

News at a Glance

Ghana to play host to President Obama

(GIN/NNPA) - President Barack Obama's upcoming African tour includes an official visit to Ghana but not Nigeria where an "all out war" threatens the oil fields of the Niger Delta and charges of fraud cloud a recent regional vote.

The purpose of the July trip is to "strengthen the US relationship with one of our most trusted partners in sub-Saharan Africa," and also to "highlight the critical role that sound governance and civil society play in promoting lasting development," the White House said.

According to a White House source, while Nigeria remains a strategic partner of the US on African issues, Ghana has earned greater merit with the US on its domestic successes, including its successful transfer of power from one party to another.

Cleveland Urban League closing after 92 years

CLEVELAND (AP) - The Urban League of Greater Cleveland says it has lingering debt and will close after 92 years of serving the city's inner-city residents and businesses.

It is closing on May 29. The agency's 15 full-time employees are losing their jobs.

Chief Executive Officer Johnathan Holifield says the affiliate of the National Urban League has \$2.75 million in debt, mostly on the purchase of its headquarters in 2002. He says that makes the nonprofit organization unable to run its programs to develop literacy, job skills and economic opportunities.

Holifield says he doesn't know of any other city where the Urban League is in a similar situation.



Holifield

Latino gang accused of targeting blacks near LA

HAWAIIAN GARDENS, California (AP) - A Latino street gang waged a racist campaign to eliminate the city's black residents through attempted murders and other crimes, according to federal racketeering indictments unsealed Thursday.

Five indictments charged a total of 147 members and associates of the Varrio Hawaiian Gardens gang, and federal and local agencies arrested 63 of them last Thursday, U.S. Attorney Thomas P. O'Brien said at a news conference.

Another 35 defendants were already in custody on unrelated charges. Weapons and drugs worth more than \$1 million also were seized in what O'Brien called "the largest gang takedown in United States history."

The indictments detail attempted murder, kidnapping, firearms, narcotics and other charges related to attacks by the gang, which is predominantly Latino and mainly operates in Hawaiian Gardens, a city of about 15,000 in southeastern Los Angeles County.

"(Varrio Hawaiian Gardens) gang members take pride in their racism and often refer to the VHG Gang as the 'Hate Gang,'" the main indictment said. "VHG gang members have expressed a desire to rid the city of Hawaiian Gardens of all African-Americans and have engaged in a systematic effort to achieve that result by perpetrating crimes against African-Americans."

The indictment alleges a string of attacks on black residents, including a shooting into a home with eight people inside. The indictment does not say if anyone was hit.

Former commander to lead NASA

WASHINGTON (AP) - President Barack Obama on Saturday named former shuttle commander Charles Bolden to lead NASA at a critical time for the space agency.

The White House has ordered a complete outside review of NASA's manned space program, including plans to return astronauts to the moon.

Bolden flew in space four times - twice as shuttle commander - and once as assistant deputy administrator at NASA headquarters in Washington. The 62-year-old Columbia, S.C., native left NASA in 1994.

If the Senate confirms Bolden, he would be the space agency's first black administrator and the second astronaut to hold the post.

Obama also announced that he was nominating Lori Garver to be NASA's deputy administrator. Garver was Obama's NASA transition chief and is a former associate administrator at the agency.

"These talented individuals will help put NASA on course to boldly push the boundaries of science, aeronautics and exploration in the 21st century and ensure the long-term vibrancy of America's space program," Obama said in a statement.

White House science adviser John Holdren said in early May that the new panel will look at the design of new spacecraft to replace the space shuttle and go to the moon, as well as consider possible alternatives to the current design.

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Gold medal-winning swimmer continues to promote water safety

BY KRISTIE RIEKEN
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

HOUSTON - Cullen Jones sternly barked orders to the nearly half a dozen children wading in the pool.

"Kick," he said to a young girl in the flowered swimsuit. "Harder. Come on, you can do it."

The group of elementary-age children got a treat as the Olympic gold medalist gave them a swim lesson to launch a six-city event called "Make a Splash with Cullen Jones."

The initiative, which is sponsored by the USA Swimming Foundation and ConocoPhillips, is aimed at reducing drownings among minority youth by promoting the availability of low or no-cost swimming lessons.

Jones is the perfect spokesman for the program, after becoming the first African American to break a world record in swimming in an Olympic contested event in 2006. His success continued last summer in Beijing when he won a gold medal with the U.S. 400-meter freestyle relay team.

His involvement in the cause isn't for publicity; he only learned to swim after almost drowning at age 5. The incident at a water park that left him unconscious and requiring CPR spurred his family to get him swim lessons, which turned into a career in the sport.

Drowning is the second-leading cause of death for children ages 14 and under



Swimmer Cullen Jones made history at the 2008 Olympics.

Photo by Jeff Siner/Charlotte Observer/MCT

in the United States. The problem is most serious among African-Americans ages 5-14 who are more than three times more likely to drown than white children of the same age range.

"Almost being part of the statistic, it hits kind of close to home," Jones said. "I've just taken the torch and really tried to run with it to help diversity in swimming."

Recently, Jones spent more than half an hour teaching the 8-to-10-year-olds swimming basics including how to breathe under water and the proper way to kick. There was splashing and laughing, but Jones made sure the four girls and one boy understood the importance of learning to swim and using care near the water.

"I have a lot of friends who don't know how to swim," said 8-year-old Citizen Broome. "Now I'll tell them I learned about swimming from someone in the Olympics and they should learn so they can be safe."

Members of the Houston Fire Department, who are often the first responders to

See Jones on A8

NAACP condemns ACC taking event to S.C.

BY PETE IACOBELLI
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

COLUMBIA, S.C. - The NAACP condemned the Atlantic Coast Conference for bringing its baseball tournament back to South Carolina, in defiance of the civil rights group's nearly decade-long boycott of the state for flying the Confederate flag.

"Dignity, decency and most importantly respect continue to be absent from the action plan of the ACC," the NAACP said in the resolution, passed by its national board last weekend.

The resolution is in response to ACC leaders voting to award its postseason tournament to Myrtle Beach for three years, starting in 2011.

The NCAA has had a moratorium on awarding predetermined championships to South Carolina since 2001, while the ACC and Southeastern Conference have largely adhered to similar stances.

That changed with last week's decision to play along the Grand Strand, said Lonnie Randolph, president of the South Carolina conference of NAACP branches.

"Initially, they supported the cause of respect, decency and equality for all people," Randolph said. "Have they resorted to their old policy where they didn't always feel that way?"

The NAACP said the ACC did not contact state or national leaders about the move.

Davis Whitfield, ACC associate commissioner of championships, said his league was told the Myrtle Beach organizing committee would talk with all groups that had sensitivities regarding the flag.

"The bid committee assured us that these conversations had taken place," he said in a statement Thursday.

Last week, Whitfield, speaking with The Associated Press by phone about Myrtle Beach's winning bid, said the climate had changed in South Carolina since the boycott began in 2000.

Then, the Confederate flag flew over the Statehouse

and sanctions led to a legislative compromise where the banner was taken down and placed at a Confederate soldier's monument in front of the Capitol building. Opponents said the new location made the flag even more visible and demanded it be removed to a museum. The boycott has continued since.

Former state NAACP

See NAACP on A8



Rep. Clyburn



Randolph

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