

NATION/WORLD DIGEST

Clinton Chides Russia On Georgia Agreement

TBILISI, Georgia (AP) — U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton rebuked Russia on Monday for failing to live up to the cease-fire agreement it signed nearly two years ago to end the fighting in this small former Soviet state.

She asserted that Russia is occupying parts of Georgia and building permanent military bases in contravention of the truce.

"We're calling on the Russians to enforce the agreement they signed," she told a news conference with Georgian President Mikhail Saakashvili at her side. She said that includes pulling its troops back to the positions they held before the invasion.

Several times she pointedly referred to Russian troops as occupiers of the breakaway Georgian territories of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. She said the U.S. was "appalled and totally rejected" Russia's rationale for the invasion, which temporarily put U.S.-Russian relations in a deep freeze and prompted NATO to suspend cooperation with Moscow.

About 1M To Gain Health Coverage By 2011

WASHINGTON (AP) — The first stage of President Barack Obama's health care overhaul is expected to provide coverage to about 1 million uninsured Americans by next year, according to government estimates.

That's a small share of the uninsured, but in a shaky economy, experts say it's notable.

Many others — more than 100 million people — are getting new benefits that improve their existing coverage.

Overall costs appear modest at this point, split among taxpayers, employers and individuals who directly benefit, although the biggest part of the health care expansion is still four years away.

For weeks, the White House has been touting the new law's initial benefit changes, even as Obama dares Republicans to make good on their threat to repeal his signature social policy achievement. Now, a clearer picture is starting to emerge from the patchwork of press releases.

Israel Officials Ease Gaza Closure

KEREM SHALOM CROSSING, Israel (AP) — Israel is easing its blockade of Hamas-ruled Gaza to allow in virtually all consumer goods, but the new rules are unlikely to restore the territory's devastated economy or allow rebuilding of all that was destroyed in last year's war.

The White House welcomed the changes that were announced Monday as Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu flew to Washington for a meeting with President Barack Obama. International Mideast envoy Tony Blair said Israel's measures "should have a dramatic influence on the daily lives of the people of Gaza and on the private sector."

The new blockade rules come in response to an outcry following a deadly Israeli raid on a blockade-busting flotilla at the end of May.

The changes will improve Gazans' access to goods from household cleaners to timber, but Israel will continue to ban most travel and exports from Gaza and restrict the import of desperately needed construction materials.

Imam Tied To Terrorism Case Leaves U.S.

NEW YORK (AP) — The imam entangled in the investigation into a suicide bomb plot against New York City subway stations left the U.S. Monday on court orders after admitting he lied to the FBI. Among his final words on U.S. soil, his lawyer says, were "God bless America."

Ahmad Wais Alzali and his wife Fatima took off on a Saudi Arabian Airlines flight to Jeddah and then will go on to Mecca, where Fatima got a job teaching English, said the lawyer, Ron Kuby. Alzali, who was born in Afghanistan but spent most of his life in Queens, isn't sure what he's going to do there, Kuby said. Most of his family lives in Virginia, including two children from a previous marriage.

Alzali pleaded guilty April 15 in the federal case and was sentenced to time served — four days — but ordered to leave the country in 90 days.

Authorities sought help last fall from the imam, a previously reliable police source, as they scrambled to thwart the plot by Najibullah Zazi, a Colorado airport van driver who pleaded guilty in the case.

The 38-year-old imam said he had wanted to help authorities in the investigation of the threat but lied under grilling by the FBI about his phone conversations with Zazi. Alzali lied when he said he never told Zazi that he was under surveillance in New York.

Alzali said that he never meant to further the plot or deceive the government.

"It was not just something he said at sentencing, he genuinely loves this country very much," Kuby said. "Unfortunately he was caught in a turf battle between the NYPD and the FBI."

Manson Follower Seeks Parole For 19th Time

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Leslie Van Houten, the one-time Charles Manson follower long seen as the most likely of his ex-acolytes to win freedom someday, faces her 19th parole hearing with a new lawyer and new case law which may give her the best chance yet for release.

Even if there is a finding of suitability for parole at Tuesday's hearing, freedom would not be immediate. The entire state parole board would review the decision within 120 days and it would then be submitted to Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger for a final ruling.

Van Houten, 60, remains incarcerated at the California Institution for Women at Frontera, the same prison where another Manson follower, Patricia Krenwinkel, is imprisoned.

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Oil Spill Hitting All Gulf States

Tar Balls Now Showing Up Along Texas Coastline

BY JUAN A. LOZANO
Associated Press Writer

TEXAS CITY, Texas — Tar balls from the Gulf oil spill found on a Texas beach were confirmed Monday as the first evidence that gushing crude from the Deepwater Horizon well has reached all the Gulf states.

A Coast Guard official said it was possible that the oil hitched a ride on a ship and was not carried naturally by currents to the barrier islands of the eastern Texas coast, but there was no way to know for sure.

The amount discovered is tiny in comparison to what has coated beaches so far in the hardest-hit parts of the Gulf coast in Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama and the Florida Panhandle. It still provoked the quick dispatch of cleaning crews and a vow that BP will pay for the trouble.

"Any Texas shores impacted by the Deepwater spill will be cleaned up quickly and BP will be picking up the tab," Texas Land Commissioner Jerry Patterson said in a news release.

The oil's arrival in Texas was predicted Friday by an analysis from the National Oceanic and

Atmospheric Administration, which gave a 40 percent chance of crude reaching the area.

"It was just a matter of time that some of the oil would find its way to Texas," said Hans Graber, a marine physicist at the University of Miami and co-director of the Center for Southeastern Tropical Advanced Remote Sensing.

About five gallons of tar balls were found Saturday on the Bolivar Peninsula, northeast of Galveston, said Capt. Marcus Woodring, the Coast Guard commander for the Houston/Galveston sector. Two gallons were found Sunday on the peninsula and Galveston Island, though tests have not yet confirmed its origin.

Woodring said the consistency of the tar balls indicates it's possible they could have been spread to Texas water by ships that have worked out in the spill. But there's no way to confirm the way they got there.

The largest tar balls found Saturday were the size of ping-pong balls, while the ones found Sunday were the size of nickels and dimes.

Galveston Mayor Joe Jaworski said he believed the tar balls were a fluke, rather than a sign of what's to come.

"This is good news," he said. "The water looks good. We're cautiously optimistic this is an anomaly."

The distance between the western reach of the tar balls in Texas and the most eastern reports of oil in Florida is about 550 miles. Oil was first spotted on land near the mouth of the Mississippi River on April 29.

The spill is reaching deeper into Louisiana. Strings of oil were seen Monday in the Rigolets, one of two waterways that connect the Gulf with Lake Pontchartrain, the large lake north of New Orleans.

"So far it's scattered stuff showing up, mostly tar balls," said Louisiana Office of Fisheries Assistant Secretary Randy Pausina. "It will pull out with the tide, and then show back up."

Pausina said he expected the oil to clear the passes and move directly into the lake, taking a backdoor route to New Orleans.

The news of the spill's reach comes at a time that most of the offshore skimming operations in the Gulf have been halted by choppy seas and high winds. A tropical system that had been lingering off Louisiana flared up Monday afternoon, bringing heavy rain and winds.

Forecasters at the National Hurricane Center said there was a 60 percent of the storm becoming a tropical cyclone.

Dutch Agency Admits Mistakes In Climate Report

Review: Errors Don't Change Report's Conclusion

BY ARTHUR MAX
Associated Press Writer

THE HAGUE, Netherlands — A leading Dutch environmental agency, taking the blame for one of the glaring errors that undermined the credibility of a seminal U.N. report on climate change, said Monday it has discovered more small mistakes and urged the panel to be more careful.

But the review by the Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency claimed that none of the errors effected the fundamental conclusion by U.N. panel of scientists: that global warming caused by humans already is happening and is threatening the lives and well-being of millions of people.

Mistakes discovered in the 3,000-page report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change last year fed into an atmosphere of skepticism over the reliability of climate scientists who have been warning for many years that human-induced emissions of greenhouse gases could have catastrophic consequences, including rising sea levels, drought and the extinction of nearly one-third of the Earth's species.

The errors put scientists on the defensive in the months before a major summit on climate change

in Copenhagen in December, which met with only limited success on agreeing how to limit carbon emissions and contain the worst effects of global warming.

The underlying IPCC conclusions remain valid, said Maarten Hajer, the Dutch agency's director. The IPCC report is not a house of cards that collapses with one error, but is more like a puzzle with many pieces that need to fit together. "So the errors do not affect the whole construction," he said at a news conference.

But he said the boiled-down version of the full IPCC report, a synthesis meant as a guideline for policymakers, included conclusions drawn from "expert judgments" that were not always clearly sourced or transparent.

With some conclusions, "we can't say it's plainly wrong. We don't know," and can't tell from the supporting text, Hajer said. The IPCC should be "careful making generalizations."

The IPCC, in a statement from its Geneva headquarters, wel-

comed the agency's findings, which it said confirmed the IPCC's conclusion that "continued climate change will pose serious challenges to human well-being and sustainable development."

It said it will "pay close attention" to the agency's recommendations to tighten up review procedures.

The Dutch agency accepted responsibility for one mistake by the IPCC when it reported in 2005 that 55 percent of the Netherlands is below sea level, when only 26 percent is. The report should have said 55 percent is prone to flood-

ing, including river flooding.

The mistake happened when a long report was compressed into a short one, and two figures were meshed into one. "Something was lost, and it wasn't spotted," said Hajer.

"The incorrect wording in the IPCC report does not affect the message of the conclusion," that the Netherlands is highly susceptible to sea level rise, the agency's report said. "The lesson to be learned for an assessment agency such as ours is that quality control is needed at the primary level."

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