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## Experts Say North Korean Sub Likely Sank S.K. Warship

TOKYO (AP) — Experts say North Korea's submarine fleet is technologically backward, prone to sinking or running aground, and all but useless outside its own coastal waters.

And yet many are asking: Could it have been responsible for the explosion that sank a South Korean warship in March? And if so, how could a sub have slipped through the defenses of South Korea, which, with significant American backing, maintains a fleet far more sophisticated than its northern neighbor's?

Evidence collected thus far indicates a torpedo hit the Cheonan, killing 46 sailors, and suspicion is growing that it was launched from a small North Korean submarine. That scenario would make it the most serious attack on the South Korean military since the peninsula's war ended in a truce in 1953.

While the North Korean submarine force reflects dated technology by Western standards, North Korean submarines during wartime would present significant challenges, particularly in coastal areas," according to the Arlington, Virginia-based Global Security think tank. "North Korea has placed high priority on submarine construction programs, which are ongoing despite its economic hardships."

Without witnesses or communications traffic to use as evidence, proving North Korea was behind the attack is difficult.

## GULF OIL SPILL

# What Next? After Failure, BP Mulls Gusher Options

BY HARRY R. WEBER AND RAY HENRY  
Associated Press Writers

ON THE GULF OF MEXICO — A day after icy slush clogged the massive box they hoped would contain an out-of-control oil gusher in the Gulf of Mexico, BP officials on Sunday said they may try again — this time with a smaller box.

They also were considering several other options to stop the daily rush of at least 200,000 gallons of crude, which began washing up on beaches in thick blobs over the weekend.

With crippled equipment littering the ocean floor, oil company engineers scrambled to devise a fresh method to cap the ruptured well. Their previous best hope for containing the leak quickly, a four-story containment box, became encrusted with deep-sea crystals Saturday and had to be cast aside.

Among the plans under consideration: — Deploying a new, smaller containment box in the hope that it would be less likely to get clogged. Officials said the new box could be in place by midweek.

"We're going to pursue the first option that's available to us and we think it'll be the top hat," the smaller box, BP Chief Operating Officer Doug Suttles said.

— Cutting the riser pipe, which extends from the mile-deep well, undersea and using larger piping to bring the gushing oil to a drill ship on the surface, a tactic considered difficult and less desirable because it will increase the flow of oil.

— Shooting mud and concrete directly into the well's blowout preventer, a device that was supposed to shut off the flow of oil after a deadly April 20 oil rig explosion but failed. The technique, known as a "top kill," is supposed to plug up the well and would take two to three weeks.

— Try again using the containment box that failed to work Saturday after finding a way to keep the crystals from building up.

The engineers appear to be "trying anything people can think of" to stop the leak, said Ed Overton, an LSU professor of environmental studies.

"Hopefully these are low-risk type of operations," he said. "We don't want to do anything to make it flow more."

An estimated 3.5 million gallons of oil have spilled since the explosion. At that pace, the spill would surpass the 11 million gallons spilled in the Exxon Valdez disaster by next month. BP is drilling a relief well that is considered a permanent fix, but that will take several weeks to complete.

BP PLC spokesman Mark Proegler said no decisions have been made on what step the company will take next. A decision could come as early as Monday.

Philip Johnson, a petroleum engineering professor at the University of Alabama, said cutting the riser pipe and slipping a larger pipe over the cut end could conceivably divert the flow of oil to the surface.

"That's a very tempting option," he said. "The risk is when you cut the pipe, the flow is going to increase. ... That's a scary option, but there's still a reasonable chance they could pull this off."

Johnson was less optimistic that a smaller containment box would be less susceptible to being clogged by icelike crystals.

"My suspicion is that it's likely to freeze up anyway," he said. "But I think they should be trying everything they can."

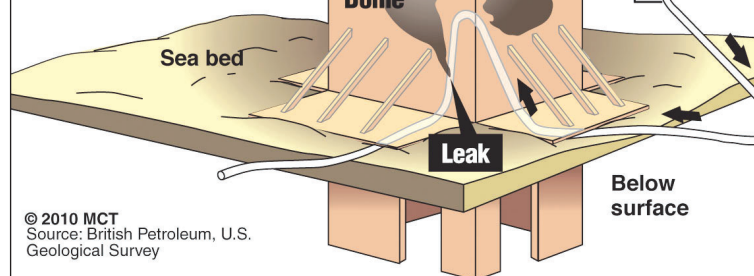
There was a renewed sense of urgency as dime- to golfball-sized balls of tar washed up Saturday on Dauphin Island, three miles off the Alabama mainland at the mouth of Mobile Bay and much farther east than the thin, rainbow sheens that have arrived sporadically in the Louisiana marshes. Until Saturday none of the thick sludge — those indelible images from the Valdez and other spills — had reached shore.

Above the oil leak, waves of dark brown and black sludge crashed into the support ship Joe Griffin. The

## Dome setback

Despite being successfully lowered over the leaking oil pipe, a clog has forced BP to remove the steel dome that was designed to contain the oil.

What's next? BP will try to solve the problem by pumping warm water down the pipe; if dome fails, the leak could continue until a relief well is completed, which may take up to two months



What happened? Extremely cold temperatures and high pressure caused methane and seawater to turn into ice-like crystals called hydrates; the hydrates merged to plug the dome's pipe

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Above the oil leak, waves of dark brown and black sludge crashed into the support ship Joe Griffin. The

fumes there were so intense that a crewmember and an AP photographer on board had to wear respirators while on deck.

A white cattle egret landed on the ship, brownish-colored stains of oil on its face and along its chest, wings and tail.

The containment box plan, never before tried at such depths, had been designed to siphon up to 85 percent of the leaking oil to a tanker at the surface. It had taken about two weeks to build the box and three days to cart it 50 miles out and slowly lower it to the well.

Icelike hydrates, a slushy mixture of gas and water, clogged the opening in the top of the peaked box like sand in a funnel, only upside-down.

BP officials were not giving up hopes that a containment box — either the one brought there or another one being built — could cover the well. Crews planned Sunday to secure the box about 1,600 feet from the massive leak site, much farther away from where it was placed Saturday, according to a daily activity sheet reviewed by The Associated Press.

The April 20 blowout was triggered by a bubble of methane gas that escaped from the well and shot up the drill column, expanding quickly as it burst through several seals and barriers before exploding, according to interviews with rig workers conducted during BP's internal investigation.

Deep sea oil drillers often encounter pockets of methane crystals as they dig into the earth.

## NATION/WORLD DIGEST

### Blasts Hit Russia's Largest Coal Mine

MOSCOW (AP) — Rescue workers scrambled to save 83 people trapped in Russia's largest underground coal mine after two explosions killed at least 12 people and injured dozens more, officials said. Among those still trapped early Monday were rescue workers who had entered the Siberian mine after the first blast.

A high level of methane gas after Sunday's second, more powerful blast raised fears of further explosions and prevented more rescuers from going into the mine for the rest of the day.

Only early Monday was the first rescue team sent down to try to bring out five miners whose location had been established, said Valery Korzhagin, a spokesman for the Emergency Ministry. It was not clear, however, whether the miners were still alive, he said.

The second explosion destroyed the main air shaft and all of the mine's above-ground structures, the governor of the Siberian region of Kemerovo told Prime Minister Vladimir Putin during a meeting with emergency officials, according to a government transcript.

More than 500 emergency workers from around the country struggled throughout the day to ventilate the mine and rebuild mine shafts so the search for those trapped could resume, Korzhagin said by telephone from Kemerovo, about 2,000 miles (3,000 kilometers) east of Moscow.

### Tea Party Activists Turn Focus On Kentucky

WASHINGTON (AP) — After toppling three-term Republican Sen. Robert F. Bennett in Utah, tea party activists and other conservative critics shifted their sights Sunday to a mid-May primary in Kentucky, their next big challenge to a political establishment they have vowed to upend.

Bennett, 76, left the door open to a write-in campaign after losing his bid for renomination, raising the possibility of an unpredictable three-way race that could yet extend his career.

But within minutes of Bennett's defeat, the chairman of the Republican senatorial campaign committee, Sen. John Cornyn of Texas, announced the organization will support the winner of a June 22 primary between businessman Tim Bridgewater and attorney Mike Lee.

Republicans are heavily favored to hold the seat in the fall in a state that hasn't elected a Democratic senator in more than three decades.

In his home state, Republicans said Bennett's defeat raised questions about the political future of Utah Sen. Orrin Hatch, also a conservative, who may face a challenge from GOP Rep. Jason Chaffetz in 2012.

### 'Iron Man 2' Soars With \$133.6M Box Office

LOS ANGELES (AP) — "Iron Man 2," the superhero sequel starring Robert Downey Jr., blasted to the top of the box office on its opening weekend, earning \$133.6 million domestically.

That's according to studio estimates released Sunday.

The first blockbuster of the summer soared past the franchise's \$98.6 million debut in 2008 and marked the fifth-biggest opening weekend.

"Iron Man 2" has taken in \$194 million overseas since it debuted in many international markets last week.

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## Federal Reserve Opens Credit Line To Europe

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Federal Reserve late Sunday opened a program to ship U.S. dollars to Europe in a move to head off a broader financial crisis on the continent.

Other central banks, including the Bank of Canada, the Bank of England, the European Central Bank and the Swiss National Bank, are also involved in the effort.

The action reopens a program put in place during the 2008 global financial crisis under which dollars are shipped overseas through the foreign central banks. In turn, these central banks can lend the dollars out to banks in their home countries that are in need of dollar funding to prevent the European crisis from spreading further.

The Fed said action is being taken "in response to the reemergence of strains in U.S. dollar short-term funding markets in Europe."

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