

**Mexico's Top Secretary Dies In Crash**

MEXICO CITY (AP) — The country's top Cabinet secretary, Francisco Blake Mora, a key figure in Mexico's battle with drug cartels, died Friday in a helicopter crash that President Felipe Calderon said was probably an accident.

Calderon said the helicopter was flying in fog when it went down in a remote area southeast of Mexico City, but that all possible causes were under investigation.

"Mexico has lost a great patriot ... and I lost a dear friend," said Calderon, visibly struggling to maintain composure during address to the country. "He was not only an exemplary minister, he was an exemplary Mexican."

Authorities said the undersecretary for human rights, Felipe Zamora, was among the seven others also killed, including the pilot.

Calderon appointed Blake Mora as interior secretary in July 2010. That put him in charge of coordinating domestic policies including security, human rights, migration and the president's relation with the legislature and opposition parties.

**Syrian Uprising Takes Dangerous New Turn**

BEIRUT (AP) — Syrians snatched from their homes turn up dead, often mutilated. Soldiers gun down former comrades who defected to the opposition. A human rights group reports that electric shocks and hot iron rods are used to torture detainees.

November is shaping up to be the bloodiest month yet in Syria's 8-month-old uprising. More than 250 Syrian civilians have been killed in the past 11 days as the regime besieges the renegade city of Homs and the conflict takes a dangerous turn, stoking fears of civil war.

The U.N. estimates some 3,500 people have been killed in the crackdown since mid-March, when the uprising began. The latest figures would push that number closer to 4,000.

The bloodshed has spiked dramatically in recent weeks amid signs that more protesters are taking up arms to protect themselves, changing the face of what has been a largely peaceful movement. Many fear the change plays directly into the hands of the regime by giving the military a pretext to crack down with increasing force.

There also have been reports of intense battles between soldiers and army defectors, setting the stage for even more bloodshed. Although the crackdown has led to broad international isolation, President Bashar Assad appears to have a firm grip on power.

**Panel Urges Cholesterol Tests For Children**

CHICAGO (AP) — Every child should be tested for high cholesterol between ages 9 and 11 so steps can be taken to prevent heart disease later on, a panel of doctors urged Friday in new advice that is sure to be controversial.

Until now, major medical groups have suggested cholesterol tests only for children with a family history of early heart disease or high cholesterol and those who are obese or have diabetes or high blood pressure. But studies show that is missing many children with high cholesterol, and the number of them at risk is growing because of the obesity epidemic.

The recommendation is in new guidelines from an expert panel appointed by the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute and endorsed by the American Academy of Pediatrics.

They also advise diabetes screening every two years starting as early as 9 for children who are overweight and have other risks for Type 2 diabetes, including family history. One third of U.S. children and teens are obese or overweight, fueling a boom in diabetes.

Autopsy studies show that some children already have signs of heart disease even before they have symptoms. By the fourth grade, 10 percent to 13 percent of U.S. children have high cholesterol, defined as a score of 200 or more.

**Internet Helps Military Connect To Main Street**

WASHINGTON (AP) — Michelle Obama is using the popular website Google to urge Americans to reach out to military families.

With the nation celebrating Veterans Day, the first lady's online video is part of an effort to use the Internet to make it easier for troops and veterans to share their stories and connect with each other and the world.

The new online tools could help the nation's military leaders answer a nagging problem: How to ease the growing disconnect between the armed forces and the people they dedicate their lives to defend. The effort comes in the waning days of unpopular wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and calls to drastically cut defense spending.

**White House Circulated Plan To Replace Chu**

WASHINGTON (AP) — Top officials at the White House circulated a plan calling for the ouster of Energy Secretary Steven Chu and other top Energy Department officials as the administration braced for a political storm brewing over the failing solar energy company Solyndra.

An email from a clean-energy activist and former official in President Barack Obama's 2008 campaign said Chu, a Nobel Prize-winning physicist, was a brilliant man but "not perfect" for other critical DOE missions, including creating jobs. The Feb. 25 email from Dan Carol, a former issues adviser in Obama's campaign, was circulated by then-Chief of Staff Peter Rouse and seen by more than a dozen senior White House officials, including senior adviser Valerie Jarrett and then-energy adviser Carol Browner.

The emails were released late Friday by the government in response to a subpoena by House Republicans, who are investigating a \$528 million federal loan received by Solyndra. The firm later went bankrupt and laid off its 1,100 workers.

A White House spokesman said Friday the plan to oust Chu was not taken very seriously.

Rouse, in a March 14 email to Deputy Chief of Staff Nancy-Ann DeParle, passed along Carol's proposal, saying he was "not that interested in Dan's criticism of Secretary Chu," but said Carol was smart and shared the president's views on energy policy.

In the Feb. 25 email, Carol said Chu should be reassigned as chief scientist at Energy, where he could "reinspire and reorganize" DOE's labs.

"This is a HUGE job and he would be perfect for it," Carol said, adding that Chu "is a wonderful and brilliant man, but he is not perfect for the other critical DOE mission: deploying existing technologies at scale and creating jobs."

**Oil Price Flirts With \$100 Per Barrel**

NEW YORK (AP) — The price of oil is closing in on \$100 per barrel for the first time since summer.

Prices have soared since October as two of the market's biggest fears — an unraveling of the 17-nation eurozone and another recession in the U.S. — appear to have eased — at least for now.

On Friday benchmark crude rose 96 cents to \$98.74 per barrel in New York, while Brent crude increased 33 cents to \$114.04 in London.

Greece and Italy have new political leadership to help them deal with massive debts. Greece appointed former European Central Bank Vice President Lucas Papademos as its new prime minister, and an interim cabinet was sworn in Friday. And Italy approved crucial economic reforms that were demanded by the European Union. Italy will also be getting a new prime minister.

**Italy Moves Toward Economic Change**

BY COLLEEN BARRY AND NICOLE WINFIELD  
Associated Press

ROME — Under pressure to control its dangerous debt, Italy sped a package of reforms toward approval Friday and prepared to hand its dysfunctional government over to a technocrat who Europe hopes can save the country from going broke. Financial markets around the world rallied in relief.

In its own step toward stability, Greece, which preceded Italy as the epicenter of the European debt crisis, installed a new prime minister. The Dow Jones industrial average in New York rose 2 percent, and markets in Britain, France and Germany posted similar gains.

A set of austerity measures cleared the Italian Senate by a vote of 156-12. The lower chamber of Parliament will vote Saturday, and Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi has said he will step down once the reforms are passed.

In a sign of confidence from investors, Italy's borrowing costs fell sharply. The yield on benchmark Italian 10-year bonds fell to 6.48 percent, safely below the crisis level of 7 percent reached earlier this week.

Greece, Ireland and Portugal all required international bailouts after their own borrowing rates passed 7 percent. The Italian economy would not be so easy to save. It totals \$2 trillion, twice as much as the other three countries combined.

An Italian default could tear apart the coalition of 17 countries that use the euro as a common currency and deal a strong blow to the economies of Europe and the United States, both trying to avoid recessions.

The Senate chamber resounded with warm applause for Mario Monti, the distinguished economist expected to succeed Berlusconi. He was unexpectedly named senator-for-life this week, putting him in line to lead.

"Our warmest and most cordial welcome," Senate President Renato Schifani told Monti after proclaiming him senator-for-life, an honorific reserved for the handful of Italians who have most contributed to Italian society.

A Cabinet meeting has been scheduled immediately after the vote in the lower house Saturday, suggesting Berlusconi might tender his resignation then.

The austerity measures will be not enough to revive the dormant Italian economy. They

raise the retirement age to 67, but not until 2026. They call for the sale of state property and privatizing some services but contain no painful labor reforms.

The reforms also offer tax incentives to companies that hire young workers in a country where the unemployment rate for people ages 15 to 24 hovers around 25 percent. Unemployment overall is closer to 8 percent.

"There is more to be done," said Herman Von Rompuy, president of the European Council, which sets the political course for the European Union. "The country needs reforms, not elections."

He added that Europe expects Italy to pass the reforms, at least as a first step.

In Greece, Prime Minister Lucas Papademos, a former vice president of the European Central Bank, assumed control of a temporary coalition government that will try to push through tough economic reforms and keep Greece from defaulting.

The Papademos government must pass a (euro) 130 billion, or \$177 billion, bailout from the European Union. That was the deal that Papademos' predecessor, George Papandreou, said he would put up for a vote. He later backed off and resigned.

**OBSERVING VETERAN'S DAY**



ASTRID RIECKEN/MCT  
An Honor Guard presents the colors during the annual Veteran's Day Observance at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C., Friday, November 11, 2011.

**11-11-11 Brings Lucky Babies, Bets And Brides**

BY MATT SEDENSKY  
Associated Press

In years to come, babies born Friday should have no trouble remembering the date — and in some cases, the exact minute — of their birth.

The day marked the 11th day of the 11th month of 2011. From China to New York, people celebrated the convergence of 11s with a splash by placing bets, tying the knot or making a wish.

Some babies were born right at 11:11 a.m., giving their time of birth 1's across the board. In Mount Holly, N.J., Jacob Anthony Saydeh made Veterans Day even more memorable for parents who are a veteran and current member of the Air Force. To the west, Celine Dianne Dizenzo's birth in Cleveland had been expected to come next week.

Newborn Alexander David Hockaday Ruiz took things a step further in Los Angeles when he was born at the exact time in room 1111 of a hospital's maternity ward. Providence Holy Cross Medical Center says the birth was natural and the room assignment was a coincidence.

But in Colorado, Cayson Childers' birthday wasn't left to chance. His parents ensured his arrival by scheduling a Caesarean section for Friday, and then doctors were able to make the operation work right at 11:11 a.m.

Across Malaysia, some 1,000 ethnic Chinese couples exchanged vows on a date viewed as auspicious and romantic. In China, a special "1111" train started at 11:11 a.m. on the No. 11 line in Shanghai.

"The numbers rhyme with one husband, one wife and one soul in Chinese and signifies a marriage that would last a lifetime," said nurse Pua Kim Giok, 25, who tied the knot with engineer Lee Chin Siang, 27. They were among 460 couples who got married at the popular Thean Hou Temple in Kuala Lumpur.

**Obama: Country Needs To Hire Veterans**

BY MARK S. SMITH  
Associated Press

ARLINGTON, Va. — Heralding the end of one war and the drawdown of another, President Barack Obama observed Veterans Day on Friday by urging Americans to hire the thousands of servicemen and women coming home from Iraq and Afghanistan.

In remarks at Arlington National Cemetery, he called it "a time when America needs all hands on deck."

"The tide of war is receding," Obama said. "My fellow Americans, our troops are coming home."

He spoke on a chilly autumn morning to an audience of veterans and dignitaries in the cemetery's amphitheater shortly after placing a floral wreath at the Tomb of the Unknowns.

Following the ceremony, Obama left the White House for a flight to San Diego to join in a holiday basketball game aboard an aircraft carrier — the start of a nine-day trip that includes an Asia-Pacific summit in Hawaii and stops in Australia and Indonesia.

Obama used his Arlington speech to mark the coming transition from a nation fighting multiple wars in the aftermath of Sept. 11 to one where reviving a struggling economy is the overriding focus.

Last month, Obama announced plans to withdraw the last U.S. troops from Iraq. Between that and Obama's commencement of a drawdown in Afghanistan, he said,

for many military families, "this holiday season will be a season of homecomings."

And he urged Americans to greet the returning vets with jobs and offers of help. "Let us welcome them home as what they are: an integral, essential part of our American family," Obama said.

Obama spoke a day after the Senate passed his proposal to give companies tax credits for hiring jobless veterans. "Our economy needs their talents and specialized skills," he said.

Earlier, with the aid of an honor guard, Obama placed the wreath on a pedestal in front of the marble tomb, then stood with a hand over his heart as a bugler played "Taps." A bell tolled and flags fluttered.

First lady Michelle Obama, Defense Secretary Leon Panetta, Veterans Affairs Secretary Eric Shinseki and other dignitaries watched from the side.

Obama's aircraft carrier visit is to the USS Carl Vinson, docked in San Diego. The first-ever Carrier Classic basketball game pits Michigan State against No. 1 North Car-

olina on board the ship. The ship is the same one from which Osama bin-Laden's remains were buried at sea following the raid in Pakistan that killed al-Qaida's top leader.

In an essay in Friday's San Diego Union-Tribune, Vice President Joe Biden and his wife Jill wrote that "because of the incredible courage of the 9-11 generation, the tide of war is receding and America is more secure than a decade ago."

"But as our service members return, many are discovering a new battlefield as they leave the military and search for civilian employment opportunities," they wrote.

Their article also made a pitch for the veterans' assistance the Senate approved on a 95-0 vote. The bill, expected to clear the House next week, also includes more counseling and job training for unemployed veterans and service members about to leave the military.

"We're taking steps to make the job search easier for veterans," the Bidens wrote.

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