

NATION/WORLD DIGEST

Accused Spies Prep For Possible Exchange

WASHINGTON (AP) — U.S. and Russian officials met secretly on two continents Wednesday in a likely prelude to one of the largest swaps of accused spies in decades, a Cold War relic showing the high-stakes race for covert intelligence between East and West endures in the new century.

Five suspects charged with spying in the U.S. were hurriedly ordered to New York, joining five others already behind bars there, after a Russian arms-control researcher convicted of spying for the West came out of the cold of his forlorn penal colony by the Arctic Circle and was transferred to Moscow.

Researcher Igor Sutyagin signed a confession even while continuing to assert his innocence, his brother said, describing that event as one in a series laying the groundwork for Russia to release him and others accused of espionage in exchange for members of an alleged spy ring broken in the U.S.

Officials in neither country would confirm a swap was in the works. But the machinations — including a meeting in Washington between U.S. officials and the Russian ambassador — had all the hallmarks as the two former Cold War antagonists moved to tamp down tensions stirred by the U.S. arrests.

The trade could be the largest since 25 prisoners in Poland and East Germany and four in the United States were exchanged in 1985, the convicted or accused spies leaving their captors on the Glienecke Bridge between East Germany and West Berlin in the waning years of the Soviet Bloc.

Triple-Digit Heat Brings Misery To East

NEW YORK (AP) — It's blistering. Scorching. Steamy. Brutal. Baking. Torrid. Ovenlike. It's run-out-of-adjectives hot.

"A volcano — that's what it feels like to me," said Wayne Reid, mopping his brow and swigging bottled water after walking three blocks to a New York subway station Wednesday morning. He was dressed for the heat — already a sticky 90 degrees and headed into triple digits — in shorts and a tank top, but it didn't matter.

"You could run butt-naked out there, and it would still be hot," he said.

Heat waves are more oppressive in big cities, because concrete, asphalt and steel absorb more solar energy during the day and are slow to release it after the sun goes down, offering people little relief at night.

In the nation's biggest city of them all, Wall Streeters are sweltering in business suits on subway platforms, senior citizens are schlepping to the grocery store on streets that seem like frying pans, and New Yorkers overall are handling it by doing what they do best: coping, with a little complaining thrown in.

Buried BP Oil Complicates Cleanup

GULF SHORES, Ala. (AP) — There's a dirty secret buried under Gulf of Mexico beaches after cleanup workers scrape away the oil washing ashore.

Walk to a seemingly pristine patch of sand, plo down in a chair and start digging with your bare feet, like everyone does at the beach. Chances are you'll walk away with goeey tar between your toes.

So far, cleanup workers hired by BP have skimmed only the surface, using shovels or sifting machines to remove oil. The company is planning a deeper cleaning program that could include washing or incinerating sand once the leak is stopped off the coast of Louisiana.

Some experts question whether it's better to just leave it alone and let nature run its course, in part because oil that weathers on beaches isn't considered as much of a health hazard as fresh crude. Some environmentalists and local officials fret about harm to the ecosystem and tourism.

"We have to have sand that is just as clean as it was before the spill," said Tony Kennon, the mayor of Orange Beach, a popular tourist stretch reaching to the Florida state line.

L.A. Police Make Arrest In Serial Killings

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Police charged a man Wednesday in the city's "Grim Sleeper" serial killings after decades of frustrated investigations into at least 11 slayings dating back 25 years, authorities said. Lonnie Franklin Jr., 57, was charged with 10 counts of murder, one count of attempted murder and special circumstance allegations of multiple murders that could make him eligible for the death penalty if convicted, District Attorney Steve Cooley said.

"Today is a good day," Donnell Alexander, the brother of victim Monique Alexander, said as he watched police activity outside the South Los Angeles house where the arrest was made earlier in the day.

Detectives have spent years probing slayings between 1985 and 2007 in which the killer targeted young black women and one man. The attacker was dubbed the "Grim Sleeper" because he apparently took a 14-year hiatus from his crimes.

Dozens of police officials closed off a block around the 81st Street house where the arrest was made.

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BRIDGE

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got him to call us," Hunhoff said. "I think he was being pretty careful. He didn't want to say much, but he did acknowledge that he was the guy and did it for fun."

The search, which had employed aircraft and boats and included a variety of agencies and volunteers, was subsequently ended.

"We haven't had a chance to discuss yet whether this is the end of the matter or whether charges might be appropriate," Hunhoff said. "I don't know if it's worth our time. I may also speak with the Yankton County state's attorney to see whether it's possible to bring any civil action against him."

It was a relief to discover that no one had drowned, Hunhoff said, but it was disappointing to learn that one person's "fun" had caused such a disturbance to so many.

"We've got a lot of really good first responders in this community," Hunhoff said. "A lot of them are volunteers and not getting paid for their efforts. This

kind of thing, in this case, ruined their Fourth of July, or at least cut it short. It put them out working when they should have been out relaxing with their families. They get called out enough on serious stuff without having to go out on this type of nonsense."

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Blagojevich Trial Hears About Jackson Jr. Backer

BY MIKE ROBINSON AND MICHAEL TARM
Associated Press Writers

CHICAGO — Prosecutors said Wednesday that a former state official has told them he was on hand for a meeting at which a businessman told Rep. Jesse Jackson Jr. he would raise \$1 million for Rod Blagojevich's campaign if the governor would appoint Jackson to the Senate.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Chris Niewoehner told federal Judge James B. Zagel that the state's former international trade director, Rajinder Bedi, would testify if asked that his friend, Raghuvver Nayak, made the remark while talking with Jackson at a downtown Chicago restaurant in October 2008.

"I will raise \$1 million for Blagojevich if he appoints you

to the Senate seat," Bedi has quoted Nayak as saying, Niewoehner said at Blagojevich's corruption trial — outside of the jury's hearing.

Jackson, a congressman from Chicago's South Side and adjacent suburbs, has said for the last 18 months that he knew nothing of any alleged scheme to use campaign fundraising to buy his way into the Senate seat Barack Obama was leaving to move to the White House.

The possibility that unspecified Jackson well-wishers had offered substantial campaign money to Blagojevich in hopes that the congressman would get the seat first surfaced in an FBI affidavit filed the day of the former governor's arrest on corruption charges in December 2008.

Jackson, a son of the prominent civil rights leader, has not been accused of wrongdoing. He

did not immediately respond to messages seeking comment left at his offices on Capitol Hill and in suburban Homewood.

Nayak, who also is not accused of wrongdoing, did not immediately reply to a message left on his answering machine.

Niewoehner's quote was offered to Zagel with the jury out of the room, and the judge immediately barred prosecutors from allowing jurors to hear specifics such as the alleged \$1 million figure or the allegation that Nayak spoke directly of trading money for the seat.

Zagel said the testimony amounted to hearsay and was not admissible. He did allow Bedi to testify that he had attended the Oct. 28 meeting with Jackson and Nayak in a restaurant near City Hall. He also allowed Bedi to testify that he spoke of the matter later to the governor's brother Robert

Blagojevich, a Nashville, Tenn., businessman who was heading his campaign fund at the time.

Bedi said he told Robert Blagojevich that Nayak was close to Jackson's family and "very interested in getting Jackson appointed to the Senate seat." He also told him that Nayak "could raise a lot of money" for campaigns. But Bedi also said the response was negative.

"He said, 'My brother will never appoint him (Jackson) to the Senate seat if Obama is elected president,'" Bedi testified.

Rod Blagojevich, 53, has pleaded not guilty to trying to get a high-paying job or massive campaign contribution in return for appointment to the seat. He has also pleaded not guilty to taking part in a racketeering scheme using the powers of the governor's office.

U.S. Reaches Plea Deal At Guantanamo Trial

BY BEN FOX
Associated Press Writer

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico — One of the first terrorism suspects taken to Guantanamo Bay reached a plea deal Wednesday with military prosecutors, giving President Barack Obama's administration its first conviction of a prisoner at the detention center in Cuba that it is struggling to close.

Ibrahim Ahmed Mahmoud al-Qosi pleaded guilty to one count each of providing material support for terrorism and conspiracy at a hearing before a military judge, sparing him from additional counts at trial.

Terms of the plea deal, including any limits on his sentence, were not publicly disclosed.

Al-Qosi — who has been held at Guantanamo since January 2002 — is scheduled to be sentenced by a panel of officers in August. Military legal authorities

can reject the panel's sentencing decision if it exceeds what was agreed upon as part of the plea deal, said Navy Capt. David Iglesias, a spokesman for military commissions prosecutors.

The 50-year-old from Sudan faced a potential life sentence if convicted at trial. Iglesias declined to say how much more time, if any, the prisoner could serve under the agreement.

"Both sides reached an agreement that they felt was fair and it would be against the interests of justice not to accept it," Iglesias said in a phone interview from the Navy base in southeast Cuba.

Defense lawyers declined to comment to reporters.

Al-Qosi was accused of acting as accountant, paymaster, supply chief and cook for al-Qaida during the 1990s when the terror network was centered in Sudan and Afghanistan. He allegedly worked later as a bodyguard for

Osama bin Laden. He told the judge at his hearing that he acknowledged his offenses and he understood his plea deal but did not speak at length.

The military commissions at Guantanamo have been stalled

for years by legal challenges and changes to the rules for prosecuting prisoners. Human rights groups say the system is still unfair and have said any prosecutions should be in civilian courts in the United States.

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