

U.S. Considering Kuwait As Staging Ground

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Obama administration is considering staging American troops in Kuwait next year as a backup or rotational training force for Iraq, after the Pentagon completes the scheduled withdrawal of its current 45,000-strong force from Iraq in December, U.S. officials said.

The proposal, not yet publicly announced, is among a number of options the administration is considering for extending its military training role in still-violent Iraq, whose divided government has been reluctant to directly ask Washington to keep troops on its soil beyond this year.

All troops are to depart Iraq by Dec. 31 under a 2008 security agreement, but senior U.S. officials are concerned that without more training the Iraqi forces may squander hard-won security gains. The Iraqi army, for example, is only now taking delivery of U.S. battle tanks, on which they have yet to be trained.

Iraq's security forces are improving but still lack the capability to fully defend Iraqi air space, borders and territorial waters, U.S. military officers say.

"There are some gaps in their military capabilities, their security capabilities, that we believe we could offer some assistance with," Navy Capt. John Kirby, a spokesman for the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said Thursday. Discussions with the Iraqis on this are in an early stage, Kirby added.

Obama's Health Care Law Survives Challenges

RICHMOND, Va. (AP) — The federal health care overhaul survived two lawsuits dismissed Thursday on technicalities, leaving President Barack Obama's signature initiative headed toward a final resolution in the U.S. Supreme Court as early as next year.

It's possible the high court could rule on the issue by June 2012, in the midst of Obama's re-election bid.

A three-judge panel of the 4th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ignored the core issue of whether the law can require that individuals buy health insurance or pay a penalty starting in 2014. In the lawsuit filed by Liberty University, the court ruled that the penalty amounted to a tax — and that a tax can't be challenged before it's collected. The panel said the state of Virginia lacked legal standing to file its lawsuit.

Three federal appeals courts have now weighed in on lawsuits filed over the law, and both opponents and advocates say the overhaul will ultimately be reviewed by the Supreme Court. A decision by the 6th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in Cincinnati upholding the law already has been appealed. The Justice Department has yet to appeal the Aug. 13 decision by the 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in Atlanta, which struck down the insurance mandate, and was given 60 days to appeal or ask for more time.

Newly Posted Audio Files Reveal 9/11 Horror

NEW YORK (AP) — Newly posted audio files depict the horror of 9/11 unfolding in the sky, as air traffic controllers struggled to follow the faint tracks of hijacked planes, fighter jets tried in vain to chase them down and a flight attendant made a desperate appeal for help.

The sound files add a layer of emotion to previously published transcripts, as puzzlement and frustration seeps into the voices of controllers, military commanders, and even pilots watching the attacks from the sky.

There are shouting and ringing phones in the background — the soundtrack, usually omitted from written transcripts, of a nation suddenly at war.

In one chilling excerpt, screaming and a shouted "Hey!" is heard over the radio as hijackers storm the cockpit of United Flight 93. That's followed by a strange, strained cry. Stunned controllers and other pilots discuss the sounds, trying to make sense of what they heard.

"No dry words on a page can capture that; you really have to hear it," said John Farmer, dean of the Rutgers University School of Law and former senior counsel to the government's 9/11 Commission.

Libya's New Rulers Dedicate Unit For Gadhafi

TRIPOLI, Libya (AP) — Determined to hunt down Moammar Gadhafi, Libya's new rulers say they have dedicated a special unit of fighters to track the elusive former leader, listening in on his aides' phone calls, poring over satellite images and interviewing witnesses.

Although leads come mostly from on-the-ground tips, help is also coming from France and other Western countries, according to a French intelligence official. Satellite-based transmission intercepts of suspicious phone calls try to pinpoint where Gadhafi might be. Small CIA teams are also assisting in the manhunt, according to former U.S. officials.

Gadhafi, who hasn't been seen in public for months, went underground after anti-regime fighters swept into Tripoli on Aug. 21. Capturing the ousted ruler would allow the former rebels to seal their grip on the country and shut the door on the possibility of Gadhafi's inspiring an insurgency against the new leaders.

After more than four decades under his authoritarian rule, Libyans are haunted by the question of Gadhafi's whereabouts, and the country has been awash with rumors that have put him everywhere from deep in a bunker under Tripoli to safe in exile in neighboring Niger or Algeria.

On Thursday, Gadhafi himself dismissed talk of his flight, saying in an audio broadcast that he's still in Libya, and exhorting followers to keep fighting.

Colleges Cutting Back Despite Rising Tuition

FORT COLLINS, Colo. (AP) — America's public colleges and universities have burned through nearly \$10 billion in government stimulus money and are still facing more tuition hikes, fewer course offerings and larger class sizes.

Many college students are already bearing the brunt of the cuts in their wallets as they prepare for their future careers.

"This next academic year is going to be the hardest one on record" for cash-strapped colleges, said Dan Hurley, director of state relations for the American Association of State Colleges and Universities.

Hurley said the higher education system has entered a phase in which cuts will begin to affect academics.

Public university systems used the stimulus to prevent deeper layoffs, maintain degree programs and keep campuses open and are now bracing for the end of the federal program.

OBITUARIES

Theadora 'Teddy' Rossiter

Theadora H. "Teddy" Rossiter, 74, died unexpectedly Thursday morning at her home, September 8, 2011.

A Memorial Mass is at 10:30 a.m. Monday at Sacred Heart Catholic Church, Yankton, with

the Rev. Leonard Kayser officiating. Burial of her cremated remains will be in the Sacred Heart Cemetery at a later date.

Visitations are 6-8 p.m. Sunday at Opsahl-Kostel Funeral Home & Crematory, Yankton, with a Scripture service at 7:30 p.m. Visitations will resume one hour prior to the service at the church.

Lee Drenches Northeast

100K Told To Leave Homes

BY MICHAEL RUBINKAM AND MICHAEL HILL
Associated Press

WILKES-BARRE, Pa. — The remnants of Tropical Storm Lee poured water on top of the already soaked Northeast on Thursday, closing hundreds of roads and forcing evacuation orders for more than 100,000 people from the Susquehanna River's worst flooding in nearly 40 years.

Most of the evacuations were ordered in and around Wilkes-Barre, where the levee system is just high enough to hold back the river if it crests at the predicted level. Even if the levees hold, 800 to 900 unprotected homes were in danger. If they fail, thousands of buildings could be lost.

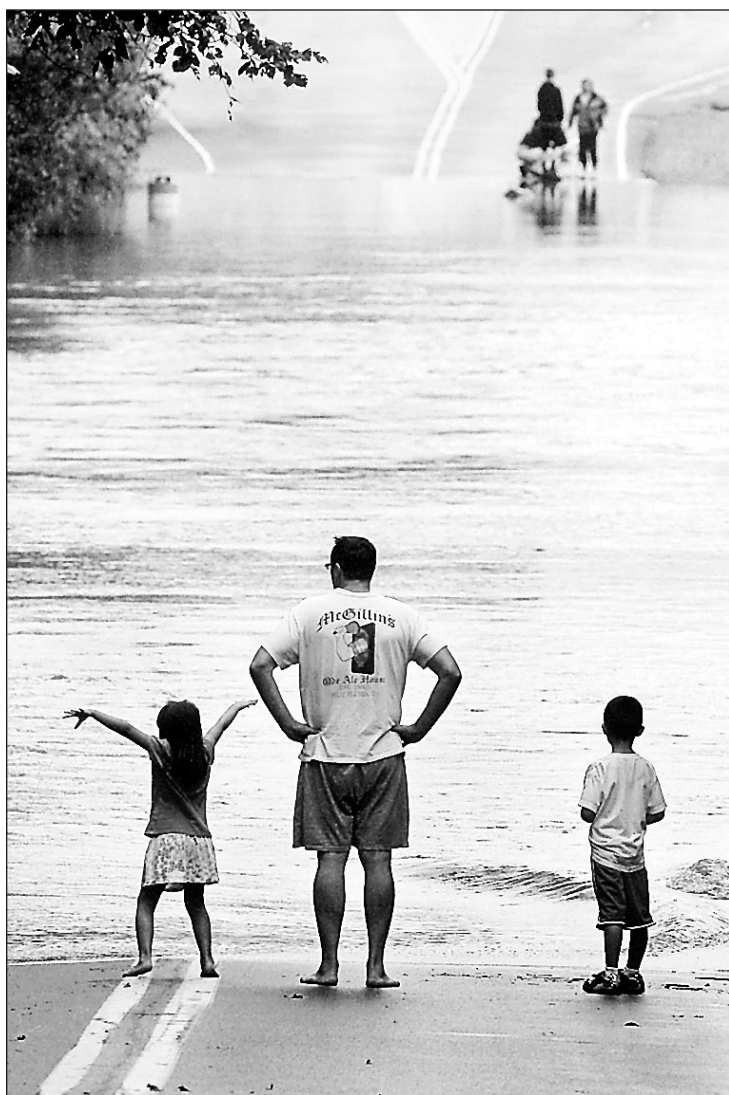
"This is a scary situation," said Stephen Bekanich, Luzerne County's emergency management director. He and other officials were confident the levees would work but sought volunteers to lay sandbags on both sides of the river.

In Hummelstown, another Pennsylvania community along the river, Donna MacLeod had to be rescued from her home.

"I'm heartsick," she said. "I know I lost two cars and everything that was in my basement and everything that was on the first floor. But I have my life and I have my dog, so that's good."

Upriver in Binghamton, N.Y., a city of about 45,000, the Susquehanna coursed into the streets and climbed halfway up lamp-posts at a downtown plaza. Mayor Matt Ryan said it was the city's worst flooding since the flood walls were built in the 1930s and '40s.

Road closures effectively sealed Binghamton off to outside traffic as emergency responders scrambled to evacuate holdouts who didn't heed warnings to leave. Buses and then boats were



Andrew Jeronis stands with his six-year-old daughter Alexis Jeronis and their six-year-old neighbor Kenny Haynes while viewing a flooded road from the rising Neshaminy Creek in Langhorne, Pennsylvania Thursday, September 8, 2011.

used to evacuate residents, and National Guard helicopters were on standby.

"It's going to get worse," Gov. Andrew Cuomo said, warning people to leave when they get the order.

Up to nine inches of rain fell in parts of Pennsylvania, and a similar amount fell in Binghamton. Rivers and streams passed or approached flood stage from Maryland to Massachusetts, and

experts said more flooding was coming.

The storm compounded the misery for some people still trying to bounce back from Hurricane Irene.

Some of the areas hardest hit by the August storm, such as Vermont, avoided the brunt of the latest bad weather. But in Paterson, N.J., where the Passaic River was rising, about 75 people were still in a shelter because of Irene.

"We just finished cleaning up after the flood from Irene," said Edith Rodriguez, who lived in shelters for three days and spent Wednesday night at a high school outside Schenectady, N.Y., because of Lee. "Now we have to start all over again."

Commuters and other travelers searched for detours as highways and other roads were flooded out, including sections of New York's Interstate 88, which follows the Susquehanna's path. In eastern Pennsylvania, where hundreds of roads were closed, flooding and a rock slide partially closed the Schuylkill Expressway, a major artery into Philadelphia.

Amtrak passenger service on New York's east-west corridor was canceled, as were classes at many colleges and schools across the Northeast.

At least nine deaths have been blamed on Lee: four in central Pennsylvania, one in Maryland and four others killed when it came ashore on the Gulf Coast last week.

Pennsylvania Gov. Tom Corbett warned of "a public health emergency because sewage treatment plants are underwater and no longer working."

"Flood water is toxic and polluted," he said. "If you don't have to be in it, keep out."

Up to 75,000 residents in and around Wilkes-Barre were ordered to leave. The mayor told residents to pack food, clothing and medicine and plan for a three-day evacuation.

The river was projected to crest overnight at 40.8 feet — essentially the same height as the levee system and nearly the level it reached in 1972, when Hurricane Agnes caused massive flooding in the area. Luzerne County officials ordered all communities flooded by Agnes to evacuate for the remnants of Lee.

Rose Simko packed up her car and headed to higher ground to stay with family. She was worried about her house, just 150 feet from a levee, but knew she had to leave.

"Everything is replaceable," she said, "but my life is not."



Texas Gov. Rick Perry, a candidate for the Republican presidential nomination, greets supporters during a rally at Rogers Gardens in Corona del Mar, California on Thursday, September 8, 2011.

GOP Race Now Down To Romney, Perry

BY KASIE HUNT
Associated Press

SIMI VALLEY, Calif. — The GOP presidential contest has quickly narrowed to a two-man race.

As Rick Perry and Mitt Romney jockey over their ability to defeat President Barack Obama, there are deepening fault lines between the two on Social Security, immigration, jobs and more that could shape the contest.

Their stylistic differences are as stark as their disagreements on substance. Romney, the former Massachusetts governor, also is a former venture capitalist who is at his best when he's talking about how to help businesses help the economy grow. Perry, the Texas governor, is a fiery, red-meat conservative who has already shown he loves to go on the attack — and isn't afraid to go after his chief GOP rival.

Those contrasts have driven Romney's campaign to fundamentally change a strategy that was previously aimed squarely at Obama. Until Perry jumped into the race and almost immediately displaced Romney as the front-runner, the former Massachusetts governor focused his public ap-

pearances and messaging on the president.

Now, instead of running a general election campaign in primary season, Romney will spend the early months trying to convince Republicans that Perry can't beat Obama in November.

It will start with Social Security, an issue Romney's campaign has decided is Perry's biggest liability. Aides privately say they plan to make it a singular focus in the coming weeks.

"You say that by any measure, Social Security is a failure. You can't say that to tens of millions of Americans who live on Social Security and those who have lived on it," Romney said in Wednesday night's debate, after he and Perry had already traded jabs over their jobs records earlier in the debate.

The Romney campaign has followed that with a steady stream of press releases, background material and on-the-record quotes assailing Perry as a career politician who is unelectable.

"If (Perry) were to win the nomination, the most interesting thing that it would prove is that God is a Democrat," said Stuart Stevens, a top Romney strategist.

Mortgage Rates Lowest In Decades, But Few Qualify

WASHINGTON (AP) — Mortgage rates have reached their lowest levels in six decades, making this the best time in most Americans' lives to buy or refinance a home. For people who qualify, today's rates could save thousands of dollars a year.

Yet most people can't take advantage. Half of would-be buyers say they'll never save enough for the 20 percent down payment now usually required. And shrunken home values have erased much of the equity people need to refinance.

"Low rates are great, but the real issue is that the pool of people who can get a loan or refinance is small," said Greg McBride, Bankrate.com's senior financial analyst.

This week, the average rate on a 30-year fixed mortgage fell to 4.12 percent. It's the lowest for a 30-year fixed loan since

mortgage buyer Freddie Mac began tracking rates in 1971. The last time rates were cheaper was in 1951, when most long-term home loans lasted just 20 or 25 years.

The average on the 15-year fixed loan, a popular refinancing option, dropped to 3.33 percent this week. That's also an all-time low, according to most economists.

Record-low rates have done little to energize depressed home sales. The average rate on the 30-year fixed loan has been below 5 percent for all but two weeks this year. Yet sales of previously occupied homes are on pace for their weakest year since 1997.

Too many would-be buyers can't come up with a down payment, don't have a job, lack enough income or are burdened by large debt loads.

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Fill the puzzle so that every row, every column, and every section contain the numbers 1-9 without repeating a number.

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INTERMEDIATE INT BOOK 24 #2

Yesterday's Solution

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