

Obama Meets With Group Who Killed Bin Laden

FORT CAMPBELL, Ky. (AP) — Brimming with pride, President Barack Obama embraced the U.S. commandos he sent after terror mastermind Osama bin Laden, saluting them Friday on behalf of America and people all over the world. "Job well done," he declared.

Speaking to a hangar full of cheering soldiers, Obama said: "Thanks to the incredible skill and courage of countless individuals — intelligence, military over many years — the terrorist leader that struck our nation 9/11 will never threaten America again."

The president addressed the larger group after meeting privately with the full assault team — Army helicopter pilots and Navy SEAL commandos — who executed the dangerous raid on bin Laden's compound and killed the al-Qaida leader in Pakistan early Monday.

At an Army post whose troops have sustained heavy losses in an Afghanistan war that has grown on his watch, Obama said: "We are ultimately going to defeat al-Qaida." Still, he warned that the fight against terrorists still rages.

Capping an extraordinary week for the military, the nation and himself, he called the bin Laden raid one of the most successful intelligence and military operations in America's history.

Coast Guard Closes Stretch Of Mississippi

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (AP) — The Coast Guard closed a stretch of the swollen Mississippi to barge traffic Friday in a move that could cause a backup along the mighty river, while police farther south in Memphis went door to door, warning thousands of people to leave before they get swamped.

Emergency workers in Memphis handed out bright yellow fliers in English and Spanish that read, "Evacuate!!! Your property is in danger right now."

All the way south into the Mississippi Delta, people faced the question of whether to stay or go as high water rolled down the Big Muddy and backed up along its tributaries, breaking flood records that have stood since the Depression.

Because of levees and other flood defenses built over the years, engineers said it is unlikely any major metropolitan areas will be inundated as the water pushes downstream over the next week or two, but farms, small towns and even some urban areas could see extensive flooding.

"It's going to be nasty," said Bob Bea, a civil engineer at the University of California-Berkeley who investigated levee failures in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina in 2005. How bad it gets depends on how well the flood protection systems have been built and maintained, he said.

Syrian Security Forces Kill 30 Protesters

BEIRUT (AP) — Syrian security forces opened fire Friday on thousands of protesters demanding regime change, killing more than 30 people in a sign that President Bashar Assad is prepared to ride out a wave of rapidly escalating international outrage.

The U.N. said it is sending a team into Syria to investigate and the European Union is expected to place sanctions on Syrian officials next week — both significant blows to Assad, a British-educated, self-styled reformer who has tried to bring Syria back into the global mainstream over his 11 years in power.

In Washington, State Department spokesman Mark Toner said the U.S. was pressing the Syrian government to cease "violence against innocent citizens who are simply demonstrating and trying to state their aspirations for a more democratic future."

Friday's protests spanned the nation of 23 million, from the capital to the Mediterranean coast and the arid northeast.

The bloodshed was the latest spasm in what has become a weekly cycle of mass protests followed by a swift and deadly crackdown.

But pressure was mounting on Assad, who insists the unrest is a foreign conspiracy carried out by "terrorist groups." More than 580 civilians and 100 soldiers have been killed since the revolt began, rights groups say.

U.S. Adds Inspection Posts At Texas Border

LAREDO, Texas (AP) — Federal authorities on Friday opened seven new inspection booths for commercial traffic heading north to the U.S. from Mexico, nearly doubling capacity at the bridge that's the busiest commercial port on America's southwestern border — and a prime smuggling corridor for drug gangs.

U.S. Customs and Border Protection says the new posts will ease wait times on Laredo's World Trade International Bridge, where more than 4,800 18-wheelers rumble into American territory daily, or one about every 18 seconds.

The \$5.4 million project also bolsters inspection of big-rigs that smugglers can cram with loads of cocaine, marijuana or amphetamines hidden among regular cargo.

It includes two additional new lanes for "secondary inspection," an area with sniffer dogs where customs agents can provide extra screening.

"Laredo is about tractor-trailers, it's about commercial vehicles, so that's the environment the smuggler's going to try to work within," said Jerry Robinette, special agent in charge of U.S. Customs and Immigration Enforcement's San Antonio office, which oversee all of South Texas.

Laredo Mayor Raul Salinas joined his cross-border counterpart from Nuevo Laredo, Benjamin Galvan Gomez, and a gaggle of federal, state and local officials, who stood in front of the new blue-and-white inspection booths and cut a dark ribbon stretched symbolically across lanes marked "Fast 2" and "Fast 3." All around, thunderous and pungent lines of trucks waited to pass through the border.

Al-Qaida Vows Revenge

Terror Network Makes First Statement Since Bin Laden's Death

BY MAGGIE MICHAEL
Associated Press

CAIRO — Al-Qaida confirmed the killing of Osama bin Laden and vowed revenge, saying Friday that Americans' "happiness will turn to sadness." The statement was the first by the terror network since its leader was slain in a U.S. commando raid against his Pakistani hideout.

The statement, written in typical al-Qaida style and in the name of the organization's General Command, seemed mostly intended to reassure followers that the terror group remains vigorous and intact.

The statement was dated Tuesday, the day after bin Laden's death. Its authenticity could not be independently confirmed, but it was posted on militant websites Friday by the al-Fajr Center, al-Qaida's online media distribution network.

"The blood of the holy warrior sheik, Osama bin Laden, God bless him, is too precious to us and to all Muslims to go in vain," the statement said. "We will remain, God willing, a curse chasing the Americans and their agents, following them outside and inside their countries."

"Soon, God willing, their happiness will turn to sadness," it said, "their blood will be mingled with their tears."

The confirmation by al-Qaida should remove doubt among all but the most die-hard conspiracy theorists that bin Laden is in fact dead.

Earlier Friday, hundreds of members of radical Islamic parties protested in several Pakistan cities against the U.S. raid.

Many chanted "Osama is alive" and blasted the U.S. for violating the country's sovereignty.

The need to provide proof was behind arguments that the U.S. should release a photo of the slain terror leader. U.S. President Barack Obama has chosen to withhold the



MOHANNAD SABRY/MCT
An Egyptian man shouts his support for Osama bin Laden at a rally outside the Nour Mosque in Cairo, Egypt, on Friday, May 6, 2011. About 400 people mourned the slain terrorist mastermind and vowed revenge for his death.

photo.

The statement also opens the way for the group to name a successor to bin Laden. His deputy, Ayman al-Zawahiri, is now the most prominent figure in the group and a likely contender to take his place.

"Sheik Osama didn't build an organization to die when he dies," the statement read. "The university of faith, Quran and jihad from which bin Laden graduated will not close its doors," it added.

The statement came as newly uncovered

documents found in bin Laden's residence revealed plans for derailing an American train on the coming 10th anniversary of the Sept. 11 attacks, according to U.S. officials. Counterterrorism officials said they believe the plot was only in the initial planning stages at the time.

But it does suggest that bin Laden may have been more involved in operations than the U.S. had assumed when they tried to portray him as merely an inspirational figure who was uninvolved in operations.

Gas Prices To Drop As Oil Joins Plunge

BY JONATHAN FAHEY
AND CHRIS KAHN
AP Energy Writers

NEW YORK — Just shy of \$4 a gallon, average U.S. pump prices are about to start falling and could hit \$3.50 by summer.

You probably won't see a change at the gas station this weekend. But relief will come soon because oil prices fell 15 percent this week, the steepest decline in two and a half years. Oil hit a two-year high of \$114.83 in Monday trading. It closed Friday at \$97.18.

The plunge was part of a sharp sell-off across in commodities this week. Analysts say investors — demonized as "speculators" by some market watchers — got nervous that oil, metals and grains had risen over the past few months to unrealistic heights.

Their rush to sell knocked silver prices down 28 percent, sugar down 13 percent and natural gas down 10 percent.

While analysts cited reasons specific to each commodity, they had one common explanation for the pullback: The strengthening U.S. dollar.

Commodities such as oil and silver are bought and sold in dol-

lars. When the dollar is weak, those commodities look cheaper to holders of foreign currency so they buy. Conversely, when the dollar rises, commodities look more expensive. So they sell.

Speculators, knowing this, tend to sell commodities and buy dollars if they anticipate the dollar will rise. That amplified this week's retreat in prices.

"This move wasn't about supply issues," said Rich Ilcyszyn, Senior Market Strategist at Lind-Waldcock, a Chicago futures brokerage firm. "It was people hedging and people investing."

An index of the dollar compared with a basket of foreign currencies rose 2 percent for the week.

Commodity prices began to rise in late August. That's when the Federal Reserve signaled its intention to embark on what eventually became a \$600 billion government bond-buying designed to push down interest rates, boost stock prices and jolt the economy.

But the dollar fell as a result. Investors knew the Fed would be flooding financial markets with U.S. currency. Many of those dollars poured into commodities, pushing them ever higher.

Other factors such as concern about Middle East oil supplies

and China's demand for raw materials contributed to the momentum in commodities buying. Analysts warned it was overdone. When the dollar rose this week — and reports suggested demand for commodities was weakening in the U.S. — that was a tipping point for many investors.

"You had the sense that the price had gone up too far too fast," said Michael Lynch, President of Strategic Energy and Economic Research. "People were leaning against the door and waiting for a signal."

Still, traders say this week's sell-off is very likely just a pause in a long-term upward trend for commodity prices. While prices could fall in the near-term, a stronger U.S. economy and rapidly growing economies of Asia will continue to need food, en-

ergy and raw materials.

On Friday some commodities rose after a U.S. Labor Department report showed surprisingly robust job growth in April. Also, some investors saw a bargain in commodities after the big price declines earlier in the week.

Before Friday, the price of gasoline had increased every day since March 23. It's been on an upward trend with oil over the past few months as the Libyan rebellion cut off the country's oil exports, the dollar fell and numerous refineries shut down due to power outages and other unexpected problems.

Gasoline prices also tend to rise every spring as refineries follow federal regulations to produce summer gasoline blends that evaporate less readily and are more expensive to make.

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