

Oil slicks off California span nine miles

Associated Press

GOLETA, Calif. — An oil spill that fouled beaches and threatened wildlife along a scenic stretch of the California coast spread across 9 miles of ocean Wednesday as cleanup efforts began and federal regulators investigated how the pipeline leaked.

Workers in protective suits raked and shoveled stinky black goo off the beaches, while boats towed booms into place to corral the two slicks off the Santa Barbara coast where a much larger spill in 1969 — the largest in U.S. waters at the time — is credited with giving rise to the American environmental movement.

The amount of oil released in the latest spill was unknown, but the pipe was carrying 84,000 gallons an hour before the leak was detected, suggesting more oil escaped than the 21,000 gallons initially estimated.

It took three hours to shut down the pipe Tuesday, but officials didn't say how long it leaked beforehand or discuss the rate at which oil escaped the pipe.

Federal regulators from the Department of Transportation, which oversees oil pipeline safety, investigated the leak's cause, the pipe's condition and the potential regulatory violations.

The 24-inch pipe built in 1991 had no previous



Kenneth Song/The News-Press via AP

An oil slick washes up on the shore Tuesday near Goleta, Calif. Capt. Dave Zaniboni of the Santa Barbara County Fire Department says the pipeline on the land near Refugio State Beach broke Tuesday and spilled oil into a culvert that ran under the U.S. 101.

problems and was inspected about two weeks ago, though results of that inspection had not been analyzed yet, said Darren Palmer, a district manager with the company that owns the pipe, Plains All American Pipeline LP.

"Plains is taking responsibility and paying for everything associated with this spill," Palmer said.

A combination of soiled beaches and pungent stench of petroleum caused state parks officials to close to Refugio State Beach and El Capitan State Beach, both popular campgrounds west of Santa Barbara, over the Memorial Day weekend.

Still, tourists were drawn to pull off the Pacific Coast Highway to eye the disaster

from overlooking bluffs.

"It smells like what they use to pave the roads," said Fan Yang, of Indianapolis, who was hoping to find cleaner beaches in Santa Barbara, about 20 miles away. "I'm sad for the birds — if they lose their habitat."

Environmental damage was anticipated, but dead fish and oily birds had not been

found in the calm seas or rocky coast by late morning, said Capt. Mark Crossland of the state Department of Fish and Wildlife.

The department closed fishing and shellfish harvesting for a mile east and west of Refugio beach and it deployed booms to protect the nesting and foraging habitat of the snowy plover and the

least tern, both endangered shore birds, a spokeswoman said.

Members of the International Bird Rescue were prepared to clean any birds covered with oil.

Environmental groups used the spill as an opportunity to take a shot at fossil fuels and remind people of the area's notoriety with oil spills.

"Big Oil comes with big risks — from drilling to delivery," said Bob Deans, spokesman for the Natural Resources Defense Council. "Santa Barbara learned that lesson over 40 years ago when offshore drilling led to disaster."

Large offshore rigs still dot the horizon off the coast, pumping crude to shore. The leak occurred in a pipe that was carrying crude from an onshore facility to another point in the chain of production that eventually leads to a refinery.

The oil spilled into a culvert running under a highway and into a storm drain that emptied into the ocean.

The spill was not expected to affect gas prices, even though the pipeline was out of operation for now, said Tom Kloza, global head of energy at the Oil Price Information Service. In fact, Californians probably will see prices drop because crude has dropped 60 cents in the past week, Kloza said.

BRIEFLY

U.S. releases hundreds of bin Laden documents

WASHINGTON (AP) — Documents swept up in the raid on Osama bin Laden's compound portray a leader cut off from his underlings, disappointed by their failures, beset by their complaints and regretting years of separation from much of his extensive family.

Focus your fighting on America, not each other, the sidelined al-Qaida chief exhorts his followers. In a videotaped will, he urges one of his wives, should she remarry after his death, to still choose to live beside him in paradise. He also directs her to send their son to the battlefield.

Despite some surprising quirks in the collection, the overall message of the 103 letters, videos and reports made public Wednesday hews to the terror group's familiar mission: In the name of God, find a way to kill Americans. Kill Europeans. Kill Jews.

"Uproot the obnoxious tree by concentrating on its American trunk," bin Laden writes in a letter urging al-Qaida affiliates in North Africa to not be distracted by fighting local security forces and to avoid Muslim infighting.

The U.S. Office of the Director of National Intelligence said the documents, released as online images, were among a collection of books, U.S. think tank reports and other materials recovered in the May 2011 raid that killed bin Laden at his compound in Abbottabad, Pakistan.

The information was declassified and made public after a review by government agencies, as required by a 2014 law. Hundreds more documents found at the compound will be reviewed for possible declassification and release, the office said Wednesday, four years after bin Laden's death.

The documents, as translated by U.S. intelligence officials, mix the mundane language of business — personnel training, budget matters, financing for "workshops and collaborating groups" — with fervent religious appeals and updates on terrorism plots, all written in flowery language full of praise for God.

The documents include a fill-in-the-blanks job application for al-Qaida candidates that not only asks typical human resources questions about education and hobbies but also,

"Do you wish to execute a suicide operation?" It requests an emergency contact should the applicant become a martyr.

DEA raids clinics, pharmacies in 4 Southern states

LITTLE ROCK, Ark. (AP) — Authorities raided medical clinics, pharmacies and other locations across the South on Wednesday as part of a Drug Enforcement Administration attempt to thwart illegal prescription drug sales.

The raids in Arkansas, Alabama, Louisiana and Mississippi were the latest stage of an operation launched last summer by the Drug Enforcement Administration's drug diversion unit, which has now netted 280 arrests over more than a year, including 22 doctors and pharmacists.

"We have people who have taken an oath to do no harm who are throwing that oath out the window," DEA Special Agent in Charge Keith Brown said after the early morning raids.

The DEA's "Operation Pilluted" had focused on the illegal distribution of oxycodone, hydrocodone and Xanax by medical professionals, and does not target addicts. Agents arrested 48 people Wednesday: 22 in Louisiana, nine each in Alabama and Arkansas and eight in Mississippi.

Since January 2014, half of the overall arrests have occurred in Arkansas. It

and the other three states involved in Wednesday's raids each ranked among the top 11 states for hydrocodone prescriptions in 2014, according to DEA data.

Foreign legion fights for Islamic State; West fears it will spawn global terror web

PANKISI GORGE, Georgia (AP) — One day this April, instead of coming home from school, two teenagers left their valley high in the Caucasus, and went off to war.

In Minneapolis, Minnesota, a 20-year-old stole her friend's passport to make the same hazardous journey.

From New Zealand, came a former security guard; from Canada, a hockey fan who loved to fish and hunt.

And there have been many, many more: between 16,000 and 17,000, according to one independent Western estimate, men and a small number of women from 90 countries or more who have streamed to Syria and Iraq to wage Muslim holy war for the Islamic State.

Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi, the group's leader, has appealed to Muslims throughout the world to move to lands under its control — to fight, but also to work as administrators, doctors, judges, engineers and scholars, and to marry, put down roots and start families.

Nebraska votes to abolish death penalty

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — Nebraska lawmakers gave final approval on Wednesday to a bill abolishing the death penalty that would make it the first conservative state to do so since 1973 if the measure becomes law.

The vote margin in the unicameral Legislature was more than enough to override a promised veto from Gov. Pete Ricketts, a supporter of capital punishment. Ricketts, a

Republican, said the vote represented a "dark day" for public safety.

The Nebraska vote marks a shift in the national debate because it was bolstered by conservatives who oppose the death penalty for religious reasons, cast it as a waste of taxpayer money and question whether government can be trusted to manage it. Law-and-order conservatives in the United States have traditionally stood among

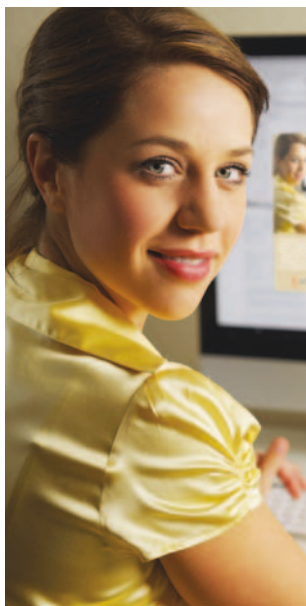
the strongest supporters of the ultimate punishment.

Nebraska hasn't executed a prisoner since 1997, when the electric chair was used.

The state has never imposed the punishment under the lethal injection process now required by state law. Some lawmakers have argued that constant legal challenges will prevent the state from executing anyone in the future.

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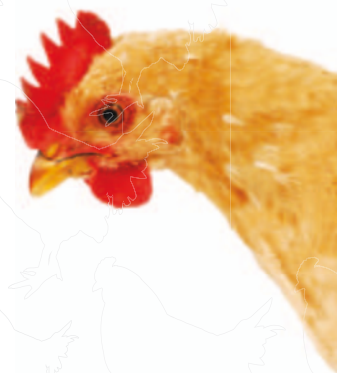


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