

## Peaks On Pluto Seen In 1st Close-Ups

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP) — Mankind's first close-up look at Pluto did not disappoint Wednesday. The pictures showed ice mountains on Pluto about as high as the Rockies and chasms on its big moon Charon that appear six times deeper than the Grand Canyon.

Especially astonishing to scientists was the total absence of impact craters in a zoom-in shot of one otherwise rugged slice of Pluto. That suggests that Pluto is not the dead ice ball many people think, but is instead geologically active even now, its surface sculpted not by collisions with cosmic debris but by its internal heat, the scientific team reported.

Breathtaking in their clarity, the long-awaited images were unveiled in Laurel, Maryland, home to mission operations for NASA's New Horizons, the unmanned spacecraft that paid a history-making flyby visit to the dwarf planet on Tuesday after a journey of 9 1/2 years and 3 billion miles.

"I don't think any one of us could have imagined that it was this good of a toy store," principal scientist Alan Stern said at a news conference. He marveled: "I think the whole system is amazing. ... The Pluto system IS something wonderful."

As a tribute to Pluto's discoverer, Stern and his team named the bright heart-shaped area on the surface of Pluto the Tombaugh Regio. American astronomer Clyde Tombaugh spied the frozen, faraway world on the edge of the solar system in 1930.

## Fictitious Persons Enrolled For Benefits

WASHINGTON (AP) — Phony applicants that investigators signed up last year under President Barack Obama's health care law got automatically re-enrolled for 2015. Some were rewarded with even bigger taxpayer subsidies for their insurance premiums, a congressional probe has found.

The nonpartisan Government Accountability Office says 11 counterfeit characters that its investigators created last year were automatically re-enrolled by HealthCare.gov, even though most had unresolved documentation issues. In Obama's terms, they got to keep the coverage they had.

Six of those later were flagged and sent termination notices. But GAO said it was able to get five of them reinstated by calling HealthCare.gov's consumer service center. That seemed to be a weak link in the system.

The five bogus beneficiaries who were reinstated even got their monthly subsidies bumped up a bit, although GAO did not ask for it. The case of the sixth fake enrollee who appealed was under review.

HealthCare.gov does not appear to be set up to detect fraud, GAO audits and investigations chief Seto Bagdoyan said in prepared testimony for a Senate Finance Committee hearing Thursday. A copy was provided to The Associated Press.

## Sex Offender Charged With Murder

WHEATON, Md. (AP) — Forty years after two young sisters vanished from a suburban Maryland mall, an imprisoned sex offender has been charged with murder, authorities said Wednesday, bringing some clarity to a baffling case that made parents afraid to let their children out of the house.

Lloyd Michael Welch Jr., 58, told authorities he was with the girls when they were abducted in March 1975 but denied any role in their deaths. Sheila Lyon, 12, and Katharine Lyon, 10, had walked a few blocks from their house to the Wheaton Plaza Mall to shop for Easter decorations and eat lunch. They never came home.

After decades of investigating leads and periodically identifying suspects, a break in the case came in 2013, according to an affidavit. A cold-case detective uncovered an interview that Welch gave to police in 1975. The detective compared a photo of Welch to a composite sketch from a witness who saw someone following the girls at the mall, and he saw "a strong likeness," the affidavit said.

Welch, who is serving a lengthy prison term in Delaware, was indicted by a grand jury in Bedford County, Virginia, on Friday on two charges of first-degree felony murder, though the girls' bodies were never found. The indictment, unsealed Wednesday, says the murders were committed during an abduction with intent to defile.

"We know what Katharine and Sheila were like. ... These were wonderful, wonderful, naive, young children," said John McCarthy, state's attorney for Montgomery County, Maryland.

## Drug Lord's Escape Tunnel Investigated

ALMOLOYA, Mexico (AP) — Mexico's most prized prisoner paced his cell, first to the latrine, then the shower, then the bed. At every turn around the tiny room, drug lord Joaquin "El Chapo" Guzman checked the shower floor hidden by a half wall, because even jailed criminals get their privacy.

In his final sweep, Guzman sat on his bed and took off his shoes. Then he walked back to the shower, stooped behind the wall and disappeared. It was the beginning of an escape odyssey straight out of the pages of fiction, and the media were given a peek on Tuesday of the deep and sophisticated tunnel that led the leader of the Sinaloa cartel, whose illicit drug trafficking reach includes Europe and Asia, swiftly to freedom late Saturday night.

On Wednesday, about 30 people who said they were relatives of prison guards detained since Guzman's escape protested outside the Altiplano prison. They declined to give their names, but some carried signs calling for "due process" and "no witch hunt." They said they had not been allowed to speak to their relatives since the escape.

Government video of Guzman's final moments in his cell and journalists' climb into the tunnel put real dimensions to a high-tech engineering feat three stories underground, where planners and builders managed to burrow through dirt and rock right to the one spot in Guzman's cell that surveillance cameras couldn't see.

Mexico's security commissioner Monte Alejandro Rubido said Tuesday that up to the moment Guzman disappeared, his pacing was considered normal for someone who lives in about 5 square meters (60 square feet) with only an hour a day outside for exercise. But there was nothing usual after he lifted a slab of concrete shower floor and descended into a warm and humid man-made underworld, where a motorcycle rigged to two carts on rails waited to whisk him away.

## Testimony Unsealed In Cold War Case

WASHINGTON (AP) — The brother of Ethel Rosenberg, who was a star trial witness against his sister and brother-in-law in a sensational Cold War atomic spying case, never implicated his sister in an earlier appearance before a grand jury and said that they had never discussed her role "at all," according to secret court records unsealed Wednesday.

The revelation may heighten public suspicion that Ethel Rosenberg was wrongly convicted and executed in an espionage case that captivated the country at the height of the McCarthy-era frenzy about Communist allegiances.

Rosenberg and her husband Julius were put to death in 1953 after being convicted of conspiring to pass secrets about the atomic bomb to the Soviet Union, though they maintained their innocence until the end.

Historians and lawyers who reviewed the transcript said it appears to lend support to both sides of a dueling narrative — that Ethel Rosenberg was framed in an overzealous prosecution even as her husband appears to have played a central role in a sophisticated spy ring.

"You change a black-and-white Cold War narrative — framed or traitors? — into a very nuanced, gray area. Well, both," said Tom Blanton, director of the National Security Archive at George Washington University, which fought for the records.

# Iran Deal: Obama Validates Diplomatic Gamble

BY JULIE PACE

AP White House Correspondent

WASHINGTON — To President Barack Obama, the historic nuclear accord with Iran is a validation of an arduous, politically fraught diplomatic gamble, one he foreshadowed before winning the White House and one that will shape his legacy long after he leaves.

The deal to curb Iran's nuclear program may prevent Tehran from developing a bomb or being the target of U.S. military action during Obama's presidency. But whether the agreement succeeds in stemming Iran's nuclear ambitions after his tenure is a far murkier question.

The sheer amount of time and political capital Obama invested in the Iran talks has fueled speculation that he had too much at stake to walk away from the negotiating table, no matter the compromises in a final deal. Obama authorized secret talks with Iran in 2012, followed by nearly two years of formal negotiations alongside Britain, France, Germany, Russia and China. His rapprochement with Iran sent U.S. relations with Israel plummeting to near-historic lows and deepened tensions with Congress.

Even with the high-stakes implications of an Iranian nuclear program, the talks over time seemed to represent more than just the quest for a deal. They were a referendum on Obama's belief that even America's most ardent enemies can be brought in line by wielding diplomacy and economic pressure instead of military might.

"It represents the core of who he is and what his presidency stands for," said Julianne Smith, a former Obama White House and Pentagon official. "He needs it to validate that approach."

With the deal now in hand, one of Obama's top priorities is selling its virtues to skeptical lawmakers and world leaders, as well as the American public. He spent much of Tuesday calling leaders in Europe and the Middle East. On Wednesday, he planned to discuss the deal in a news conference, while dispatch-



OLIVIER DOULIERY/ABACA PRESS/TNS

President Barack Obama speaks during a press conference in the East Room of the White House on Wednesday, July 15 in Washington, D.C.

ing Vice President Joe Biden to Capitol Hill to meet with House Democrats.

"I'm here to answer questions and explain what the deal is and I'm confident they'll like it when they understand it all," Biden told reporters as he entered the closed-door session.

Rep. Gene Green, D-Texas, said Biden was trying to make a case for the agreement's longevity and said the reaction to the vice president's remarks were "pretty favorable."

Green added, "I'm pretty close to my Jewish community in Houston so I still have some questions."

Senior U.S. officials say Obama is sensitive to the perception he was desperate for a deal. With big gaps remaining as a June 30 deadline neared for a final agreement, officials said the president urged his team to send clear messages to Iran both publicly and privately that the U.S. was ready to end the talks without a deal.

"He did not want people to have the impression that this is something we needed to have," one official said, adding that Obama was frequently among the most pessimistic members of his national security team about the prospects of a deal.

Officials also pointed to

a video conference Obama convened with Kerry and other negotiators last week as an example of his willingness to forgo a deal. With momentum for an agreement building in Vienna and a deadline to limit congressional oversight looming, officials said Obama essentially rejected the deal at hand because timetables for keeping restrictions on Iran's nuclear program and a U.N. arms embargo in place were insufficient.

Negotiators blew through the congressional deadline and were able to extend the timelines, according to the officials, who insisted on the condition of anonymity in order to discuss the president's thinking.

Obama first planted the seeds for engagement with Iran as a presidential candidate, saying in a 2007 Democratic primary debate that he would be willing to meet with Iranian leaders without preconditions. His statements were ridiculed by Democratic rival Hillary Rodham Clinton, who went on to be his secretary of state and help jumpstart the secret negotiations with Iran.

The president's opening months in office included public and private overtures to Tehran, all with a more conciliatory tone aimed at signal-

ing a shift from predecessor George W. Bush, who cast Iran as part of an "axis of evil."

In a veiled reference to Iran in his inaugural address, Obama said he was willing to "extend a hand if you are willing to unclench your fist." He exchanged letters with Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. He used conciliatory language in a videotaped message to both the people and government of Iran on the Persian new year, calling for engagement "that is honest and grounded in mutual respect."

Obama has taken a similar approach — clandestine diplomacy, prioritizing negotiations over military action — to other foreign policy challenges, with mixed results. Plans to negotiate an end to Syria's bloody civil war have gone nowhere. A resumption of diplomatic relations with Cuba after a half-century of hostilities is moving along largely as planned.

Yet the stakes and the scope of the Iran effort stand apart, a reality not lost on Obama. While he talked of American strength and long-sought change Tuesday, he acknowledged in an interview with The Atlantic earlier this year that if Iran does ultimately get a bomb, "it's my name on this."

## Greek Lawmakers Pass Austerity Bill Despite Dissent

BY ELENA BECATOROS AND

DEREK GATOPOULOS

Associated Press

ATHENS, Greece — Greek lawmakers voted overwhelmingly early Thursday to approve a harsh austerity bill demanded by bailout creditors, despite significant dissent from members of Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras' own left-wing party.

The bill, which imposes sweeping tax hikes and spending cuts, fueled anger in the governing Syriza party and led to a revolt against Tsipras, who has insisted the deal forged after a marathon weekend eurozone summit was the best he could do to prevent Greece from catastrophically crashing out of the euro, Europe's joint currency.

The legislation was approved with 229 votes in favor, 64 against and six abstentions — and won the support of three pro-European opposition parties.

Among Syriza's 38 dissenters were prominent party members, including Energy Minister Panagiotis Lafazanis and former finance minister Yanis Varoufakis, who many blame for exacerbating tensions with Greece's creditors with his abrasive style during five months of tortured negotiations.

The post-midnight vote might not pose an immediate threat to Tsipras'

government, but it raised more doubts over whether it could implement the harsh new austerity program demanded by rescue lenders.

The vote came after an anti-austerity demonstration by about 12,000 protesters outside parliament degenerated into violence as the debate was getting underway Wednesday night. Riot police battled youths who hurled petrol bombs for about an hour before the clashes died down.

The bill was the first step Greece must take in order to begin negotiations with creditors on a new bailout — its third in five years — of about 85 billion euros (\$93 billion) in loans over three years.

Dissenters argued that Greeks could not face any further cuts after six years of recession that saw poverty and unemployment skyrocket and wiped out a quarter of the country's economy.

Tsipras has been battling all week to persuade party hard-liners to back the deal. He has acknowledged the agreement reached with creditors was far from what he wanted and trampled on his pre-election promises of repealing austerity, but insisted the alternative would have been far worse for the country.

"We had a very specific choice: A deal we largely disagreed with, or a chaotic default," he told parliament ahead of the vote.

Tsipras had urged Syriza members to back the bill despite having urged voters to reject earlier, milder creditor demands in a July 5 referendum. Greeks voted overwhelmingly to reject those proposals.

Finance Minister Euclid Tsakalotos, who took over from Varoufakis the day after the referendum, said the deal Greece reached with its creditors on Monday was the only possible choice.

"I must tell you, that Monday morning at 9:30, it was the most difficult day of my life. It was a decision that will weigh on me for the rest of my life," Tsakalotos said.

"I don't know if we did the right thing. But I know we did something with the sense that we had no choice. Nothing was certain and nothing is," he told parliament.

High-ranking dissenters included Alternate Finance Minister Nadia Valavani, who resigned from her post earlier Wednesday, saying she could not vote in favor of the bill.

In a letter sent to Tsipras on Monday and released by the finance ministry Wednesday, Valavani said she believed "dominant circles in Germany" were intent on "the full humiliation of the government and the country."

The economy ministry's secretary general, Manos Manousakis, also resigned over the measures.

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