure and four others and stranding the survivors on a rocky, brush-covered slope overnight until rescuers could reach them.

Stevens and the eight other people in the single-engine plane were on a fishing trip when the flight experienced sudden fog and rain in a rugged section of southwestern Alaska and slammed into a mountainside. The passengers included former NASA chief Sean O'Keefe and three teenagers.

Volunteers discovered the wreckage late Monday and tended to the injured, including O'Keefe and his teenage son, during a damp and cold night on the mountain until help could arrive Tuesday.

The 86-year-old Stevens' death stunned lawmakers and residents alike because of his pre-eminence in Alaska history: A decorated World War II pilot who survived a deadly 1978 plane crash, he was the longest-serving GOP senator in history and became the patron saint of Alaska politics as he brought billions of federal dollars home.

One failed effort — the infamous "Bridges to Nowhere" — became part of his national legacy, as did corruption convictions that helped foil his 2008 campaign after 40 years in office. The cause was later tossed out.

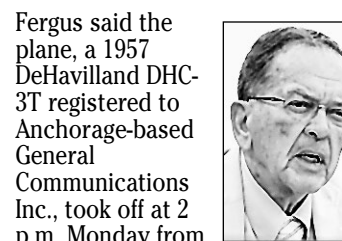
"He is one of the real giants," said Paul Brown, a consultant who was having lunch at an outdoor cafe in Anchorage. "He dedicated his life to this state."

Investigators with the National Transportation Safety Board arrived late Tuesday at the crash site outside Dillingham, located on Bristol Bay about 325 miles southwest of Anchorage. The cause was not immediately known, but the flights at Dillingham are often perilous through the mountains, even in good weather.

Federal Aviation Administration spokesman Mike



Survivors from the plane crash near Dillingham, Alaska, are transferred from a U.S. Coast Guard C-130 to Anchorage Fire Department paramedic vehicles on Tuesday, August 10, 2010.



Stevens



O'Keefe

Fergus said the plane, a 1957 DeHavilland DHC-3T registered to Anchorage-based General Communications Inc., took off at 2 p.m. Monday from a GCI corporate site on Lake Nerka, heading to a lodge on Lake Aleknagik.

He said the plane was flying by visual flight rules, and was not required to file a flight plan.

National Weather Service data shows that weather conditions deteriorated between 1 p.m. and 2 p.m. Monday — the approximate time the FAA said the plane took off. Visibility at Dillingham, the nearest observation area, was about 10 miles with overcast skies at 1:49 p.m.; it was three miles by 2:22 p.m., with light rain, fog and mist reported.

Volunteer pilots were dispatched around 7 p.m. after the plane was overdue at its destination. They came upon the wreckage about a half hour later, authorities said. Rescuers could not arrive until after daybreak because fog and rain made it too difficult to reach the site.

Four survivors were taken to Providence Hospital in Anchorage with "varying degrees of injuries," Alaska State Troopers said. The survivors include O'Keefe, 54; his teenage son, who was listed in serious

condition late Tuesday afternoon; William "Willy" Phillips Jr., 13; and Jim Morhard, of Alexandria, Va. Former NASA spokesman Glenn Mahone said the O'Keefes had broken bones and other injuries.

The victims were identified as Stevens; pilot Theron "Terry" Smith, 62, of Eagle River; William "Bill" Phillips Sr.; Dana Tindall, 48, of Anchorage and a CGI executive; and Corey Tindall, 16, of Anchorage.

Megan Peters, a spokeswoman for the troopers, said that the bodies have been recovered and were being taken to Anchorage.

Stevens and O'Keefe were fishing companions and longtime Washington colleagues who worked together on the Senate Appropriations Committee that the Republican lawmaker led for several years.

The Stevens crash is the latest in a long line of aviation accidents to claim political figures over the years in the U.S., including Pennsylvania Sen. John Heinz in 1991, South Dakota Gov. George Mickelson in 1993, Missouri Gov. Mel Carnahan in 2000 and Minnesota Sen. Paul Wellstone in 2002.

Plane crashes in Alaska are somewhat common because of the treacherous weather and

mountainous terrain. Many parts of the state are not accessible by roads, forcing people to travel by air to reach their destinations.

In a similar accident by another GCI-owned plane, an amphibious, float-equipped Havilland plane flipped after landing on Lake Nerka in 2002. The pilot drowned and a passenger was injured. The plane was landing on the lake in front of the lodge when the accident occurred.

Stevens was one of two survivors in a 1978 plane crash at Anchorage International Airport that killed his wife, Ann, and several others. In 1972, Nick Begich, who was Alaska's only congressman, was killed when his plane disappeared over Alaska with then-House Majority Leader Hale Boggs of Louisiana.

"Alaska has lost one of its greatest statesmen and a true pioneer of our state with the passing of Senator Ted Stevens," said Begich's son, Mark, an Anchorage Democrat who narrowly defeated Stevens in 2008.

His counterpart, Sen. Lisa Murkowski, said the state had lost a hero and "I lost a dear friend," praising his service during World War II. He flew cargo planes over "the hump" in the Himalayas and was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross.

A White House spokesman said President Barack Obama called Stevens' widow, Catherine, on Tuesday afternoon to express his condolences.

## U.S. Sending Ground Zero Mosque Imam To Mideast

BY MATTHEW LEE  
Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON — The imam behind controversial plans for a mosque near the site of the Sept. 11 attacks is being sent by the State Department on a religious outreach trip to the Middle East, officials said Tuesday, in a move that drew criticism from conservative lawmakers.

The department is sponsoring Imam Feisal Abdul Rauf's visit to Qatar, Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates, where he will discuss Muslim life in America and promote religious tolerance, spokesman P.J. Crowley said. He said the imam had been on two similar trips and that plans for the upcoming tour predated the mosque controversy.

"We have a long-term relationship with him," Crowley told reporters, noting that Rauf had visited Bahrain, Morocco, the United Arab Emirates and Qatar in 2007 and went to Egypt last January as part of an exchange program run by the State Department's Office of International Information Programs.

"His work on tolerance and religious diversity is well-known and he brings a moderate perspective to foreign audiences on what it's like to be a practicing Muslim in the United States," Crowley said.

Rauf will not be allowed to raise funds for the proposed center during the trip, Crowley said. Two Republican members of Congress, Reps. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen of Florida and Peter King of New York, called government sponsorship of Rauf's trip "unacceptable" in a joint statement. They said he had suggested in at least one interview that the United

States was to blame for the 2001 attacks and that taxpayer money should not be used to fund the tour.

"The State Department's selection of Feisal Abdul Rauf to represent the American people through this program further calls into question the administration's policy and funding priorities," Ros-Lehtinen and King, who are the ranking members of the Foreign Affairs and Homeland Security committees, said in their statement.

The mosque, to be located two blocks from ground zero, would be part of a 13-story, \$100 million Islamic center that would feature a 500-seat auditorium, a swimming pool and a gym. It's a project of the Cordoba Initiative, an advocacy group that promotes improved relations between Islam and the West.

The mosque has drawn vocal opposition from many relatives of Sept. 11 victims and local and national Republican leaders. The Anti-Defamation League, a Jewish civil rights group, is also opposed.

Crowley said the Obama administration has no position on Rauf's plans, which he termed a local zoning matter for New York. But he acknowledged that the State Department had posted a transcript of New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg's Aug. 3 speech defending the project on a website that it runs for foreign audiences.

"We posted it because we thought it was useful for people overseas to understand perspectives on this issue," Crowley said. "We certainly support what the mayor was underscoring, which is the history of religious diversity and religious tolerance in his city."



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