

Obama Vows To Stick With New Yorkers

NEW YORK (AP) — President Barack Obama vowed Thursday to stick with New Yorkers still struggling 17 days after Superstorm Sandy “until the rebuilding is complete” after getting an up-close look at devastated neighborhoods rendered unlivable.

Obama brought the spotlight to people still without heat or electricity and hugged many of those trying to rebuild their lives. He also delivered a postelection message of unity, nine days after a closely divided America gave him a second term.

“During difficult times like this, we’re reminded that we’re bound together and we have to look out for each other,” Obama said from a Staten Island street that was demolished by the storm. “And a lot of the things that seem important, the petty differences, melt away.”

Obama announced that Housing and Urban Development Secretary Shaun Donovan, a former chief of New York’s Housing Authority, will be his point person to oversee long-term redevelopment in the region.

On a three-hour tour, the president encountered many still suffering in Sandy’s aftermath and waiting in lines for food, supplies and other help.

Postal Losses Cap Year Of Payment Defaults

WASHINGTON (AP) — The struggling U.S. Postal Service on Thursday reported an annual loss of a record \$15.9 billion and forecast more red ink in 2013, capping a tumultuous year in which it was forced to default on billions in payments to avert bankruptcy.

The financial losses for the fiscal year ending Sept. 30 were more than triple the \$5.1 billion loss in the previous year. Having reached its borrowing limit, the mail agency is operating with little cash on hand, putting it at risk in the event of an unexpectedly large downturn in the economy.

“It’s critical that Congress do its part and pass comprehensive legislation before they adjourn this year to move the Postal Service further down the path toward financial health,” said Postmaster General Patrick Donahoe, calling the situation “our own postal fiscal cliff.”

Much of the red ink in 2012 was due to mounting mandatory costs for future retiree health benefits, which made up \$11.1 billion of the losses. Without that and other related labor expenses, the mail agency sustained an operating loss of \$2.4 billion, lower than the previous year.

Donahoe said the post office has been able to reduce costs significantly by boosting worker productivity. But he said the mail agency has been hampered by congressional inaction on a postal overhaul bill that would allow it to eliminate Saturday mail delivery and reduce its \$5 billion annual payment for future health benefits.

Xi Jinping Assumes China’s Leadership

BEIJING (AP) — Long-anointed successor Xi Jinping assumes the leadership of China at a time when the ruling Communist Party is confronting slower economic growth, a public clamor to end corruption and demands for change that threaten its hold on power.

The country’s political elite named Xi to the top party post on Thursday, and unexpectedly put him in charge of the military too, after a weeklong party congress and months of divisive bargaining.

The appointments give him broad authority, but not the luxury of time. After decades of juggernaut growth, China sits on the cusp of global pre-eminence as the second largest economy and newest power, but it also has urgent domestic troubles that could frustrate its rise.

Problems that have long festered — from the sputtering economy to friction with the U.S. and territorial spats with Japan and other neighbors — have worsened in recent months as the leadership focused on the power transfer. Impatience has grown among entrepreneurs, others in the new middle class and migrant workers — all wired by social media and conditioned by two decades of rising living standards to expect better government, if not democracy.

All along, police have continued to harass and jail a lengthening list of political foes, dissidents, civil rights lawyers and labor activists. A 14-year-old Tibetan set himself on fire in western China on Thursday, in the latest of more than 70 self-immolations Tibetans have staged over the past 20 months in desperate protests against Chinese rule.

BP Agrees To Pay \$4.5 Billion; Three Employees Charged

BY MICHAEL KUNZELMAN
Associated Press

NEW ORLEANS — A day of reckoning arrived for BP on Thursday as the oil giant agreed to plead guilty to a raft of charges in the deadly Gulf of Mexico spill and pay a record \$4.5 billion, including the biggest criminal fine in U.S. history. Three BP employees were also charged, two of them with manslaughter.

The settlement with the federal government came 2 1/2 years after the fiery drilling-rig explosion that killed 11 workers and set off the nation’s largest offshore oil spill.

In announcing the deal, Assistant Attorney General Lanny Brewer said the tragedy “resulted from BP’s culture of privileging profit over prudence.”

BP will plead guilty to charges involving the 11 deaths and lying to Congress about how much oil was spewing from the blown-out well.

“We believe this resolution is in the best interest of BP and its shareholders,” said Carl-Henric Svanberg, BP chairman. “It removes two significant legal risks and allows us to vigorously defend the company against the remaining civil claims.”

The settlement appears to be easily affordable for BP, which made a record \$25.8 billion in profits last year. And it will have five years to pay. But the oil giant still faces several billion dollars in additional claims for damage to people’s livelihoods and the environment.

Separately, BP rig workers Robert Kaluza and Donald Vidrine were indicted on federal charges of manslaughter and involuntary manslaughter, accused of repeatedly disregarding abnormal high-pressure readings that should have been glaring indications of trouble just before the blowout.

In addition, David Rainey, BP’s former vice president of exploration for the Gulf of Mexico, was charged with obstruction of Congress and making false statements. Prosecutors said he withheld information that more oil was gushing from the well than he let on.

Rainey’s lawyers said he did “absolutely nothing wrong.” And attorneys for the two rig workers accused the Justice Department of making scapegoats out of them. Both men are still with BP.

“Bob was not an executive or high-level BP official. He was a dedicated rig worker who mourns his fallen co-workers every day,” Kaluza attorneys Shaun Clarke and David Gerger said in a statement. “No one should take any satisfaction in this indictment of an innocent man. This is not justice.”

The settlement, which is sub-

OBITUARIES

Kari (Ptak) Douglass

Kari (Ptak) Douglass, age 59 of Yankton passed away unexpectedly at her home on Tuesday, November 13, 2012.

Memorial services will be held at 10:30 a.m. Saturday, November 17, 2012 at the Opsahl-Kostel Funeral Chapel in Yankton, SD.

Visitations will be from 4:00-7:00 p.m. Friday, November 16, 2012 at the Opsahl-Kostel Funeral Home and Crematory, Yankton, SD. Visitations will resume one hour prior to the service at the funeral home.

Honorary urnbearers will be Joseph Ptak, Joey Stulgies, Adam Stulgies, Jeff Douglass, Cole Douglass, and John Hatwan.

Kari was born on December 21, 1952 to Joseph and Rosie (Hroza) Ptak. Kari attended St. Wenceslaus Catholic School and Tabor High School where she was in the last graduating class in Tabor. She continued her education at the University of South Dakota where she graduated with a Bachelors of Science in Political Science. Kari pursued a career at Dale Electronics, later to be known as Vishay Intertechnology for 25 years in production and later as a sales assistant in Yankton, SD. She married Allan Douglass, who had a son and a daughter from a previous marriage, on October 24, 1979 at St. Wenceslaus Catholic Church, Tabor, SD by Msgr. Carlton Hermann. She loved to watch old movies and had a passion to read lots of books! She and Allan loved to spend the winters in Florida and spending time on the Gulf of Mexico. Kari truly enjoyed



Douglass

having her friends and family to her and Allan’s home by the Lewis and Clark Lake. She loved to feed the deer and turkeys all around her house, and especially loved her pet dogs.

Kari is survived by her husband, Allan of Yankton, SD; her two children, Amy (Greg) Stulgies of Malvern, IA and Jeff Douglass of Omaha, NE; her mother, Rosie Ptak of Tabor, SD; brother, Brian (Michelle) Ptak, of Shawnee, KS; five grandchildren: Adam (Krystal) Stulgies, Elizabeth (Noah) Jensen, Joseph (Jenna) Stulgies, Cole Douglass, Kirsten Douglass; two great-grandchildren, Timothy Jensen and Anna Jensen and daughter-in-law, Pam Douglass of Omaha, NE. She is also survived by many nieces, nephews, cousins, neighbors, friends, and special friends, Dick and Lorie Wright of Yankton, SD.

She is preceded in death by her father, Joseph Ptak, several aunts and uncles, and a special friend, Jim Lincoln.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests donations be made to The Guiding Eyes For The Blind, 611 Granite Springs Road, Yorktown Heights, NY 10598.

Yankton Press & Dakotan
November 16, 2012

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Hamas Targets Tel Aviv In Rocket Barrage

BY KARIN LAUB AND IBRAHIM BARZAK
Associated Press

GAZA CITY, Gaza Strip — Palestinian militants targeted densely populated Tel Aviv in Israel’s heartland with rockets for the first time Thursday, part of an unprecedented barrage that threatened to provoke an Israeli ground assault on Gaza. Three Israelis were killed.

Air raid sirens wailed and panicked residents ran for cover in Tel Aviv, Israel’s commercial and cultural capital. Israel responded by moving troops and heavy weapons toward Gaza and authorizing the call-up of tens of thousands of reservists.

There was no word on where the two rockets aimed at Tel Aviv landed, raising the possibility they fell into the Mediterranean. A third rocket landed in an open area on the southern outskirts of Tel Aviv.

The fighting, the heaviest in four years, came after Israel launched a ferocious air assault Wednesday to stop repeated rocket fire from Gaza. The powerful Hamas military chief was killed in that strike, and another 18 Palestinians have died over two days, including five children. Some 100 Palestinians have been wounded.

Israeli warplanes struck dozens of Hamas-linked targets in Gaza on Thursday, sending loud booms echoing across the narrow Mediterranean coastal strip at regular intervals, followed by gray columns of smoke. After nightfall, several explosions shook Gaza City several minutes apart, a sign the strikes were not letting up, and the military said the targets were about

“After four years, we became stronger, we have a strategy and we became united with all the military wings in Gaza.”

FAWZI BARHOUM

70 underground rocket-launching sites.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said the army was hitting Hamas hard with what he called surgical strikes, and warned of a “significant widening” of the Gaza operation. Israel will “continue to take whatever action is necessary to defend our people,” said Netanyahu, who is up for re-election in January.

There were mounting signs of a ground operation. At least 12 trucks were seen transporting tanks and armored personnel carriers toward Gaza late Thursday, and a number of buses carrying soldiers arrived. Israeli TV stations said a Gaza incursion was expected on Friday, though military officials said no decision had been made.

Defense Minister Ehud Barak said he authorized the call-up of reservists, and the army said up to 30,000 additional troops could be drafted.

“We will continue the attacks and we will increase the attacks, and I believe we will obtain our objectives,” said Lt. Gen. Benny Gantz, Israel’s military chief.

Hamas, meanwhile, warned it would strike deeper inside Israel with Iranian-made Fajr-5 rockets, acknowledging for the first time it has such longer-range weapons capable of hitting

targets some 47 miles (75 kilometers) away. Tel Aviv is 40 miles (70 kilometers) from Gaza.

By nightfall Thursday, Hamas said it had fired more than 350 rockets into Israel. Israel, which estimates Gaza militants have as many as 12,000 rockets, said some 220 rockets struck the Jewish state and another 130 were intercepted by an anti-missile shield.

Israel believes Hamas has significantly boosted its arsenal since the last Gaza war four years ago, including with weapons from Iran and from Libyan stockpiles plundered after the 2011 fall of the regime there.

“After four years, we became stronger, we have a strategy and we became united with all the military wings in Gaza,” said Hamas spokesman Fawzi Barhoum, referring to Hamas’ setbacks during Israel’s last major offensive in late 2008.

In the current round of fighting, Israel is facing an emboldened Hamas with a stronger arsenal and greater regional backing. Egyptian President Mohammed Morsi, like Hamas a member of the region-wide Muslim Brotherhood, said he was sending a high-level delegation to Gaza on Friday in a show of support for the fellow Islamists there.

Both Israel and Hamas had largely observed an informal truce over the last four years, marred by occasional flare-ups. In recent days, however, border tensions escalated, then exploded into major violence Wednesday when Israel assassinated Hamas’ secretive military chief, Ahmed Jabari, with a missile strike on his car.

BP Agrees To Pay \$4.5 Billion; Three Employees Charged

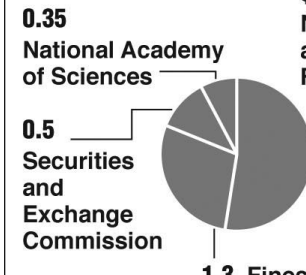
BY MICHAEL KUNZELMAN
Associated Press

BP agrees to pay huge fine

BP agreed to pay \$4.5 billion in a settlement with the U.S. government and plead guilty to criminal charges related to the 2010 Deepwater Horizon oil spill, the largest in U.S. history.

Who gets the money

To be paid over five years; in billions



Criminal charges

BP pleaded guilty to

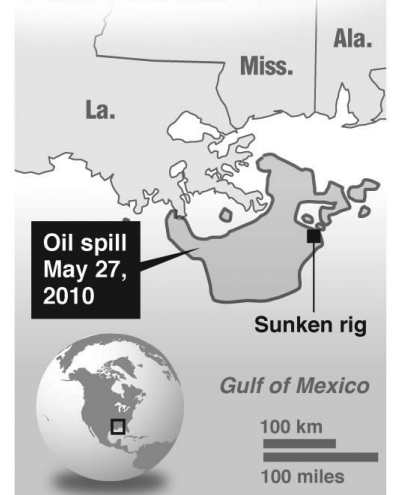
- 11 felony misconduct or neglect charges related to 11 deaths when drilling rig exploded
- One felony count of obstruction of Congress (lying about amount of oil leaking)
- Two misdemeanor counts

What’s unresolved

- Civil penalties U.S. government might seek under Clean Water Act, other laws
- Billions of dollars in claims brought by states, businesses, individuals
- Judge to rule on \$7.8 billion proposed settlement with more than 100,000 private sector victims
- Civil trial brought by U.S. government and Gulf Coast states to begin February 2013
- Potential liability of other firms involved, Transocean and Halliburton

The spill

April 20, 2010 Explosion on rig kills 11 workers; more than 4.9 million barrels (206 million gal.) of oil leak from well into Gulf of Mexico over three months



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Source: AP, NOAA, Reuters
Graphic: Judy Treible

ject to approval by a federal judge, includes payments of nearly \$2.4 billion to the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, \$350 million to the National Academy of Sciences and about \$500 million to the Securities and Exchange Commission, which accused BP of misleading investors by lowballing the amount of crude that was spilling.

It also includes nearly \$1.3 billion in fines.

“This marks the largest single criminal fine and the largest total criminal resolution in the history of the United States,” Attorney General Eric Holder said at a news conference in New Orleans. He said much of the money will be used to restore the Gulf.

Holder said the criminal investigation is still going on. Before Thursday, the only person charged in the disaster was a former BP engineer who was arrested in April on obstruction of justice charges, accused of deleting text messages about the company’s handling of the spill.

Greenpeace blasted the settlement as a slap on the wrist. “This fine amounts to a rounding error for a corporation the size of BP,”

the environmental group said.

The largest previous corporate criminal penalty assessed by the Justice Department was a \$1.2 billion fine against drug maker Pfizer in 2009.

Nick McGregor, an oil analyst at Redmayne-Bentley Stockbrokers, said the settlement would be seen as “an expensive positive.”

“This scale of bill is unpleasant,” he said. But “the worst-case scenario for BP would be an Exxon Valdez-style decade of litigation. I think that is the outcome they are trying to avoid.”

On the New York Stock Exchange, BP rose 14 cents Thursday to close at \$40.30.

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