

### Mississippi Delta Braces For Historic Flood

TUNICA, Miss. (AP) — The bulging Mississippi River rolled into the fertile Mississippi Delta on Tuesday, threatening to swamp antebellum mansions, wash away shotgun shacks, and destroy fields of cotton, rice and corn in a flood of historic proportions. The river took aim at one of the most poverty-stricken parts of the country after cresting before daybreak at Memphis, Tenn., just inches short of the record set in 1937. Some low-lying neighborhoods were inundated, but the city's high levees protected much of the rest of Memphis.

Over the past week or so in the Delta, floodwaters along the rain-swollen river and its backed-up tributaries have already washed away crops, forced many people to flee to higher ground and closed some of the dockside casinos that are vital to the state's economy.

But the worst is yet to come, with the crest expected to roll through the Delta over the next few days.

With hundreds of homes already damaged, "we're going to have a lot more when the water gets to where it's never been before," said Greg Flynn, a spokesman for the Mississippi emergency management agency.

### Obama Mocks GOP As Never Being Satisfied

EL PASO, Texas (AP) — In search of Hispanic votes and an immigration overhaul, President Barack Obama on Tuesday stood at the U.S.-Mexico border for the first time since winning the White House and declared it more secure than ever. He mocked Republican lawmakers for blocking immigration over border security alone, saying they won't be happy until they get a moat with alligators along the border.

"They'll never be satisfied," he said.

Stymied by both chambers of Congress, the president ditched lawmakers in favor of voters who might pressure them, making an appeal to the public on a hot and dusty day far outside the beltway. He told a friendly El Paso, Texas, crowd that it's up to them to tell Congress to pass legislation providing a pathway to citizenship for 11 million illegal immigrants.

The approach also allowed the president to make clear that it's Republicans — not him — standing in the way of immigration legislation. As his re-election approaches it's a message he wants broadcast loud and clear to Latino voters who don't like his administration's heavy deportations and feel he never made good on his promise to prioritize immigration legislation during his first year in office.

### Appeals Panel Hears Health Care Arguments

RICHMOND, Va. (AP) — A federal appeals panel dominated by appointees of President Barack Obama heard arguments Tuesday in two Virginia lawsuits challenging his health care overhaul.

The three-judge panel of the 4th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals vigorously questioned lawyers on both sides, but the most spirited exchanges focused on the central issue in both cases: whether the law's requirement that individuals buy insurance is constitutional. Federal judges in Virginia split on that question in the lawsuits, one filed by Virginia Attorney General Kenneth Cuccinelli and the other by Liberty University.

The 14-member court uses a computer program to randomly select its panels, and Obama could hardly have wished for a better outcome. He appointed two of the judges, Andre M. Davis and James A. Wynn Jr. The other was Judge Diana Gribbon Motz, an appointee of former President Bill Clinton.

"They were aggressive in both directions for both sides, so I don't draw any great concern about that," Cuccinelli said at a news conference after the hearings.

The Richmond-based 4th Circuit has historically been viewed as the nation's most conservative appeals court, but recent Democratic appointments have steered it more toward the ideological center — a trend that was in evidence in the packed courtroom Tuesday.

### U.S. Close To Declaring End Of Assad's Rule

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Obama administration is edging closer to calling for an end to the long rule of the Assad family in Syria. Administration officials said Tuesday that the first step would be to say for the first time that President Bashar Assad has forfeited his legitimacy to rule, a major policy shift that would amount to a call for regime change that has questionable support in the world community.

The tougher U.S. line almost certainly would echo demands for "democratic transition" that the administration used in Egypt and is now espousing in Libya, the officials said. But directly challenging Assad's leadership is a decision fraught with problems: Arab countries are divided, Europe is still trying to gauge its response, and there are major doubts over how far the United States could go to back up its words with action.

If the Syrian government persists with its harsh crackdown on political opponents, the U.S. could be forced into choosing between an undesired military operation to protect civilians, as in Libya, or an embarrassing U-turn that makes it look weak before an Arab world that is on the tipping point between greater democracy or greater repression.

The internal administration debate over a tougher approach to Assad's regime is occurring amid a backdrop of brutality in Syria. More than 750 civilians have been killed since the uprising began nearly two months ago and some 9,000 people are still in custody, according to a leading Syrian human rights group.

### Lesbian Air Force Flight Nurse Won't Return

SEATTLE (AP) — An Air Force Reserve flight nurse who sued to overturn her dismissal under the "don't ask, don't tell" law against gays serving openly in the military said Tuesday she is retiring with full benefits rather than resuming service.

Maj. Margaret Witt, 47, served 18 years — two short of being eligible for full retirement — before she was dismissed for being gay in 2006. A federal judge ruled last fall that her dismissal failed to advance any legitimate military goals and violated her constitutional rights. The judge ordered that Witt be reinstated as soon as possible.

The U.S. Justice Department initially appealed. But early this year, after President Barack Obama signed the repeal of "don't ask, don't tell," Justice Department officials contacted Witt's lawyers and said the agency planned to drop the appeal, remove the discharge from her record, and give her credit for two additional years of service, said Sarah Dunne, legal director for the American Civil Liberties Union of Washington, which represented Witt.

# Replacing Bin Laden

## Al-Qaida Likely To Elevate No. 2 — Or Name No One

BY REBECCA SANTANA  
Associated Press

BAGHDAD — A week after the death of Osama bin Laden, his longtime deputy is considered the front-runner to succeed the iconic al-Qaida founder. But uprisings in the Middle East and changing dynamics within the group could point to another scenario: a decision not to appoint anyone at all to replace the world's most-wanted terrorist.

Replacing bin Laden, who founded al-Qaida more than two decades ago and masterminded 9/11, may be no easy task. Analysts say the choice will likely depend on how the terror organization views its goals and priorities in the post-bin Laden age.

The revolt across the Arab world over the past few months was driven by aspirations for Western-style democracy, not the al-Qaida goal of a religiously led state spanning the Muslim world. And as al-Qaida struggles to prove its relevance, the group has become increasingly decentralized and prone to internal disputes.

"You almost have to start with the question of 'Can he be replaced?'" said Lt. Col. Reid Sawyer, the director of the West Point, N.Y.,-based Countering Terrorism Center.

Whether al-Qaida "even need name an 'official' new leader is uncertain," wrote Rita Katz and Josh Devon in a report by SITE Intelligence Group, which monitors jihadist web traffic. "So long as the group can continue to

issue messages ... the group will remain a guiding light for the global jihadist community."

If al-Qaida does pick a successor, Sawyer and other analysts said Ayman al-Zawahri, 59, is the most likely choice because he was bin Laden's longtime deputy and has far more experience than younger candidates.

Few may want to challenge him openly for the top spot, analysts said.

"If he is passed over for someone else, it tells me that al-Qaida has already splintered," said Fawaz Gerges, an al-Qaida scholar at the London School of Economics.

Al-Zawahri is an Egyptian doctor who is believed to be hiding somewhere in Pakistan. He founded the Egyptian Islamic Jihad, which was dedicated to overthrowing Hosni Mubarak's government, before merging his group with al-Qaida.

But al-Zawahri lacks bin Laden's personal appeal, and some members of al-Qaida have found him a controlling micromanager, said a senior U.S. intelligence official who briefed reporters in Washington.

"There are strong indications that he is not popular within certain circles of the group. So I believe it's an open question as to who will take over," said the official, who requested anonymity to discuss sensitive issues frankly.

One possible challenger is Abu Yahia al-Libi, a Libyan who serves as al-Qaida's Afghanistan commander. Al-Libi, an Islamic

scholar, escaped from the U.S.'s Bagram Air Base in Afghanistan in 2005 and began appearing in videos released by the terror group.

Another possibility is Saif al-Adel, an Egyptian who was indicted by the U.S. for his role in the Aug. 7, 1998 bombings of U.S. embassies in Tanzania and Kenya that killed 224 people. But his close ties with al-Zawahri and lack of religious credentials make him unlikely to lead the group.

Other militants better known in the West, such as Afghan Taliban leader Mullah Mohammed Omar or American-born Adam Gadahn, known as Azzam al-Amriki, stand no chance. Mullah Omar was never a member of al-Qaida, and Gadahn lacks stature within the movement.

Another well-known name, U.S.-born cleric Anwar al-Awlaki, is considered a long-shot at best. Al-Awlaki, who is based in Yemen, is one of the most prominent English-language radical clerics whose sermons have influenced militants involved in attacks or attempted attacks on American soil. But his lack of operational experience and the fact that he's not even the top leader in al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula argue against him.

If al-Zawahri is the successor, he will face sharp challenges in trying to make his severely debilitated organization a force following the Arab spring and bin Laden's death May 2 in a U.S. raid on his hideout in Abbottabad, Pakistan.

### SMOKEY TRAVEL



Motorists traveling on I-75 westbound near Glades Parkway in Weston, Florida, are warned about smoke from a fire in Collier County, which is limiting visibility, Tuesday, May 10, 2011.

### FEMA Asks For Return Of Disaster Aid

BY RYAN J. FOLEY  
Associated Press

CEDAR RAPIDS, Iowa — After the raging Cedar River filled his home with 13 feet of water and ruined most of his possessions, Justin Van Fleet pleaded for help from the Federal Emergency Management Agency to get back on his feet.

Dead broke and living in a FEMA trailer following the 2008 flood, Van Fleet repeatedly submitted paperwork and made countless phone calls arguing his case.

After seven months, the agency finally gave him more than \$20,000, which he said gave him his life back and allowed him to move into a house.

Then in March, a letter arrived from the government with a shocking message: He should never have gotten the money. And he had just 30 days to pay it all back.

The agency is asking Van Fleet and thousands of other Americans who were victims of natural disasters to return more than \$22 million in government aid, acknowledging it mistakenly made payments to many people who were ineligible.

FEMA is required by law to recover improperly spent money, but most of the people who were helped say they used the cash years ago, and they don't want to be financially punished because of the agency's errors.

"It literally felt like everything is being taken away from me again," said Van Fleet, a 28-year-old call center worker. "It's like going through the flood again."

## Debate Over Debt Crisis Intensifies

BY JIM KUHNHENN AND ANDREW TAYLOR  
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The battle over whether tax increases can be used to cut the nation's debt flared Tuesday as the Senate's Democratic budget writer floated a possible millionaire's surtax to help cut projected deficits over the next decade. But Republican leaders flatly said no to tax increases.

Democratic officials said Senate Budget Committee Chairman Kent Conrad, D-N.D., raised the idea of an extra tax on the wealthiest taxpayers and the Senate's Democratic leader, Harry Reid, D-Nev., called for an end to tax subsidies for oil and gas companies. House Speaker John Boehner and Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell both staked out seemingly unyielding positions against tax increases.

The parties exchanged volleys over taxes even as bipartisan congressional negotiators working

with Vice President Joe Biden struggled for common ground on spending cuts that would help erode long-term deficits.

Boehner is calling for trillions of dollars in spending cuts, and the Democrats, too, acknowledge that spiraling annual deficits require spending restraint. But the differences over possible tax increases, even if they would spare regular wage-earners, underscore the chasm between the two parties.

The conflicting approaches put added pressure on the bipartisan budget negotiators who met with Biden for the second time in a week. At the same time, the administration is seeking an increase in the government's borrowing authority, and Republicans see that debt ceiling vote as critical leverage.

Biden, emerging from a two-hour meeting with congressional negotiators across from the White House, voiced optimism about the talks, but indicated that top House and Senate leaders might


ultimately have to become involved to seal any bargain.

"Whether we get to the finish line with this group is another question," he said.

One of the Republicans' top negotiators with Biden, House Majority Leader Eric Cantor of Virginia, signaled flexibility Tuesday. Cantor said the talks were designed to find where the White House, Democrats and Republicans were "in terms of commonality right now" and indicated that an agreement on spending cuts in broad terms could be enough to win support for increasing the debt ceiling.

Still, he said, "there's got to be assurances that the commitments are real" to cut spending.

## YANKTON DAILY PRESS & DAKOTAN



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### Meeting for the Yankton Fire Protection District

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