

NEWS IN BRIEF

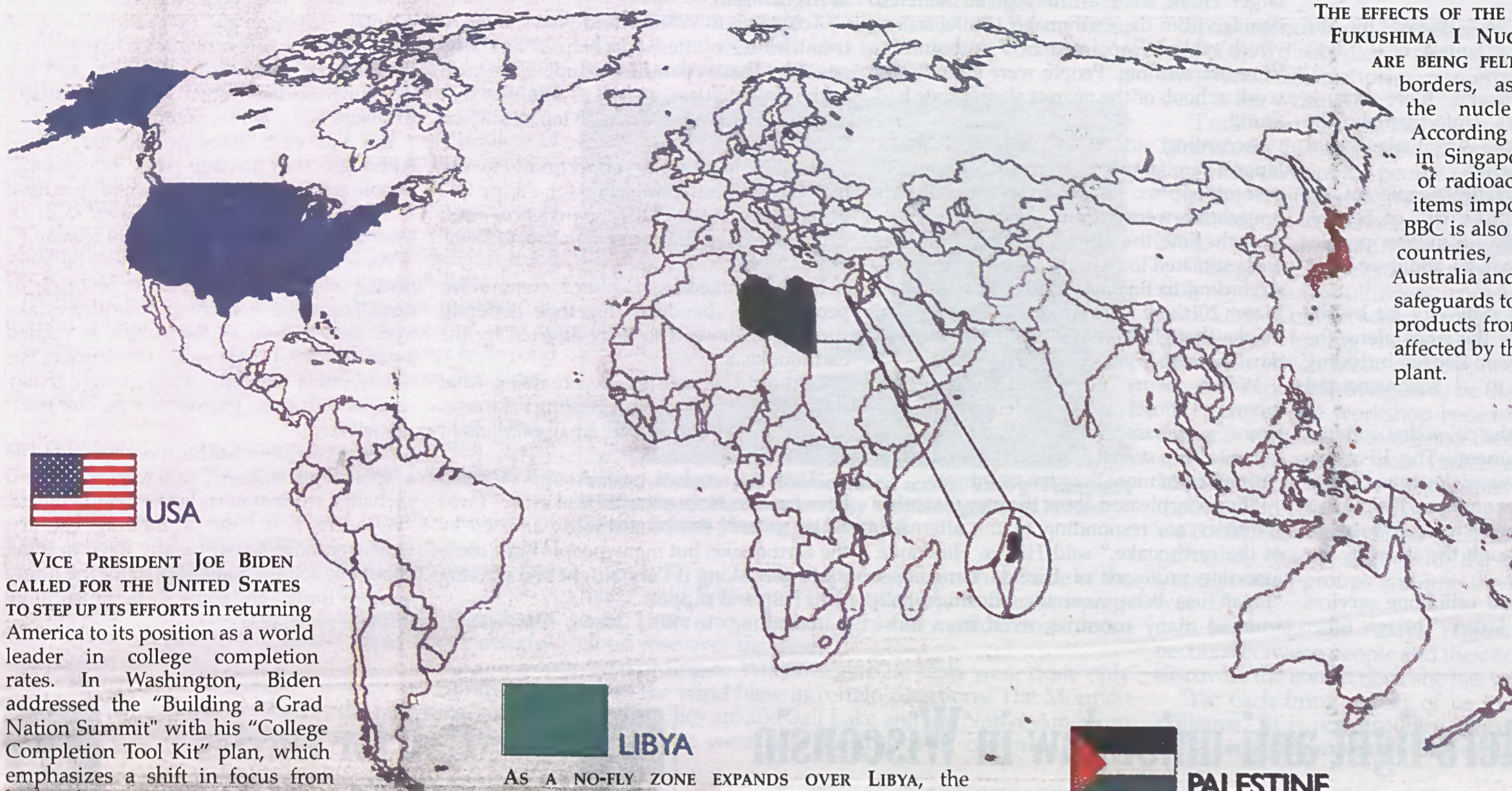
STORIES BY ALEX MILLER

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JAPAN

THE EFFECTS OF THE RADIATION FROM THE FUKUSHIMA I NUCLEAR POWER PLANT ARE BEING FELT outside the Japan's borders, as efforts to contain the nuclear crisis continue. According to the BBC, Officials in Singapore discovered traces of radioactivity in certain food items imported from Japan. The BBC is also reporting that several countries, including the US, Australia and Russia, have instated safeguards to check incoming food products from the region of Japan affected by the Fukushima I power plant.



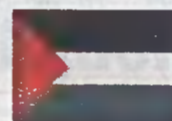
USA

VICE PRESIDENT JOE BIDEN CALLED FOR THE UNITED STATES TO STEP UP ITS EFFORTS in returning America to its position as a world leader in college completion rates. In Washington, Biden addressed the "Building a Grad Nation Summit" with his "College Completion Tool Kit" plan, which emphasizes a shift in focus from high school completion to college completion, as well as "developing action plans, embracing performance-based funding, and aligning high school graduation standards with college entrance standards," reports Reuters News. Though no monetary aid was included with the plan, Biden highlighted the need to make education more affordable.



LIBYA

AS A NO-FLY ZONE EXPANDS OVER LIBYA, the international community's military intervention faced its first setback when a U.S. F15 fighter jet crash-landed on the night of Monday, March 21, reports The New York Times. U.S. military officials reported that the crash was a result of mechanical malfunctions, rather than enemy fire, and that both pilots successfully ejected and are safe. Meanwhile, heavy fighting continues on the ground and air strikes continue to target radar and anti-aircraft defense systems.



PALESTINE

ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN TENSIONS TOOK AN UGLY TURN in the past week as violence escalated on both sides. In response to more than 50 rockets and mortars fired into Southern Israel over the weekend, Israeli forces responded with attacks against Hamas positions, reports The Washington Post. One attack, in which Israeli forces returned fire on a house from which multiple rounds were fired into Israel, left four dead and 12 wounded, with three children included in the casualties. More recently, The Jerusalem Post reported that a Hamas official has declared an Israeli air strike killed four Hamas militants.

Nuclear reactor crisis continues in Japan

By Abbey Brinkey
STAFF WRITER

The worst may not be over for Japan.

On March 11, a devastating earthquake hit Japan. Then came the tsunami. Six hours later, once everyone thought it could not get any worse — it did.

The nuclear power plant at Fukushima Daiichi was declared in a state of emergency.

This crisis is much greater than what happened in 1979 at Three Mile Island, according to Reuters.

"The major problem in Japan has been the loss of cooling (produced by the loss of electric power due to the tsunami damage)," said David Dobson, associate professor of geology, in an email interview. "The Three Mile Island event was also caused by a loss of cooling."

"At Three Mile Island, there was a significant release of radioactive material when radioactive coolant was released into a nearby river," said Dobson. "Although there are still unknowns, it is reasonably clear that the Japanese incidents are already more severe than what happened at Three Mile Island — and they're not over yet."

However, The Wall Street Journal reports,

the situation at Fukushima Daiichi is not quite the Chernobyl incident in 1986. Chernobyl is known as the worst nuclear incident in history. A reactor exploded and released harmful radioactive smoke into the air; fifty deaths were directly attributed with this incident, and thousands more were considered connected.

"The concerns involve both the reactors and their fuel rods, as well as the 'ponds' where spent fuel is stored," explained Professor of Geology Marlene McCauley in an email. "The reactor rods and spent fuel must both be kept cooled with water."

March 15, a large fire broke out in the Unit 4 nuclear reactor, due to the instability caused by the earthquake, Reuters reports. That same day, white smoke was seen emitting from the plant.

"White smoke — meaning the steam release — would not necessarily be a good thing," Keith Holbert, associate professor and director of the Nuclear Power Generation Program at Arizona State University, said in an interview with Reuters.

"This releases some short-lived radioactivity," McCauley said of the steam release. "It isn't a huge problem unless you are nearby; it's pretty low level and short-

lived."

March 18, Japanese military fire trucks were put to work spraying water into the Unit 3 nuclear reactor, details CTV News. NHK — a Japanese reporting organization — disclosed that, while this was occurring, the Tokyo Electric Power Company was working on restoring power to Units 1 and 2 of the nuclear reactors. According to The Wall Street Journal, the company was successful.

"Our priority right now is to try and cool them (the spent fuel pools) down first," an official from the Tokyo Electric Power Company told Reuters.

The biggest concern at the moment is containing the radiation that could leak into the environment. Currently, there is talk about encasing the reactors in cement to prevent any leaks as well as burying the core, reports The Wall Street Journal.

"Burying the reactor core is an option — but not a great one," said Beverly Cea, who attended Guilford in '74-'75. "Just think of how long — 1000-plus — years it will be before anyone can go near it."

"The reactors are pretty well-shielded, steel inner cores, concrete containment around that, etc," said McCauley. "The storage ponds for spent fuel are not usually at all as well

protected. If those ponds' water all boils off, the heat from the spent rods can get quite extreme and the explosions that ensue may put more, and longer-lived, radiation into the environment."

300 workers have stayed behind to work in groups of 50, reports The Guardian. They are risking not only their health, but their lives as well.

"My eyes well with tears at the thought of the work they are doing," Kazuya Aoki, a safety official at Japan's Nuclear Industrial Safety Agency, said when speaking to Reuters.

Dobson spoke of the chances of a catastrophe like this hitting America.

"We don't have the same degree of earthquake and tsunami risk that the Japanese do because of their geologic setting, so crises like this are not as likely here," Dobson said. "However, we have our own weather and geologic risks that could affect nuclear reactors, and the potential for engineering failure or human error (as in Three Mile Island) is always present, not to mention terrorist attacks or other incidents."

Japan — along with the rest of the world — watches with baited breath and crossed fingers that another catastrophe does not hit this already-ravaged country.