

North Dakota pipeline construction halted until court hearing next week

BISMARCK, N.D. (AP) — Developers of a four-state oil pipeline have agreed to halt construction of the project in southern North Dakota until a federal court hearing next week in Washington, D.C. The temporary construction shutdown comes amid growing protests and increased tension over the Dakota Access Pipeline that is intended to cross the Missouri River near the Standing Rock Sioux reservation that straddles the North Dakota-South Dakota border.

Some things to know about the pipeline and the protest:

WHAT IS THE DAKOTA ACCESS PIPELINE?

Dallas-based Energy Transfer Partners' Dakota Access Pipeline is a \$3.8 billion, 1,772-mile project that would carry nearly a half-million barrels of crude oil daily from North Dakota's oil fields through South Dakota and Iowa to an existing pipeline in Patoka, Illinois, where shippers can access Midwest and Gulf Coast markets.

WHY THE PROTEST?

The Standing Rock Sioux Tribe is suing federal regulators for approving the oil pipeline that would be the largest-capacity one carrying crude out of western North Dakota's oil patch. The tribes' lawsuit filed last month in federal court in Washington challenges the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' decision to grant permits at more than 200 water crossings in four states for the pipeline. The tribe argues the pipeline that would be placed less than a mile upstream of the reservation could impact drinking water for the more than 8,000 tribal members and the millions who rely on it further downstream. The lawsuit, filed on behalf of the tribe by environmental group Earthjustice, said the project violates several federal laws, including the National Historic Preservation Act. The tribe worries the project will disturb



In this Aug. 12 photo American Indians protest the Dakota Access oil pipeline near the Standing Rock Sioux reservation in southern North Dakota.

ancient sacred sites outside of the 2.3-million acre reservation. The hearing on the tribe's request for a temporary injunction is slated for Wednesday.

WHO ARE THE PROTESTERS?

Mostly members of the Standing Rock Sioux tribe, but they've been joined by other American Indians and non-Native Americans from across the country. "Divergent" actress Shailene Woodley was part of the protests last week.

HAVE THERE BEEN ARRESTS?

American Indians have for months been staging a nonviolent protest at a "spirit camp" at the confluence of the Cannonball and Missouri rivers in the path of the pipeline. More than a dozen young people from the reservation also ran from North Dakota to Washington to deliver 140,000 petition signatures to the Corps to protest the pipeline. The protest took a turn last week when law

enforcement was called to keep the peace between protesters and armed security guards hired by the company. Twenty-eight people have been arrested since then and charged with interfering with the pipeline construction, including Standing Rock Sioux Tribal Chairman David Archambault II. Developers on Monday sued in federal court to stop protesters, alleging the safety of workers and law enforcement is at risk.

WHY THE NEED?

Energy Transfer Partners announced the Dakota Access pipeline in 2014, a few days after North Dakota Gov. Jack Dalrymple urged industry and government officials to build more pipelines to keep pace with the state's oil production, which is second only to Texas'. Supporters said the pipeline would create more markets for the state's oil and gas, and reduce truck and oil train traffic.

Touring flooding, Trump moves ahead with campaign turnaround

BATON ROUGE, La. (AP) — Offering consolation, expressing regret, cutting ties with a controversial aide. Donald Trump's campaign turnaround plan on Friday featured the unorthodox candidate acting much like a conventional politician struggling to revive a presidential bid on the ropes.

Trump headed to flood-damaged Louisiana to express solidarity with residents cleaning up after devastating flooding that left at least 13 people dead. The trip made for a pointed contrast to President Barack Obama and Democratic nominee Hillary Clinton, who both have yet to go, although Obama announced that he would visit next week.

The typically brash and spotlight-seeking billionaire offered notably restrained remarks as he surveyed the waterlogged wreckage.

"Nobody understands how bad it is," Trump told reporters, after briefly helping unload a truck of supplies while cameras captured the moment. "It's really incredible, so I'm just here to help."

Yet the trip did little to obscure the turmoil in Trump's campaign, punctuated early Friday when Trump announced that he'd accepted campaign chairman Paul Manafort's offer to resign.

Manafort's departure followed a string of revelations about his work for a pro-Russian political party in Ukraine. The damaging news included an Associated Press report Thursday describing a covert Washington lobbying operation run by Manafort's firm. Manafort and his deputy, Rick Gates, never disclosed their work as foreign agents as required under federal law.

Trump, in a statement, praised Manafort's work on the campaign and called him a "true professional." But his son, Eric Trump, made clear the controversy was behind the resignation. His father didn't want to be "distracted by whatever things Paul was dealing with," the younger Trump told Fox News.

Campaign spokesman Jason Miller said Gates would have a new role as liaison to the Republican National Committee, which has had a turbulent relationship with its nominee this year.

Clinton's campaign called the resignation an admission of the Trump campaign's "disturbing" connections with allies of Russian President Vladimir Putin in Russia and Ukraine.

"You can get rid of Manafort, but that doesn't end the odd bromance Trump has with Putin," campaign manager Robby Mook said in a statement.

U.S. defends \$400M payment to Iran

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Obama administration on Friday defended its decision to make a \$400 million cash delivery to Iran contingent on the release of American prisoners, saying the payment wasn't ransom because the Islamic Republic would have soon recouped the money one way or another.

In a conference call with reporters, senior administration officials said it made no sense not to use the money as leverage to ensure that four U.S. citizens were freed, especially as Washington was uncertain until the very moment their plane left that Iran would live up to its word.

The administration's defense came after the State Department outlined for the first time that the Jan. 17 repayment of money from a 1970s Iranian account to buy U.S. military equipment was connected to a U.S.-Iranian prisoner exchange on the same day. Previously, President Barack Obama and other officials had denied any such linkage.

The acknowledgement kicked off a torrent of Republican criticism, who declared it evidence of a quid pro quo that undermined America's longstanding opposition to ransom payments.

"He denied it was for the hostages, but it was," Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump said in a speech Thursday night in Charlotte, North Carolina. "He said we don't pay ransom, but he did. He lied about the hostages, openly and blatantly."

House Speaker Paul Ryan, R-Wis., said Obama "owes the American people a full accounting of his actions and the dangerous precedent he has set."

The money came from an account used by the Iranian government to buy American military equipment in the days of the U.S.-backed shah. The equipment was never delivered after the shah's government was overthrown in 1979 and revolutionaries took American hostages at the U.S. Embassy in Tehran. The two sides have wrangled over that account and numerous other financial claims ever since.

The Jan. 17 agreement involved the return of the \$400 million, plus an additional \$1.3 billion in interest, terms that Obama described as favorable compared to what might have been expected from a tribunal set up in The Hague to rule on claims between the two countries. U.S. officials have said they expected an imminent ruling on the claim and settled with Tehran instead.

At an Aug. 4 news conference, Obama said nothing nefarious occurred. "We do not pay ransom for hostages," he said.

In a conference call with reporters, two senior administration officials intimately involved with the financial and prisoner negotiations sought to refute what they described as false reports about what happened. They weren't authorized to speak publicly on the matter and demanded anonymity.

There was no way that Washington could have avoided repaying the money to Iran in the short-term, one of the officials insisted.

The 1981 Algiers Accord between the U.S. and Iran that set up the tribunal made repayment mandatory, and allowed for either claimant to seize assets in international courts if the other reneged on a ruling, the official said.

BRIEFLY

More people go home as progress made against California fire

PHELAN, Calif. (AP) — More people returned to their homes Friday as firefighters made significant progress against a huge wildfire burning in Southern California's San Bernardino National Forest, but that was tempered by the announcement that at least 96 homes and 213 outbuildings were destroyed.

Johanna Santore was among those left homeless. She was running an errand Tuesday when the fire charged through her neighborhood. She tried to rush home to rescue the family's four dogs, six cats and hamster but was blocked by closed roads.

Frantic for answers, she posted messages about her pets on Facebook. A group of animal rescue volunteers saw her pleas and offered to check on the animals.

They found the house in smoldering ruins — with no signs of the pets. "I'm actually feeling numb," said Santore, who fled with her husband and granddaughter to an evacuation center. "It's like a nightmare."

Thousands of residents chased from their mountain and desert homes were slowly beginning to take stock of their losses as the preliminary damage assessment was released for the blaze that erupted Tuesday in drought-parched canyons 60 miles east of Los Angeles.

Firefighters initially struggled to get the towering flames under control but later made dramatic progress in corralling the fire that scorched nearly 58 square miles and was 26 percent contained. Plans were underway to demobilize some of the nearly 1,600 firefighters.

Yellowstone River closes after tens of thousands of fish die

BILLINGS, Mont. (AP) — Montana wildlife officials indefinitely closed a 183-mile stretch of the Yellowstone River and hundreds of miles of other waterways Friday, barring all fishing, rafting and other activities to prevent the spread of a parasite believed to have killed tens of thousands of fish.

Fishing guides and rafting operators who run businesses along the river said the move could be catastrophic to the area's sizable outdoor industry, which depends heavily on the busy summer season.

The closure could last for months if river conditions don't improve and fish keep dying, according to officials from Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks. It extends to hundreds of miles of waterways that feed into the Yellowstone, including the Boulder, Shields and Stillwater rivers.

Even when the river reopens, there are fears the fish die-off could deal a lasting blow to the Yellowstone's reputation as a world-class trout fishery that draws visitors from around the world.

"This kill is unprecedented in magnitude. We haven't seen something like this in Montana," said Fish, Wildlife and Parks spokeswoman Andrea Jones said.

By Friday, roughly 4,000 dead fish had been counted, but the total number is estimated to be in the tens of thousands, including fish that sank to the bottom, officials said.

Most have been mountain whitefish, a native game species, but reports emerged that the die-off has affected some rainbow trout and Yellowstone cutthroat trout — species crucial to the fishing industry.

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