

Floodwaters Rise In The Mississippi Delta

RENA LARA, Miss. (AP) — Floodwaters from the bloated Mississippi River and its tributaries spilled across farm fields, cut off churches, washed over roads and forced people from their homes Wednesday in the Mississippi Delta, a poverty-stricken region only a generation or two removed from sharecropping days.

People used boats to navigate flooded streets as the crest rolled slowly downstream, bringing misery to poor, low-lying communities. Hundreds have left their homes in the Delta in the past several days as the water rose toward some of the highest levels on record.

The flood crest is expected to push all the way through the Delta by late next week.

Two Earthquakes Strike Spain, Killing Ten

MADRID (AP) — Two earthquakes struck southeast Spain in quick succession Wednesday, killing at least 10 people, injuring dozens and causing major damage to buildings, officials said. It was the highest quake-related death toll in Spain in more than 50 years.

The epicenter of the quakes — with magnitudes of 4.4 and 5.2 — was close to the town of Lorca, and the second came about two hours after the first, an official with the Murcia regional government said on condition of anonymity in line with department policy.

Dozens of injured people were being treated at the scene and a field hospital was set up in the town of about 85,000 people, officials said. About 270 patients at a hospital in Lorca were being evacuated by ambulance as a precaution after the building sustained minor damage, the Murcia regional government said.

The Spanish prime minister's office put the death toll at 10 and the Murcia administration said the deaths included a minor and occurred with the second, stronger quake.

Large chunks of stone and brick fell from the facade of a church in Lorca as a reporter for Spanish state TV was broadcasting live from the scene. A large church bell was also among the rubble, which missed striking the reporter, who appeared to be about 30 feet (9 meters) away when it fell. The broadcaster reported that schoolchildren usually gather at that spot around that time, and if it had happened 10 minutes later, a "tragedy" could have occurred.

Tapes To Get More Use In White-Collar Cases

NEW YORK (AP) — Former hedge fund titan Raj Rajaratnam was convicted in an insider-trading case Wednesday thanks largely to weapons prosecutors have used against mobsters and drug lords for years: wiretaps. What that means for his former peers depends on whether it's true, as his lead attorney asserts, that what he did "happens every day on Wall Street."

Federal prosecutors used nearly three dozen recordings at trial to back up their claim that Rajaratnam made a fortune by coaxing a crew of corporate tipsters into giving him an illegal edge on blockbuster trades in technology and other stocks. In a clear signal of the tapes' importance, the U.S. District Court jurors asked several times to rehear some of the recordings before convicting Rajaratnam of all 14 counts: five of conspiracy and nine of securities fraud.

Rajaratnam could be heard wheeling and dealing with corrupt executives and consultants — in one case demanding "radio silence" on information that could affect a stock price.

Authorities have said the recordings represent the most extensive use to date of wiretaps in a white-collar case. The defense had fought hard in pretrial hearings to keep the evidence out of the trial by arguing that the FBI obtained it with a faulty warrant.

Clinics: Obama Health Care Quality Unworkable

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Barack Obama's main idea for getting quality health care at less cost was in jeopardy Wednesday after key medical providers called his administration's initial blueprint so complex it's unworkable.

Just over a month ago, top officials released long-awaited draft regulations for "accountable care organizations," networks of doctors and hospitals that would collaborate to keep Medicare patients healthier and share in the savings with taxpayers. Obama's health care overhaul law envisioned quickly setting up hundreds of such networks around the country to lead a bottom-up reform of America's bloated health care system.

But in an unusual rebuke, an umbrella group representing premier organizations such as the Mayo Clinic wrote the administration Wednesday saying that more than 90 percent of its members would not participate, because the rules as written are so onerous it would be nearly impossible for them to succeed.

The medical groups say they are worried they will be left holding the bag for losses, that the government has designed things so there is no easy way to tell which patients are part of the program, and that there's no reliable way to adjust for patients who are sicker and require closer follow-up and more expensive treatments.

Cleanup

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this year. That compares to \$74,900 in 2009.

The number of hours worked by city crews to pick up the material decreased from 1,134 hours with 72 hours of overtime to 858 hours with 73 hours of overtime.

The amount of garbage for the landfill hauled in by citizens was

down from 105 tons in 2010 to 65 tons this year. Wood decreased from 47 tons to 23 tons. Meanwhile, the amount of concrete and metal brought in by citizens was well below a ton.

"Overall, it's a good program, and we're happy to be able to continue to do it," Russell said. "I think it's very valuable for the community."

Kuhl added, "We appreciate everyone's effort to have the community look good for the summer."

Diary: Bin Laden Eyed New Targets

BY KIMBERLY DOZIER
AP Intelligence Writer

WASHINGTON — Deep in hiding, his terror organization becoming battered and fragmented, Osama bin Laden kept pressing followers to find new ways to hit the U.S., officials say, citing his private journal and other documents recovered in last week's raid.

Strike smaller cities, bin Laden suggested. Target trains as well as planes. Above all, kill as many Americans as possible in a single attack.

Though he was out of the public eye and al-Qaida seemed to be weakening, bin Laden never yielded control of his worldwide organization, U.S. officials said Wednesday. His personal, handwritten journal and his massive collection of computer files reveal his hand at work in every recent major al-Qaida threat, including plots in Europe last year that had travelers and embassies on high alert, two officials said.

They described the intelligence to The Associated Press only on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to talk publicly about what was found in bin Laden's hide-out. Analysts are continuing to review the documents.

The information shatters the government's conventional thinking about bin Laden, who had been regarded for years as mostly an inspirational figurehead whose years in hiding made him too marginalized to maintain operational control of the organization he founded.

Instead, bin Laden was communicating from his walled compound in Pakistan with al-

Qaida's offshoots, including the Yemen branch that has emerged as the leading threat to the United States, the documents indicate. Though there is no evidence yet that he was directly behind the attempted Christmas Day 2009 bombing of a Detroit-bound airliner or the nearly successful attack on cargo planes heading for Chicago and Philadelphia, it's now clear that they bear some of bin Laden's hallmarks.

He was well aware of U.S. counterterrorist efforts and schooled his followers in working around them, the messages to his followers show. Don't limit attacks to New York City, he said in his writings. Consider other areas such as Los Angeles or smaller cities. Spread out the targets.

In one particularly macabre bit of mathematics, bin Laden's writings show him musing over just how many Americans he must kill to force the U.S. to withdraw from the Arab world. He concludes that the smaller, scattered attacks since 9/11 had not been enough. He tells his disciples that only a body count of thousands, something on the scale of the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks, would shift U.S. policy.

He also schemed about ways to sow political dissent in Washington and play political figures against one another, officials said.

The communications were in missives sent via plug-in computer storage devices called flash drives. The devices were ferried to bin Laden's compound by couriers, a process that is slow but exceptionally difficult to track.

Intelligence officials have not identified any new planned targets or plots in their initial analysis of the 100 or so flash drives and five computers that Navy SEALs hauled away after

killing bin Laden. Last week, the FBI and Homeland Security Department warned law enforcement officials nationwide to be on alert for possible attacks against trains, though officials said there was no specific plot.

Officials have not yet seen any indication that bin Laden had the ability to coordinate timing of attacks across the various al-Qaida affiliates in Pakistan, Yemen, Algeria, Iraq and Somalia, and it is also unclear from bin Laden's documents how much the affiliate groups relied on his guidance. The Yemen group, for instance, has embraced the smaller-scale attacks that bin Laden's writings indicate he regarded as unsuccessful. The Yemen branch had already surpassed his central operation as al-Qaida's leading fundraising, propaganda and operational arm.

Al-Qaida has not named bin Laden's successor, but all indications point to his No. 2, Ayman al-Zawahiri. The question is whether al-Zawahiri, or anyone, has the ability to keep so many disparate groups under the al-Qaida banner. The groups in Somalia and Algeria, for instance, have very different goals focused on local grievances. Without bin Laden to serve as their shepherd, it's possible al-Qaida will further fragment.

British officials said the Americans had shared some information about the bin Laden cache but there had been nothing concrete yet to indicate his stamp on any of the recent terror attacks or plans in Britain — including a European plot last year involving the threat of a Mumbai-style shooting spree in a capital. Those officials spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss matters of intelligence.

Hikes

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because of the flooding, according to people familiar with refinery operations.

The flooding could hit an area producing and distributing a large portion of the nation's crude oil, Bloomberg News quoted an industry leader.

On the Mississippi River between New Orleans and Baton Rouge, there are 11 refineries with a combined capacity of 2.5 million barrels a day, or 13 percent of U.S. output, according to Andy Lipow, president of Lipow Oil Associates LLC in Houston.

Louisiana state officials have also expressed concerns about the impact on two refineries, Bloomberg News reported.

One of the plants on the Mississippi River could have capacity cut to 75 percent for two weeks, according to the state's Department of Natural Resources. Anna Dearmon, the DNR's communications director, said she couldn't release the names of the refineries because of security reasons.

While the Mississippi River flooding could affect oil supplies, AAA spokesman Madeja doesn't look for a long-term flood-related rise in prices after the waters crest and recede.

Another factor that could lead to rising gas prices may be higher priced fuel still in the supply chain, Madeja said.

"Normally, there has been some volatility when prices fall," he said. "It all revolves around when the retailers have purchased their product and at what prices they have bought it."

"As far as spiking, though, I haven't seen any widespread indication of it. This summer, prices should hold fairly steady."

For now, the reduced crude oil prices have helped hold down gas prices, Madeja said. The market has cooled off after hitting \$112 to \$114 a barrel, he said.

"When prices were spinning, when crude was up there, about \$20 per barrel was due to fear and speculation," he said. "It's a shame that American consumers have to pay it at the pump. I call it a risk premium. The market was way over bought, and there were real concerns about the domino effect on consumers."

Madeja said he supports a review of the commodities market by President Obama.

World tensions also come into play, Madeja said. He cited reaction to Libyan unrest and the death of Al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden.

"The Japanese earthquakes and tsunamis have also had an impact (on oil prices)," Madeja said. "The Japanese demand for oil has dropped because of the disasters, but once they start to rebuild (the nation) it will be back up to high demand."

In the United States, Madeja doesn't think American consumers have greatly changed their lifestyle because of gas prices.

"The last time we saw prices escalate, there was a real trend

for public transportation, up 5 to 15 percent, and we saw more car pooling," he said. "I have not heard of any of those trends."

However, that could change with the arrival of warmer weather, he said.

"It's a great time, normally when people ditch the car for a motorcycle or bicycle," he said.

The Sioux Falls AAA office has seen one sign of higher gas prices, Madeja said.

"Our towing calls for those who run out of gas has been up about 25 percent," he said. "When the gas prices get this high, people just wait and wait for it to come down. There is less and less


gas in the tank, and we get calls from people who sheepishly admit they waited too long and ran out of gas."

The national and state averages for gas prices are holding steady and inching their way back down at a critical time of year for agriculture and tourism, Madeja said.

"We are coming out with our (AAA) travel forecast for Memorial Day next week, which should be a much more telling saga of what we can expect (for the summer)," he said.

"It's hopefully good news for the season. The economy needs it."

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