

NATION/WORLD DIGEST

China: Diplomat Beaten, Injured By Police

DALLAS (AP) — Three Houston police officers have been restricted to desk duty after they followed a Chinese diplomat into the parking garage of the Chinese Consulate, arrested the man and injured him, the Houston mayor said.

Mayor Annise Parker said in a statement that the officers' duties will remain limited pending an investigation into how Chinese diplomat Yu Boren was injured last Saturday.

Officials in China's Foreign Ministry released a statement Friday saying police harassed and beat a deputy consul-general while he was driving to the consulate. The statement said a family member also was involved, but did not say if that person was injured.

The consulate in Houston did not immediately return a message left by The Associated Press. Houston police and the U.S. State Department are investigating the incident.

"China urges the U.S. ... to quickly investigate the details of this incident and to look into the persons responsible to ensure that the Chinese diplomatic and consulate personnel and premises are not violated," Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Jiang Yu said in a statement. "The Chinese Foreign Ministry, the Chinese Embassy and the Houston consulate have already made solemn exchanges with the U.S. side."

Economy Grows, But Recovery Not In Sight

WASHINGTON (AP) — The numbers would be excellent in normal times, but for a country recovering from deep recession, they're not enough.

Spending by consumers rose by the fastest pace in three years, helping the economy grow at an annual rate of 3.2 percent in the first quarter of the year, the Commerce Department said Friday. It marked the third straight quarterly gain as the nation heals from the longest and deepest recession since the 1930s.

That has not been enough, however, to ignite a recovery capable of driving down the jobless rate, which has been stuck at 9.7 percent since January and is not expected to dip significantly for months.

Economists say it takes about 3 percent growth in gross domestic product to create enough jobs just to keep up with population growth. Growth would have to be about 5 percent for a full year just to drive the unemployment rate down by 1 percentage point.

Prosecutors: Boys Killed Stepdad To Run Away

WARSAW, Ind. (AP) — Two young friends from a quiet, middle-class neighborhood in northern Indiana wanted to run away to Arizona so badly, prosecutors say, that they gunned down a stepfather who stood in the way of their plans.

The two alleged triggermen — ages 15 and 12 — kept the plot a closely guarded secret until the older boy's 49-year-old stepfather, Phillip Danner, was shot to death in his home last week, according to neighbors and family members who testified at a hearing Thursday in which a judge ruled the boys would be tried for murder as adults.

Both boys were formally charged with murder on Friday during an initial hearing before Kosciusko Circuit Court Judge Rex Reed, who ordered them held without bond.

David Kolbe, the 15-year-old's defense attorney, said the boy seemed dazed Friday by the legal proceedings.

"He is certainly bewildered by the process having been waived to adult court," Kolbe said. "But overall I would rate him as holding up well under the circumstances."

Grand Jury Subpoena To Reporter Over Book

WASHINGTON (AP) — A New York Times reporter will fight a grand jury subpoena seeking the identities of his sources for portions of a book about the CIA.

The publisher of "State of War: The Secret History of the CIA and the Bush Administration" said Friday that the government should not be permitted to breach author James Risen's confidential relationship with his sources.

The lawyer for Risen, Joel Kurtzberg, said that the Justice Department is seeking information regarding Risen's sources about a CIA effort to disrupt Iranian nuclear research, according to a story on the subpoena dispute that appeared in Wednesday's Times.

Simon & Schuster and its Free Press imprint which published Risen's book said they "firmly believe that the American people have been well served by Mr. Risen's reporting ... and that the ability to publish confidentially sourced information about our government's practices and policies is one of the bedrock principles of a free and open society."

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OIL RIG EXPLOSION

Winds Hurting Efforts Against Spill

MOUTH OF THE MISSISSIPPI RIVER (AP) — British Petroleum once downplayed the possibility of a catastrophic accident at an offshore rig that exploded, causing the worst U.S. spill in decades along the Gulf coast and endangering shoreline habitat.

In its 2009 exploration plan and environmental impact analysis for the well, BP suggested it was unlikely, or virtually impossible, for an accident to occur that would lead to a giant crude oil spill and serious damage to beaches, fish and mammals.

At least 1.6 million gallons of oil have spilled so far since the April 20 explosion that killed 11 workers, according to Coast Guard estimates. One expert said Friday that the volume of oil leaking from the well nearly 5,000 feet below the surface could actually be much higher, and that even more may escape if the drilling equipment continues to erode.

Amid increased fingerpointing Friday, efforts sputtered to hold back the giant oil spill seeping into Louisiana's rich fishing grounds and nesting areas, while the government desperately cast about for new ideas for dealing with the growing environmental crisis.

President Barack Obama halted any new offshore drilling projects unless rigs have new safeguards to prevent another disaster.

The seas were too rough and



CAROLYN COLE/LOS ANGELES TIMES/MCT
A boat drifts along one of the booms placed to block oil at the mouth of the Southeast Pass of the Mississippi River near Venice, Louisiana, where it enters the Gulf of Mexico on Friday.

the winds too strong to burn off the oil, suck it up effectively with skimmer vessels, or hold it in check with the miles of orange and yellow inflatable booms strung along the coast.

The floating barriers broke loose in the choppy water, and waves sent oily water lapping over them.

"It just can't take the wave action," said Billy Nungesser, president of Louisiana's Plaquemines Parish.

The spill — a slick more than 130 miles long and 70 miles wide —

posed activities."

And while the company conceded that a spill would impact beaches, wildlife refuges and wilderness areas, it argued that "due to the distance to shore (48 miles) and the response capabilities that would be implemented, no significant adverse impacts are expected."

Although the cause of the explosion was under investigation, many of the more than two dozen lawsuits filed in the wake of the explosion claim it was caused when workers for oil services contractor Halliburton Inc. improperly capped the well — a process known as cementing. Halliburton denied it.

While the amount of oil in the gulf already threatened to make it the worst U.S. oil disaster since the Exxon Valdez spill in Alaska in 1989, one expert emphasized that it was impossible to know just how much oil had already escaped and that it could be much more than what BP and the Coast Guard have said.

Even at current estimates, the spill could surpass that of the Valdez — which leaked 11 million gallons — in just two months.

As of Friday, only a sheen of oil from the edges of the slick was washing up at Venice, La., and other extreme southeastern portions of Louisiana. But several miles out, the normally blue-green gulf waters were dotted with sticky, pea-quarter-sized brown beads with the consistency of tar.

threatens hundreds of species of wildlife, including birds, dolphins and the fish, shrimp, oysters and crabs that make the Gulf Coast one of the nation's most abundant sources of seafood. Louisiana closed some fishing grounds and oyster beds because of the risk of oil contamination.

BP's 52-page exploration plan for the Deepwater Horizon well, filed with the federal Minerals Management Service, says repeatedly that it was "unlikely that an accidental surface or subsurface oil spill would occur from the pro-

Military Tells Congress To Keep Gay Ban For Now

WASHINGTON (AP) — Senior Pentagon leaders on Friday warned Congress not to tamper with the ban on gays serving openly in the military until they can come up with a plan for dealing with potential opposition in the ranks.

In a strongly worded letter obtained by The Associated Press, Defense Secretary Robert Gates and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Adm. Mike Mullen told the House Armed Services Committee that forcing policy changes on the military before it's ready would be a mistake.

Gay rights advocates want an immediate freeze on military firings of openly gay service members, and some senior Democratic senators have said they want to offer such a bill. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi on Friday said the Obama administration should suspend enforcement of the law until the Defense Department completes its study and Congress can act to change it.

But other lawmakers, including Skelton, have said they are uneasy

about lifting the ban and don't want to act before the force is ready.

The letter provides Skelton and other unsettled Democrats political cover not to press the issue until after this year's midterm elections. Earlier this week, Skelton asked Gates in a letter to outline his views as the House committee prepares the 2011 defense authorization bill.

President Barack Obama has said the 1993 law, known as "don't ask, don't tell," unfairly punishes patriotic Americans and asked Congress to repeal it.

In a statement released late Friday, White House spokesman Tommy Vietor said Obama's commitment to repealing the law remains "unequivocal" and that Obama "is committed to getting this done both soon and right."



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