

NATION/WORLD DIGEST

Judge Grants, Stays Scouts Files Release

PORTLAND, Ore. (AP) — A Portland judge granted and then stayed a request by news organizations to release more than 1,000 Boy Scouts of America files on suspected child molesters given to a jury that found the Scouts liable for \$20 million in damages.

Judge John Wittmayer ruled Friday the files should be released after the names of victims and people who reported abuse are redacted.

But the judge also stayed his order pending an appeal by the Boy Scouts, who argued the release could damage their defense in pending abuse cases.

The files were compiled from 1965-85 and introduced as evidence in a trial resulting in the jury award in April.

The Associated Press, The Oregonian, The New York Times, Oregon Public Broadcasting, KGW-TV and Courthouse News Service are seeking the records.

Senate Medicare Bill Doesn't Pass In Time

WASHINGTON (AP) — After a week of partisan wrangling, the Senate on Friday passed legislation to spare doctors a 21 percent cut in Medicare payments looming for months. But the last-ditch effort came too late.

Moments after the Senate acted, Medicare announced it would begin processing claims it has already received for June at the lower rate. The reason: the House cannot act on the fix until next week.

That means doctors, nurse practitioners, physical therapists and other providers who bill under Medicare's physician fee schedule will have to resubmit their claims if they want to be made whole, with added paperwork costs both for the providers and for taxpayers.

"Congress is playing Russian roulette with seniors' health care," Dr. Cecil B. Wilson, president of the American Medical Association, said in a statement. "This is no way to run a major health coverage program."

AARP, the seniors' lobby, called the cut "unprecedented" and "dangerous" even if it's only temporary. Nancy LeaMond, the group's executive vice president, warned it would undermine confidence in the stability of the giant health care program for 46 million elderly and disabled people.

Uzbeks In Camps, Fear Returning To Homes

VLKSM, Kyrgyzstan (AP) — Ethnic Uzbeks sheltering in squalid tent camps say they don't have enough food or clean water but are terrified of going back to live alongside those they hold responsible for days of shootings, arson and sexual assaults.

That air of suspicion was rife Friday among the hundreds of refugees crowded into gray canvas tents on a patch of arid scrub in this Kyrgyz village near the border with Uzbekistan.

"Where can we go now? Our belief in the future is dead," said Mamlyakat Akramova, who lived in the center of Osh, Kyrgyzstan's second-largest city and the epicenter of the violence that broke out last week.

Entire Uzbek neighborhoods of southern Kyrgyzstan have been reduced to scorched ruins by rampaging mobs of ethnic Kyrgyz who forced nearly half of the region's roughly 800,000 Uzbeks to flee for their lives.

The U.N. says as many as 1 million people will need aid, and Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon issued an appeal Friday for \$71 million. "There are shortages of food, water and electricity in the affected areas, due to looting, lack of supply, and restrictions on movement," he said. "Hospitals and other institutions are running low on medical supplies."

Ohio Man Calls 911 From Back Of Truck

SABINA, Ohio (AP) — Police say a man called 911 from the back of a moving tractor-trailer after he jumped onto the truck on a dare from friends, then traveled about 10 miles on an Ohio highway.

In the call early Friday, 24-year-old Brandon Farmer tells a Fayette County dispatcher that it was a stupid idea and that he's "holding on for dear life" on U.S. route 22 near Sabina, about 50 miles southwest of Columbus.

The Washington Court House man says he jumped onto the semitrailer as "kind of a joke" when it was stopped at a red light. A Sabina police officer pulled over the truck and spotted Farmer still clinging to the back. The driver was unaware of the extra cargo onboard.

Sheriff Vernon Stanforth says Farmer had been drinking at the time and was charged with disorderly conduct.

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BP CEO Hands Over Greasy Reins

BY RAY HENRY
Associated Press Writer

NEW ORLEANS — BP's chairman said Friday that CEO Tony Hayward is on his way out as the company's point man on the Gulf oil spill crisis, a day after Hayward enraged members of Congress by offering few answers about how the environmental disaster happened. It was unclear when the switch will occur.

BP Chairman Carl-Henric Svanberg told Britain's Sky News television on Friday that Hayward "is now handing over the operations, the daily operations to (BP Managing Director) Bob Dudley." BP had said this month that Dudley would take over the long-term response to the spill once the leak was stopped, but millions of gallons continue to spew and that mile-



Hayward

stone remains months away.

Svanberg's statement sowed confusion, with other BP officials saying Hayward remains in charge.

Spokesman Toby Odono said "Nothing has changed" since the earlier announcement regarding Dudley, and spokesman Tristan Vanhagan said the "board still has confidence in Tony."

BP's move overshadowed some positive news in the cleanup effort. Coast Guard Adm. Thad Allen announced earlier Friday that a newly expanded containment system is capturing or incinerating more than 1 million gallons of oil daily, the first time it has approached its peak capacity.

And the system will soon

grow. By late June, the oil giant hopes it can keep nearly 90 percent of the flow from hitting the ocean.

But the massive leak, set off by an oil rig explosion that killed 11 workers nearly two months ago, will not be stopped completely until at least August. BP has been hammered for its response, in part because of comments by Hayward that Gulf Coast residents horrified by the spill consider insensitive.

Hayward shocked residents in slick-hit Louisiana by saying, "I would like my life back." He was quoted by the Times of London suggesting that Americans were particularly likely to file bogus claims — a statement that gained significance Friday when a House committee said BP has paid less than 12 percent of claims submitted. President Barack Obama suggested he would fire Hayward if he could.

On Thursday, Hayward told lawmakers on a U.S. House investigations panel that he was out of the loop on decisions surrounding the blown well. Both Democrats and Republicans were infuriated when he asserted, "I'm not stonewalling."

"It is clear that Tony has made remarks that have upset people," said Svanberg, who made a misstep of his own this week when he said BP cares "about the small people." But he added that Hayward "is also a man who has probably been on 100 hours of TV time and maybe 500."

Dudley, an American-born oil man with more than 30 years in the industry, has been BP's managing director since 2009. His responsibilities include broad oversight of the company's activities in the Americas and Asia, and earlier this month he was named head of the company's disaster management unit.

Alert Issued For Afghans Gone AWOL From Texas Base

BY MICHELLE ROBERTS
Associated Press Writer

SAN ANTONIO — U.S. military investigators are asking law enforcement nationwide to be on the lookout for Afghan military members who went AWOL while training in Texas, though none is believed to be a national security threat, officials said Friday.

Air Force spokesman Gary Emery said 17 Afghans disappeared from Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio one-by-one over the last 18 months, but a federal law enforcement official says seven have been accounted for. The official spoke on the condition of anonymity because privacy rules prevent disclosure of details about individual cases.

The men were vetted by the military and aren't believed to be connected to one another or to any terrorist group, Emery said. All had been studying English as a precursor to training sponsored by the U.S. and Afghan militaries.

"I don't think that anybody's

really concerned that this is any sort of a plot or that they're looking to do anybody any harm," he said.

Emery said the disappearances were reported to immigration and federal law enforcement when they occurred, but an alert notifying law enforcement nationwide was issued Wednesday. Emery did not know what prompted the alert by the Naval Criminal Investigation Service, and a phone message and e-mail to an NCIS spokesman were not returned Friday.

The FBI referred all calls to NCIS.

The last of the men went missing in January. Their visas, driver's licenses and other travel documents were immediately revoked, but the men were issued base access cards that could allow them to drive on military bases, Emery said.

There was no information indicating the Afghans posed a threat, but the bulletin helps provide better investigative

leads to immigration authorities, Immigration and Customs Enforcement spokesman Brian Hale said.

"Previous indications are that such foreign military deserters typically do so solely for prospects of a better life," he said.

Still, Texas Republican Sen. John Cornyn sent a letter Friday

to Air Force Secretary Michael Donley calling the reports of the AWOL Afghans "alarming."

"I request an immediate report on how such a serious violation of security was allowed to happen not once, but on 17 separate occasions, and why safeguards were not put in place to prevent repeated incidents," he said.

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