

Oil Spill Catastrophe Will Last Well Into The Fall

BY PATRICIA MAZZEI, LESLEY CLARK AND MICHAEL VASQUEZ
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PENSACOLA, Fla. — Though BP's containment cap is now capturing an estimated hundreds of thousands of gallons of oil daily, the environmental catastrophe in the Gulf of Mexico will last "well into the fall," the federal government's oil-spill point-man said Sunday morning.

Coast Guard Adm. Thad Allen, in an appearance on CBS' "Face The Nation," said the containment cap's success does not represent a stop to the spill — something he said can only be achieved when the deep-water gusher is fully cemented shut. That final closure can't happen until the completion of a relief well that's still months away.

"It's not going to end soon," Allen said. The needed relief well should be finished by August, but Allen said there will still be oil spread throughout the Gulf at that point — making the cleanup far from over even then.

"This is a siege across the entire Gulf," Allen said. Allen's comments came as the white sand beaches of the Florida Panhandle continued to be fouled by scattered tarballs. Across the state, the fear was that damage to Florida's precious coastline was poised to get much worse.

The federal fishing ban continues to creep deeper into Florida



GEORGE SKENE/ORLANDO SENTINEL/AMCT
Workers carry pom poms to soak up oil in Pensacola Beach, Florida on Sunday.

waters — expanding 565 square miles over the weekend to now include an area stretching from Pensacola to the outskirts of Panama City. Roughly one-third of all federal waters in the Gulf — more than 78,000 square miles — has been closed to fishermen.

In Pensacola, beachgoers spent the weekend carrying cameras, shovels and plastic bags to document the phenomenon and hunt for tar balls that have been splattering ashore since Friday.

After a series of torrential downpours Saturday night, the sun rose over Pensacola Beach Sunday with what appeared to be fewer and smaller tar specks than the day before.

"It's a lot better," said Tonya Ryals of Nashville.

"Yesterday was horrible," said her husband, Bo.

U.S. Sen. Bill Nelson, a Florida Democrat, minimized the damage to Sunshine State beaches in his own appearance on "Face The Nation," saying that, so far, the visibility of oil in the Panhandle "wasn't that bad."

But the economic fallout from worried tourists is widespread, Nelson said.

"They're canceling their fishing trips, they're canceling their hotels, they're not going into the restaurants because they're not coming," Nelson said.

In spite of the tarballs and oil

sheens, officials from the Department of Environmental Protection said beaches, the jewel of Florida's tourism industry, will remain open and occasional contact with small amounts of oil won't harm beachgoers.

Florida Gov. Charlie Crist has said he would ask for more oil-containment booms to keep the spill off Florida's shore, but during a Sunday interview with CNN, Crist stressed that it is bays and estuaries that will need the most protection.

"People don't like to hear this, but the beaches are some of the best boom that can be available," Crist said. "It is easier to clean up off the beaches."

Asked if BP's claims process for affected Florida businesses has been "lacking," Crist responded: "Well, it is lacking. I mean, I think they are trying to do the best they can. But they can always do better. And we are urging them to do better ... we are demanding that they do better."

According to Darryl Willis, the senior claims officer for BP America who was visiting Pensacola on Sunday, the company has opened 25 spill-related claims offices — 10 of them in Florida. They have 515 claims adjusters and 120 people answering the phones. Thirty-seven thousand individual claims have been filed along coastal states, and 18,000 of them have been paid out, to the tune of \$48 million.

NJ Men Accused Of Trying To Join Somali Terrorists

BY BRUCE SHIPKOWSKI AND MATT APUZZO
Associated Press Writers

ELMWOOD PARK, N.J. — They were recorded talking jihad against their fellow Americans. But they hadn't talked the jihadists into accepting them.

When the two New Jersey men tried to fly out of New York's Kennedy Airport in hopes of getting terror training in Somalia, investigators who had been following them for years were waiting for each of them at the gate, officials said Sunday.

Mohamed Mahmood Alessa, 20, and Carlos Eduardo Almonte, 26, were arrested Saturday before they could board separate flights to Egypt and then continue on to Somalia, federal officials in New Jersey and the New York Police Department said.

They are the latest of several U.S. Muslims accused of joining or trying to join terrorist groups, radicalized with help from fellow Americans preaching violent jihad over the Internet.

Authorities say they recorded Alessa and Almonte talking about attacking Americans. Alessa allegedly said he would outdo Maj.

Nidal Hasan, the Army psychiatrist accused of killing 13 people at Fort Hood, Texas, last year.

"He's not better than me. I'll do twice what he did," Alessa was recorded saying, according to court documents.

They had no known connections to established terrorist groups, however. They had traveled to Jordan three years ago and tried to get into Iraq, only to be rejected by jihadists, New York Police Commissioner Raymond Kelly said. Their trip to Somalia apparently amounted to a leap of faith that they would be embraced by al-Shabab, a violent extremist group based in Somalia and connected to al-Qaida.

Though Americans are potentially valuable to terrorist groups, they also carry the risk of being undercover investigators — like the one who had gained Alessa's and Almonte's trust well before their arrests.

In March, Alessa was recorded telling Almonte and the NYPD undercover officer that no one else they knew in New Jersey should be included in their plan to join al-Shabab because only the three of them were "serious about their plan and were preparing

for it." Court documents do not indicate that authorities had other targets in the investigation.

Law enforcement became aware of the men in the fall of 2006, after receiving a tip. Since then, during the lengthy investigation, the undercover officer recorded conversations with the men in which they spoke about jihad against Americans.

"I leave this time. God willing, I never come back," authorities say Alessa told the officer last year. "Only way I would come back here is if I was in the land of jihad and the leader ordered me to come back here and do something here. Ah, I love that."

Kelly said Alessa, of North Bergen, and Almonte, of Elmwood Park, are American citizens. Alessa was born in the United States and is of Palestinian descent. Almonte is a naturalized citizen who was born in the Dominican Republic.

They are accused of trying to join al-Shabab, which was designated by the U.S. as a terrorist group in 2008.

Investigators say they are among many U.S. terrorism suspects to have been inspired by two well-known U.S. citizens who have recruited terrorists through the Internet.

NATION/WORLD DIGEST

Israel Says Activists Were Prepared To Fight

JERUSALEM (AP) — Israel's prime minister claimed Sunday that the Turkish activists who battled Israeli naval commandos in a deadly clash last week prepared for the fight ahead of time, before boarding the ship in a different city from the rest of the passengers.

Benjamin Netanyahu's charges highlight Israel's frantic efforts to portray the activists as terrorists and counter a wave of harsh international condemnation that has left the Jewish state isolated and at odds with some of its closest allies.

Last Monday's operation, in which nine activists were killed aboard a ship headed to the blockaded Gaza Strip, damaged Israel's ties with Turkey — its main Muslim ally — and brought heavy pressure on Israel to lift the 3-year closure of Hamas-ruled Gaza.

Netanyahu told his Cabinet that "dozens of thugs" from "an extremist, terrorism-supporting" organization had readied themselves for the arrival of the naval commandos.

Vatican: Christians In The Middle East Ignored

NICOSIA, Cyprus (AP) — The Vatican said Sunday that the international community is ignoring the plight of Christians in the Middle East, and that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the war in Iraq and political instability in Lebanon have forced thousands to flee the region.

A working paper released during Pope Benedict XVI's pilgrimage to Cyprus to prepare for a crisis summit of Middle East bishops in Rome in October also cites the "extremist current" unleashed by the rise of "political Islam" as a threat to Christians.

The paper said that the line between religion and politics is blurred in Muslim countries, "relegating Christians to the precarious position of being considered non-citizens, despite the fact that they were citizens of their countries long before the rise of Islam."

"The key to harmonious living between Christians and Muslims is to recognize religious freedom and human rights," it said.

In his final Mass in Cyprus on Sunday, Benedict said he was praying that the October meeting will focus the attention of the international community "on the plight of those Christians in the Middle East who suffer for their beliefs."

Suicide Bomber, Bombs Kill 6 In Baghdad

BAGHDAD (AP) — A car bomb exploded outside a Baghdad police station Sunday in the deadliest of a pair of attacks that killed six people in the Iraqi capital, security and hospital officials said.

A suicide attacker drove the bomb-rigged car up to a gate protecting the police post in western Baghdad's al-Amil neighborhood during an early morning shift change when officers were gathered outside its blast walls.

The blast killed four police officers and one civilian, and wounded 15 people, according to emergency security and hospital officials who spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to talk to the media.

Though violence has declined dramatically from just a few years ago, when the country teetered on the brink of civil war, attacks around the capital continue. The violence is a serious challenge for Iraq's police and military forces as U.S. troops prepare to withdraw.

Thousands Stampede At World Cup Warm-Ups

TEMBISA, South Africa (AP) — Thousands of soccer fans stampeded outside a stadium Sunday before an exhibition game between Nigeria and North Korea, leaving 15 people injured, including one police officer who was seriously hurt.

Several fans fell under the rush of people, many wearing Nigeria jerseys. The Makholung Stadium in the Johannesburg suburb seats about 12,000 fans.

The mayhem happened only five days before the start of the World Cup, the first to be held in Africa.

"At this moment we have 14 civilians that were slightly injured in the process, one policeman seriously injured," police spokesman Lt. Col. Eugene Opperman said outside the stadium. The injured were being treated at a hospital, he said.

Opperman said tickets for the game were given out for free outside the stadium.

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

June 8

- **PARKINSON'S SUPPORT GROUP**
1:30 p.m.
Benedictine Center - 3rd Floor
(605) 665-7158
- **BLOOD DRIVE**
8 a.m. - 2 p.m.
Benedictine Center Lobby
Siouxland Community Blood Bank
(877) 224-6208

June 14

- **DIABETES AREA SUPPORT GROUP**
DIABETES 101 PRESENTATION
1 p.m.
Benedictine Center Conference Room
Everyone is welcome.
(605) 668-8279
- **AMERICAN CANCER SOCIETY'S "LOOK GOOD FEEL BETTER"**
3 p.m.
Cancer Center Conference Room
Reservations are required.
(605) 668-8850

June 15

- **CROHN'S & COLITIS SUPPORT GROUP**
6:45 p.m.
Professional Office Pavilion Conf. Room
(605) 665-7199

June 25 & 26

- **HEALING TOUCH CERTIFICATE PROGRAM "Healing Touch Level 2"**
9 a.m. - 6 p.m., both days
Professional Office Pavilion
Registration fee & reservations are required.
(605) 668-8475

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