

Obama To Create Largest Ocean Reserve

WASHINGTON (AP) — Vowing to protect fragile marine life, President Barack Obama acted Tuesday to create the world's largest ocean preserve by expanding a national monument his predecessor established in waters thousands of miles from the American mainland.

The designation for a remote stretch of the Pacific Ocean marks a major symbolic victory for environmentalists, who have urged the president to take action on his own to protect the planet as Congress turns its focus elsewhere. But the initiative will have limited practical implications because little fishing or drilling are taking place even without the new protections.

Protecting the world's oceans and the vibrant ecosystems that thrive deep under the surface is a task that's bigger than any one country but the U.S. must take the lead, Obama said, announcing the initiative during an ocean conservation conference.

"Let's make sure that years from now we can look our children in the eye and tell them that, yes, we did our part, we took action, and we led the way toward a safer, more stable world," Obama said in a video message.

Obama hasn't settled on the final boundaries for the expanded Pacific Remote Islands Marine National Monument, and will solicit input from fishermen, scientists and conservation experts. Obama's senior counselor, John Podesta, said that process would start immediately and wrap up "in the very near future."

FDA Prepping Plan To Reduce Salt

WASHINGTON (AP) — Food companies and restaurants could soon face government pressure to make their foods less salty — a long-awaited federal effort to try to prevent thousands of deaths each year from heart disease and stroke.

The Food and Drug Administration is preparing voluntary guidelines asking the food industry to lower sodium levels, FDA Commissioner Margaret Hamburg told The Associated Press. Hamburg said in a recent interview that the sodium is "of huge interest and concern" to the agency.

"We believe we can make a big impact working with the industry to bring sodium levels down, because the current level of consumption really is higher than it should be for health," Hamburg said.

It's still unclear when FDA will release the guidelines, despite its 2013 goal to have them completed this year.

Hamburg said she hoped the agency would be able to publicly discuss the issue "relatively soon." On Tuesday, FDA spokeswoman Erica Jefferson said there is no set timeline for their release.

The food industry has already made some reductions, and has prepared for government action since a 2010 Institute of Medicine report said companies had not made enough progress on making foods less salty. The IOM advised the government to establish maximum sodium levels for different foods, though the FDA said then — and maintains now — that it favors a voluntary route.

Americans eat about 1 1/2 teaspoons of salt daily, about a third more than the government recommends for good health and enough to increase the risk of high blood pressure, strokes and other problems. Most of that sodium is hidden inside common processed foods and restaurant meals.

In addition to flavor, companies use sodium to increase shelf life, prevent the growth of bacteria, or improve texture and appearance. That makes it more difficult to remove from some products, Hamburg noted.

Once the guidelines are issued, Americans won't notice an immediate taste difference in higher-sodium foods like pizza, pasta, bread and soups. The idea would be to encourage gradual change so consumers' taste buds can adjust, and to give the companies time to develop lower-sodium foods.

Kenyatta Blames Attacks On Locals

NAIROBI, Kenya (AP) — The killers in the Kenyan village singled out non-Muslims, shooting them point-blank or slitting their throats, just like the previous night in an adjacent hamlet. A Somali extremist group claimed responsibility but Kenya's president on Tuesday blamed local political networks for the 60 deaths.

President Uhuru Kenyatta, in a national address, said evidence indicates that the motive for the killing spree was to evict a community of people in order to grab the land along the coast near the Somali border. He said al-Shabab, a Somali group linked to al-Qaida, was not behind it.

But analysts expressed doubt. Matt Bryden, the former head of the U.N. Monitoring Group on Somalia, said al-Shabab has never claimed credit for an attack it didn't carry out.

"It has all the hallmarks of an al-Shabab attack, said Bryden, now the head of Sahan Research. "Secondly, there's been no sign of a Kenyan group carrying out an attack on this scale or with these tactics."

In a nearby village, residents stood on top of burned-out vehicles and erected barricades of burning tires to blockade the road in protest against the recent killings and what they claimed was the government's failure to provide them with enough security. Some residents abandoned another village with their belongings on their heads while armed security forces marched in single file along narrow paths leading through the dense swamp and forest, searching for the killers.

Al-Shabab said Monday that such attacks would continue "as you continue to invade our lands and oppress innocent Muslims." Al-Shabab gunmen attacked an upscale mall in the Kenyan capital, Nairobi, last September, killing at least 67 people in reprisal for Kenya sending its troops to Somalia.

Canada OKs Pipeline To Pacific Coast

TORONTO (AP) — Canada's government on Tuesday approved a controversial proposed pipeline to the Pacific Coast that would allow oil to be shipped to Asia, which would be major step in the country's efforts to diversify its oil exports.

The approval Tuesday was expected but whether Enbridge's Northern Gateway pipeline ever gets built remains in question as there is fierce aboriginal and environmental opposition in British Columbia and court challenges are expected.

Conservative Prime Minister Stephen Harper has called Canada an emerging energy superpower and he has been a staunch supporter of the pipeline after the U.S. delayed a decision on TransCanada's Keystone XL pipeline that would take oil from Alberta to the U.S. Gulf Coast.

Enbridge's pipeline would transport 525,000 barrels of oil a day from Alberta's oil sands to the Pacific to deliver oil to Asia, mainly energy-hungry China. About 220 large oil tankers a year would visit the Pacific coast town of Kitimat and opponents fear pipeline leaks and a potential Exxon Valdez-like disaster on the pristine Pacific coast.

The Keystone XL pipeline and the Northern Gateway project are critical to Canada, which needs infrastructure in place to export its growing oil sands production. The northern Alberta region has the world's third largest oil reserves, with 170 billion barrels of proven reserves.

Harper has said Canada's national interest makes the pipelines essential and it is a legacy issue for him. He was "profoundly disappointed" that U.S. President Barack Obama delayed a decision on the Texas Keystone XL option, and spoke of the need to diversify Canada's oil industry. Ninety-seven percent of Canadian oil exports now go to the U.S.

Meanwhile, China's growing economy is hungry for Canadian oil. Chinese state-owned companies have invested more than \$40 billion in Canadian energy in the past few years.

US Seizes Benghazi Suspect In Deadly Libya Attack

BY LOLITA C. BALDOR
AND NANCY BENAC
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — U.S. special forces seized a "key leader" of the deadly Benghazi, Libya, attack and he is on his way to face trial in the U.S. for the fiery assault that killed the U.S. ambassador and three other Americans, the Obama administration announced Tuesday. It was the first breakthrough in the sudden overseas violence in 2012 that has become a festering political sore at home.

President Barack Obama said the capture on Sunday of Ahmed Abu Khattala sends a clear message to the world that "when Americans are attacked, no matter how long it takes, we will find those responsible and we will bring them to justice." "We will find you," Obama declared.

As recently as last August, though, Abu Khattala told The Associated Press that he was not in hiding nor had he been questioned by Libyan authorities about the attack at the diplomatic compound. He denied involvement and said that he had abandoned the militia. Administration officials said Tuesday that despite his media interviews, he "evaded capture" until the weekend when military special forces, including members of the Army's elite Delta Force, nabbed him.

Whatever the path to his capture, he was headed for the United States to face what Obama called "the full weight of the American justice system." Obama called the Libyan an "alleged key leader" of the attack.

U.S. officials said Abu Khattala was being held on the Navy amphibious transport dock ship USS New York, which was in the Mediterranean Sea. The officials spoke only on condition of anonymity because they weren't authorized to discuss Abu Khattala's whereabouts.

The Libyan was the commander of a militant group called the Abu Obaida bin Jarrah Brigade and is accused of being a senior leader of the Benghazi

Benghazi attack and aftermath

U.S. special forces captured a suspected leader of the 2012 Benghazi, Libya, terror attacks in a secret raid on Sunday. Key events leading up to Ahmed Abu Khattala's capture:

Oct. 20, 2011 During civil war, longtime Libyan dictator Moammar Gadhafi killed

Sept. 11-12, 2012 Four Americans killed, including Ambassador Chris Stevens, in attack on U.S. mission and CIA station in Benghazi, Libya

Sept. 16 U.N. Ambassador Susan Rice says on Sunday talk shows that attack resulted from protests over anti-Muslim U.S.-made video, not pre-planned attack

Sept. 28 U.S. intelligence community says incident was deliberate and organized terror attack; unclear if it was directed by a group

July 15, 2013 U.S. Justice Department files criminal complaint against Khattala accusing him of "killing a person in the course of an attack on a federal facility"

Oct. 5 U.S. special forces snatch an al-Qaida leader in Tripoli, Libya, who was allegedly involved in the 1998 bombing of U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania

Dec. 19 Four State Department officials relieved of duties after internal probe of Benghazi attack found management deficiencies that left security for consulate inadequate

Jan. 10, 2014 U.S. State Department adds Khattala and his group, Ansar al-Shariah, to its terrorist designation list; says he is responsible for Benghazi attack

Jan. 15 Senate Intelligence Committee report on Benghazi faults State Department for not increasing security despite warnings and faults CIA for not telling U.S. military about CIA outpost

Feb. 11 House Armed Services Committee report says there was no way for U.S. military to have responded in time to save lives of four Americans killed in Benghazi attack; debunks idea that White House ordered the military not to intervene

May 15 White House releases emails on the development of administration's talking points on Benghazi attack; shows CIA ordered scrubbing of references to terrorism

June 17 U.S. says special forces captured Khattala in raid on June 15 and he would be brought to U.S. for trial

Source: McClatchy Washington Bureau, The Washington Post, Congressional Research Service Graphic: Judy Treible © 2014 MCT



branch of Ansar al-Shariah in Libya, which the U.S. has designated a terror group.

On Capitol Hill, Republicans urged the administration to get as much intelligence out of Abu Khattala as possible before anyone reads him his rights to remain silent, supplies him with a lawyer and prepares him for trial in a U.S. courtroom. In fact, Sen. Saxby Chambliss of Georgia, top Republican on the Intelligence Committee, said interrogation of the Libyan already was underway and "we hope to find out some positive things."

Abu Khattala is charged with terror-related crimes in U.S. District Court in Washington and will be tried like a civilian, the administration said. The Obama administration policy is to treat terror suspects as criminals when possible and not send them to the military prison in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, like hundreds of terror suspects captured during the administration of President George W. Bush.

Republican Senate leader Mitch McConnell of Kentucky said the U.S. should skip the legal niceties and focus on interrogation.

Signs Of Reprisal Killings Emerge In Iraq

BY HAMZA HENDAWI
Associated Press

BAGHDAD — Nearly four dozen Sunni detainees were gunned down at a jail north of Baghdad, a car bomb struck a Shiite neighborhood of the capital and four young Sunnis were found slain, as ominous signs emerged Tuesday that open warfare between the two main Muslim sects has returned to Iraq.

The killings, following the capture by Sunni insurgents of a large swath of the country stretching to Syria, were the first hints of the beginnings of a return to sectarian bloodletting that nearly tore the country apart in 2006 and 2007.

During the United States' eight-year presence in Iraq, American forces acted as a buffer between the two Islamic sects, albeit with limited success. The U.S. military is now being pulled back in — with a far more limited mission and far fewer troops, as President Barack Obama nears a decision on an array of options for combating the Islamic militants.

In the latest sect-on-sect violence, at least 44 Sunni detainees were slaughtered by gun shots to the head and chest by pro-government Shiite militiamen after Sunni insurgents tried to storm the jail near Baqouba, northeast of Baghdad, police said.

The Iraqi military gave a different account and put the death toll at 52, insisting the Sunni inmates were killed by mortar shells in the attack

late Monday on the facility. In Baghdad, the bullet-riddled bodies of four men in their late 20s or early 30s, presumably Sunnis, were found Tuesday at different locations in the Shiite neighborhood of Benouk, according to police and morgue officials who spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to talk with the media.

Also Tuesday, a car bomb in Baghdad's Shiite Sadr City district killed 12 people and wounded 30 in a crowded outdoor market, police and hospital officials said. No one claimed responsibility for the bombing, but attacks targeting Shiite districts are routinely the work of Sunni militants.

The sectarian violence was a grim reminder of a dark chapter in Iraq's history when nearly a decade ago the city woke up virtually every morning to find dozens of bodies dumped in the streets, trash heaps or in the Tigris river, bullet-riddled or with torture marks.

Obama has said he would not commit the U.S. to military action in Iraq unless the government in Baghdad moves to "set aside sectarian differences, to promote stability, and account for the legitimate interests of all of Iraq's communities." In the absence of that type of political effort, Obama has said any American military action would not succeed.

In a move apparently designed to satisfy Obama's demand for political inclusion, Iraq's Shiite, Sunni and Kur-

dish leaders issued a joint statement late Tuesday stressing the importance of setting "national priorities" that adhere to democratic mechanisms in resolving divisions and condemning sectarian rhetoric.

A U.N. commission, meanwhile, warned Tuesday that "a regional war in the Middle East draws ever closer" as Sunni insurgents advance across Iraq to control areas bridging the Iraq-Syria frontier. It said Iraq's turmoil will have "violent repercussions," most dangerously the rise of sectarian violence as "a direct consequence of the dominance of extremist groups."

In a move certain to exacerbate regional Shiite-Sunni tensions, the Iraqi government made a scathing attack on Saudi Arabia, accusing the Arab world's Sunni powerhouse of meddling in its affairs and acquiescing to terrorism. The harsh words came in response to a Saudi Cabinet statement blaming what it called "the sectarian and exclusionist policies in Iraq in recent years" for the latest violence.

There were conflicting details about the clashes at the jail in the al-Kattoun district near Baqouba, the capital of Diyala province, which was one of the bloodiest battlefields of the U.S.-led war.

The fighting, some 40 miles northeast of Baghdad, was the closest to the Iraqi capital since the al-Qaida

"The most valuable thing we can get from this terrorist is information about who else was involved in this," McConnell told reporters. "We'll be watching closely to see how much information they glean from him and how they're handling it."

Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., added: "We should have some quality time with this guy — weeks and months. Don't torture him; have some quality time with him."

Justice Department spokesman Marc Raimondi declined to comment on whether Abu Khattala had been read his "Miranda rights" or when that might happen.

"As a general rule, the government will always seek to elicit all actionable intelligence and information we can from terrorist suspects in our custody," Raimondi said in an email.

The Sept. 11, 2012, attack in Benghazi, on the 11th anniversary of the World Trade Center attacks, killed U.S. Ambassador Chris Stevens and three other Americans. Stevens was the first U.S. ambassador to be killed in the line of duty in more than 30 years. In the immediate aftermath, political reaction formed along sharply drawn lines that hold fast to this day.

With the presidential election near, Republicans accused the White House of intentionally misleading voters about what sparked the attack by portraying it as one of the many protests over an anti-Muslim video made in America, instead of a calculated terrorist attack on the president's watch. Obama, for his part, accused the Republicans of politicizing a national tragedy.

After 13 public hearings, the release of 25,000 pages of documents and 50 separate briefings, more congressional hearings are yet to come. One element in the ongoing political situation: The attacks unfolded while Hillary Rodham Clinton, now considered a likely Democratic presidential candidate, was secretary of state, and Republicans have faulted her words and actions in many respects.

INFORMATION REQUEST

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