

NATION/WORLD DIGEST

Oldest WWII Medal Of Honor Recipient Dies

SAN DIEGO (AP) — Retired Navy Lt. John Finn, the oldest Medal of Honor recipient from World War II, died Thursday at a nursing home for veterans in Southern California. He was 100.

Finn enlisted in the Navy just before his 17th birthday and went on to become the first man to receive the nation's highest military award for heroism during the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on Dec. 7, 1941, according to a Navy statement.

He was oldest of 97 Medal of Honor recipients still living. Despite head wounds and other injuries, Finn, the chief of ordnance for an air squadron, continuously fired a .50-caliber machine gun from an exposed position as bullets and bombs pounded the Naval Air Station at Kaneohe Bay in Oahu. He then supervised the rearming of returning American planes.

Finn received the Medal of Honor on Sept. 15, 1942, from then-President Franklin D. Roosevelt.

He later served as a limited duty officer specializing in anti-aircraft guns in San Diego, Hawaii, Washington, Panama and aboard aircraft carriers, the Navy said.

He retired in 1956 after three decades of service, but he continued to help young sailors and stayed active in Navy organizations, Lt. Aaron Kakiel said.

"He's been a real inspiration to a number of our aviation ordnance men and an example for the entire Navy," he said.

Born July 23, 1909, in Los Angeles, Finn lived for 50 years on his ranch near Live Oak Springs, outside San Diego.

Finn died at the Veterans Home of California in Chula Vista, the Navy said. Officials initially said he had died at his ranch.

He will be buried with full military honors. Kakiel said the Navy was still working with his family members on the details.

Jamaica Police: 73 People Killed In Manhunt

KINGSTON, Jamaica (AP) — Jamaican security forces kicked down doors and arrested dozens of residents of a bullet-pocked slum on Thursday, and said the death toll from four days of fighting sparked by the search for a reputed drug lord has risen to 73.

The target of the manhunt, Christopher "Dudus" Coke, was nowhere to be found.

Hinds said police and soldiers have found 73 bodies, three of which were killed in incidents not related to the raid.

"The 73 bodies we're speaking about are all civilians," Hinds said. "But civilians are sometimes gunmen and gunmen."

Activist Released On Parole After 15 Years

LIMA, Peru (AP) — Activist Lori Berenson walked out of prison smiling Thursday but got a chilly reception from her new neighbors after serving three-quarters of a 20-year sentence for aiding leftist rebels.

Now 40, the New Yorker spent more than a third of her life behind bars — getting married, giving birth, undergoing back surgery — but never denouncing the Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement she was convicted of abetting.

When she was arrested in November 1995 with the wife of the group's leader, prosecutors said Berenson was helping it plot a takeover of Peru's Congress that never happened. The following month, police found a forged ID card bearing her photo in a raid on a rebel safe house.

But Berenson apparently became less strident over the years, many of them spent in frigid prisons in the high Andes. Documents her defense team provided to the judge who granted her parole Tuesday said Berenson had "recognized she committed errors" getting involved with the rebels.

A year after Berenson's arrest, the Tupac Amaru gained notoriety when 13 of its members stormed the Japanese ambassador's residence and seized hostages. Among their demands was Berenson's release. The standoff ended 126 days later with all the rebels killed.

Wall Street Jumps 285 Points On Debt News

NEW YORK (AP) — Stocks had another turnaround Thursday and rocketed higher after China reassured investors it doesn't plan to sell the European debt it holds.

The Dow Jones industrial average surged nearly 285 points. Treasury prices tumbled as traders funneled money into riskier assets like stocks and commodities.

China's show of confidence in Europe let the market resume a rally that stalled late Wednesday following a report that the Chinese government was considering cutting its European debt holdings. If that were true, such a move would have signaled that China didn't think Europe would be able to contain the crisis. The agency that manages China's \$2.5 trillion in foreign reserves denied the report.

Analysts also said some bounce has been expected after the slide that drove the Dow down 11 percent from its 2010 peak a month ago. Traders cautioned that this might not be a rally but merely a break in selling.

Hacker Takes Over Wis. Construction Sign

STEVENS POINT, Wis. (AP) — A digital construction sign along a central Wisconsin interstate has been flashing a rock-inspired passionate message to passing motorists.

The sign near Stevens Point spelled out "Danger Danger," "High Voltage," "When We Touch," "When We Kiss," to rush-hour drivers Thursday.

The words are borrowed from the song "Danger! High Voltage" by the Detroit-based rock band Electric Six.

James Bierman, co-owner of Central State Signage, says a hacker must have changed the message board.

The black and orange construction sign was placed on Interstate 39 because the state Department of Transportation contracted with United Painting of Forest Junction to repaint several overpasses in the area.

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U.S. Predicts Several Major Hurricanes

MIAMI (AP) — The Atlantic hurricane season could be the busiest since 2005, when Katrina and Rita caused massive destruction along the same part of the Gulf Coast now struggling with the largest offshore oil spill in U.S. history, government scientists said Thursday.

The 2010 season may spawn as many as 23 named tropical storms, including up to seven major hurricanes, a number not likely to be affected by the spill, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration predicted.

Eight to 14 storms would strengthen into hurricanes, with top winds of 74 mph or higher, the agency said. Three to seven of those could become major storms that reach Category 3 or higher — meaning they bring sustained winds of at least 111 mph.

A hurricane might help break up the oil spill staining the Gulf of Mexico, but the oil won't affect significantly how tropical storms develop, forecasters said. They don't know what kind of environmental hazards to expect, though there are fears that winds and waves could push the oil deeper into estuaries and wetlands.

GULF OIL SPILL

Estimate: Leak Eclipses Exxon Valdez

BP Resumes Its 'Top Kill' Attempt To Seal Well

BY GREG BLUESTEIN AND BEN NUCKOLS
Associated Press Writers

ROBERT, La. — As BP labored for a second day Thursday to choke off the leak at the bottom of the Gulf of Mexico, dire new government estimates showed the disaster has easily eclipsed the Exxon Valdez as the biggest oil spill in U.S. history.

The company announced late in the day that it had suspended shooting heavy drilling mud into the blown-out well 5,000 feet underwater around midnight Wednesday so it could bring in more materials. Thursday evening, BP PLC said it had resumed the pumping procedure known as a top kill. Officials said it could be late Friday or the weekend before the company knows if it has cut off the oil that has been flowing for five weeks.

BP insisted the top kill was progressing as planned, though the company acknowledged drilling mud was escaping from the broken pipe along with the leaking crude.

"The fact that we had a bunch of mud going up the riser isn't ideal but it's not necessarily indicative of a problem," said spokesman Tom Mueller.

Early Thursday, officials said the process was going well, but later in the day they announced pumping had been suspended 16 hours earlier.

The top kill is the latest in a string of attempts to stop the oil that has been spewing since the drilling rig Deepwater Horizon exploded April 20. Eleven workers were killed.

If the procedure works, BP will inject cement into the well to seal it permanently. If it doesn't, the company has a number of backup plans. Either way, crews will continue to drill two relief wells, considered the only sure-fire way to stop the leak.

A top kill has never been attempted before so deep underwater. BP Chief Operating Officer Doug Suttles said the company is also



DANIEL BELTRA/GREENPEACE/MCT
A brown pelican (*Pelecanus occidentalis*) is washed at the International Bird Rescue Research Center in Fort Jackson, Louisiana, to clean birds affected by oil leaked from the Deepwater Horizon well-head, the BP leased oil platform exploded April 20 and sank after burning.

considering shooting small, dense rubber balls or assorted junk such as golf balls and rubber scraps to stop up a crippled five-story piece of equipment known as a blowout preventer to keep the mud from escaping.

The stakes were higher than ever as public frustration over the spill grew and a team of government scientists said the oil has been flowing at a rate 2 1/2 to five times higher than what BP and the Coast Guard previously estimated.

Two teams of scientists calculated the well has been spewing between 504,000 and more than a million gallons a day. Even using the

most conservative estimate, that means about 18 million gallons have spilled so far. In the worst-case scenario, 39 million gallons have leaked.

That larger figure would be nearly four times the size of the Exxon Valdez disaster, in which a tanker ran aground in Alaska in 1989, spilling nearly 11 million gallons.

"Now we know the true scale of the monster we are fighting in the Gulf," said Jeremy Symons, vice president of the National Wildlife Federation. "BP has unleashed an unstoppable force of appalling proportions."

BP spokesman Steve Rinehart said the previous estimate of 210,000 gallons a day was based on the best data available at the time. As for the new figures, he said: "It does not and will not change the response. We are going all out on our response."

The spill is not the biggest ever in the Gulf. In 1979, a drilling rig in Mexican waters — the Ixtoc 1 — blew up, releasing 140 million gallons of oil.

In another troubling discovery, marine scientists said they have spotted a huge new plume of what they believe to be oil deep beneath the Gulf, stretching 22 miles from the leaking well-head northeast toward Mobile Bay, Ala. They fear it could have resulted from using chemicals a mile below the surface to break up the oil.

In Washington, Elizabeth Birnbaum stepped down as director of the Minerals Management Service, a job she had held since last July. Her agency has been harshly criticized over lax oversight of drilling and cozy ties with industry.

An internal Interior Department report released earlier this week found that between 2000 and 2008, agency staff members accepted tickets to sports events, lunches and other gifts from oil and gas companies and used government computers to view pornography.

Polls show the public is souring on the administration's handling of the catastrophe, and Obama sought to assure Americans that the government is in control and deflect criticism that his administration has left BP in charge.

"My job right now is just to make sure everybody in the Gulf understands: This is what I wake up to in the morning, and this is what I go to bed at night thinking about. The spill," he said.

KOREAN CONFLICT

NKorea Scraps Sea Accords; SKorea Holds Navy Drill

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — Military tension on the Korean peninsula rose Thursday after North Korea threatened to attack any South Korean ships entering its waters and Seoul held anti-submarine drills in response to the March sinking of a navy vessel blamed on Pyongyang.

Separately, the chief U.S. military commander in South Korea criticized the North over the sinking of the South Korean warship Cheonan in which 46 sailors died, telling the communist country to stop its aggressive actions.

North Korean reaction was swift. The military declared it would scrap accords with the South designed to prevent armed clashes at their maritime border, including the cutting of a military hot line, and warned of "prompt physical strikes" if any South Korean ships enter what the North says are its waters in a disputed area off the west coast of the peninsula.

A multinational team of investigators said May 20 that a North Korean torpedo sank the 1,200-ton ship. Seoul announced punitive measures, including slashing trade and resuming anti-Pyongyang propaganda over radio and loudspeakers aimed at the North. North Korea has denied attacking the ship, which sank near disputed western waters where the Koreans have fought three bloody sea battles since 1999.

Inter-Korean political and economic ties have been steadily

deteriorating since the February 2008 inauguration of South Korean President Lee Myung-bak, who vowed a tougher line on the North and its nuclear program. The sinking of the Cheonan has returned military tensions — and the prospect of armed conflict — to the forefront.

Off the west coast, 10 South Korean warships, including a 3,500-ton destroyer, fired artillery and other guns and dropped anti-submarine bombs during a one-day exercise to boost readiness, the navy said.

South Korea also is planning two major military drills with the U.S. by July in a display of force intended to deter aggression by North Korea, according to South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff.

War of words

In response to the sinking of one of its navy ships, South Korea has said it will no longer allow North Korean vessels to cross its maritime boundaries.

South Korean maritime boundaries

China

N. KOREA

Pyongyang

Seoul

S. KOREA

Sea of Japan

Yellow Sea

Korea Strait

JAPAN

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Source: VIZ Maritime

Boundaries: Geodatabase

Graphic: Chicago Tribune

Use your head
Grow smart

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