



Baktybek Kalyev (R), former defence minister of ousted President Kurmanbek Bakiyev, and deputy chief of Bakiyev's security guard Nurlan Temirbekov sit in a metal cage during a court session held in a sports palace in Bishkek November 17, 2010.

Clashes erupt at trial for deposed Kyrgyz president

ALMATY, — Relatives of those killed in April's uprising in Kyrgyzstan clashed with police and defense counsels at a trial in Bishkek for deposed President Kurmanbek Bakiyev and 27 of his top allies, local media reported Wednesday. The relatives kept shouting

slogans, calling to burn all defendants' houses and charging them with life penalties. During the trial proceeding, they became angry about the present 18 defense counsels and some of them even broke through the police line, conflicting physically with the counsels, who then quitted and left. The judge then announced the sentence would be made on Thursday.

Bakiyev was tried in his absence. He and his two sons and other two allies were still abroad. Other 22 were charged with malfeasance and murder of civilians, the report said.

The trial was conducted in the Sports Palace of Bishkek to accommodate enough interested crowds, the report said.

Riots broke out on April 7 in Bishkek and bloody conflicts occurred then between police and demonstrators which killed 57 and injured about 500 others.

The event resulted in the deposition of Bakiyev and his escape to Belarus. He announced resignation afterwards. (Xinhua)

Exxon Mobil: Abducted workers rescued unharmed in Nigeria

LAGOS, — Exxon Mobil on Thursday confirmed that eight workers recently abducted from its Oso offshore platform have been freed unharmed by government security agencies in Nigeria.

The workers were among the 19 hostages rescued by Nigerian troops operating in the oil-rich Niger Delta region on Wednesday.

The rescued hostages were kidnapped at different locations in the oil-rich region within two weeks.

"Mobil Producing Nigeria Unlimited (MPN), operator of the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC)/MPN joint venture confirms that the eight personnel recently abducted from its Oso offshore platform have been freed unharmed by government security agencies," the

company said in a statement reaching here.

"We expect that the eight people will be handed over to the company later on Thursday Nov. 18, 2010," it added.

"We would like to express our appreciation to the Federal Government, Akwa Ibom and Rivers State governments, as well as security agencies for their intervention and swift action during the incident," it said.

"Mobil Producing Nigeria restates its commitment to ensuring the safety and security of its people and property," the company added.

The Joint Task Force (JTF) had on Tuesday said in a statement that they are flushing out criminals in the region.

"You will recall that in the last few weeks, criminal gangs masquerading as militants have been engaging in all atrocities,

like kidnapping, sea robbery and illegal boarding of oil production platforms," the statement said.

"The Joint Task Force is currently in an operation to rid the Niger Delta of these criminal elements in order for the region to experience the needed peace and security which are imperatives for sustainable development," it added.

"All law abiding indigenes of the communities hosting these criminals are advised to remain calm and promptly report suspicious characters to relevant military authorities," the statement quoted regional military spokesperson Timothy Antigha as saying.

Nigeria's main militant group, the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), has claimed responsibility for the attacks on the

Exxon Mobil Ibeno oil facility and the London-based oil exploration firm Afren offshore oil rig. The militant group re-emphasized that it will launch a major operation that will simultaneously affect oil facilities across the Niger Delta in the coming weeks.

The group is known for a series of attacks on international oil companies in the Niger Delta, engaging in actions including sabotage, theft, property destruction, guerilla warfare and kidnapping.

The Niger Delta is an unstable area where inter-ethnic clashes are commonplace. Access to oil revenue is the trigger for the violence.

Over 300 foreigners have been seized in the Niger Delta since 2006. Almost all have been released unharmed after paying a ransom. (Xinhua)

BP ignores warning signs in Gulf oil well blowout: report

HOUSTON, — British oil giant BP and its contractors failed to learn from earlier errors and showed an "insufficient consideration of risk" in the massive oil well blowout in the Gulf of Mexico, a group of U.S. scientists have concluded.

In a report released late Tuesday night, a panel of experts convened by the U.S. National Academy of Engineering said that "numerous technical and operational breakdowns" in the Deepwater Horizon oil rig explosion "suggest the lack of a

suitable approach for managing the inherent risks, uncertainties, and dangers associated with deepwater drilling operations and a failure to learn from previous 'near misses.'"

"The events also suggest insufficient checks and balances for critical decisions impacting the schedule for 'abandoning' the exploratory well — or sealing it in transition to production — and for considering well safety," according to the report, which was commissioned by U.S. Secretary of the

Interior Ken Salazar.

"Important decisions made to proceed toward well abandonment despite several indications of potential hazard suggest an insufficient consideration of risks," said Donald Winter, professor of engineering practice at the University of Michigan, and chair of the study committee.

"It's also important to note that these flawed decisions were not identified or corrected by BP and its service contractors, or by the oversight process employed by the U.S. Minerals Management

Service and other regulatory agencies," he said.

The report cited numerous decisions that apparently contributed to the accident, beginning with continuing abandonment operations at the Macondo site despite several tests that indicated that the cement put in place after the installation of a long-string production casing was not an effective barrier to prevent gases from entering the well.

"The decision to accept the test results as satisfactory without review by adequately trained shore-based engineering or management personnel suggests a lack of discipline and clearly defined responsibilities," it said.

U.S. to ask Israel to include east Jerusalem, West Bank in settlement freeze

JERUSALEM, — The United States will ask Israel not to build Jewish homes in largely Arab eastern Jerusalem as well as in other mostly Jewish areas beyond territory Israel gained in the 1967 war, according to a U.S. official speaking to the Ha'aretz newspaper.

The request is reportedly part of U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's 90-day moratorium package offered to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu during his recent visit to the states, Ha'aretz reported on Thursday.

The package includes a promise of 20 F-35 Joint Strike Fighters if Israel and the Palestinians conclude a comprehensive peace deal, as well as backing for Israel against hostile efforts to delegitimize the Jewish State in international fora, including at the United Nations.

However, "Jerusalem is outside the discussion on this issue," according to Netanyahu's statements released by his office. Israel considers the entire city its "sovereign and eternal" capital, a long time position it has held steady despite international criti-

cism. Israeli officials said they want the U.S. document to be extension of the previous self-imposed 10-month freeze on new settlement ended on September 26, which did not include East Jerusalem.

Palestinians have consistently said that they will refuse to restart talks if Israel allows construction in Jerusalem.

But the Shas Torah Guardians Party, an important coalition partner of the ruling Likud party, has said that it is against the U.S. offer if freezing building in Jerusalem is part of the deal.

Netanyahu and Defense Minister Ehud Barak, in a bid to gain Shas support, met with party leader and Interior Minister Eli Yishai overnight, in an effort to work out the issue, the local Ynet news site reported.

Israeli President Shimon Peres told Israel Army radio on Thursday that he hopes the agreement will be signed in coming days and that direct negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians will resume. (Xinhua)

DPRK offers to discuss property seizure at Red Cross talks

SEOUL, — The Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) proposed Thursday discussing seized South Korean assets at a mountain resort in the country at the upcoming Red Cross talks, the unification ministry in Seoul said. In a message delivered to South Korea, the DPRK suggested authorities involved in the suspended tour program to the mountain resort discuss the issue at the latest round of the Red Cross talks slated for Nov. 25.

The offer came one day after South Korea renewed its call on Pyongyang to withdraw its confiscation of South Korean properties at the resort, a measure taken in protest to Seoul's refusal to resume the tour. Once a rare source of foreign exchange for

Pyongyang, the tours were indefinitely suspended in 2008 after a South Korean tourist was shot dead by a DPRK soldier. Seoul has refused to resume the lucrative tours unless Pyongyang allows an investigation into the case and draws up safety measures for South Korean tourists.

The DPRK's seizure and freezing of South Korean assets in May prompted protest from Seoul, which regards the measure as a violation of inter-Korean agreements and international norms.

The Red Cross talks next week is designed to discuss regularizing reunions of families separated by the 1950-1953 Korean war. (Xinhua)

In addition, several clear failures in monitoring of the well appear to have contributed to its blowout, making ignition "most likely," the report said, adding that the failure of the blowout

prevention and several questionable decisions made about the cement process are also factors in the blowout.

A final report is due in the summer of 2011. (Xinhua)



Graphics shows the review of the sealing of leaking oil in the Gulf of Mexico.