

Taiwan's New President Sworn In

Taiwan's Ma Ying-jeou took the oath of office as president on Tuesday, two months after sweeping to victory on a pledge to mend fragile relations with China and revitalize the economy, according to AFP.

He succeeded Chen Shui-bian, whose pro-independence rhetoric during eight years in power irked not only Beijing, but also the United States for the way it spiked regional tensions.

Ma, a Harvard-educated former mayor of Taipei, was expected to reach out to Beijing—which still claims sovereignty over the island—in his inaugural address in front of some 15,000 people.

Reports here said he would appeal for a resumption of high-level dialogue that was suspended by China in 1995 in protest at a landmark US visit by Lee Teng-hui, who was then Taiwan's president.

Ma has already urged increased trade and tourism links, including regular direct flights, but has insisted he will not discuss reunification with the mainland.



EU Pre-Membership For Bosnia

There are no obstacles to Bosnia signing a pre-membership agreement with the European Union, AP quoted an EU representative as saying Monday.

Slovenia's UN Ambassador Sanja Stiglic, whose country hold the EU presidency, told the UN Security Council that Bosnia's recent adoption of two important police reform laws was one of the conditions for the signing of a Stabilization and Association Agreement with the EU.

Stiglic said the EU also noted progress in three other key priorities - building up Bosnia's public administration, implementing public broadcasting legislation, and cooperating with the international war crimes tribunal for former Yugoslavia.

"Thus, while there are still shortcomings, there are no obstacles to the signing of the Stabilization and Association Agreement with Bosnia and Herzegovina, which will take place as soon as technical preparations are concluded," she said.

Stiglic said the agreement will provide the framework for Bosnia's relations with the EU and will be an essential element to ensure stability and strengthen dialogue within the country.

S. Africa Fights Xenophobic Violence

Clashes pitting the poorest of the poor against one another have focused attention on complaints that South Africa's post-apartheid government has failed to deliver enough jobs, housing and schools to go around, said AP.

Police brought in reinforcements as violence hopped from slum to slum in scenes reminiscent of the bloodiest days of apartheid. Most of the victims were foreigners in squatter camps.

Archbishop Desmond Tutu made an impassioned plea Monday for the violence to end.

Tutu said that when South Africans were fighting against apartheid they had been supported by people around the world, and particularly in Africa.

South Africans are struggling to buy food as prices rise. Unemployment is 23 percent and many complain the government hasn't worked fast enough to build houses, schools and hospitals for the long-neglected black majority.



Obama Seeks Delegate Majority

Barack Obama will reach for a symbolic tipping point in the Oregon and Kentucky primaries Tuesday—a majority of pledged delegates offered in the Democratic presidential contest.

According to AP, Hillary Rodham Clinton vowed there was "no way that this is going to end anytime soon" as she campaigned on Monday across Kentucky, a state she was expected to win.

Obama was favored in Oregon, where supporters delivered the largest crowd of his campaign on Sunday.

Regardless of who prevails in those states, Obama is on track to secure the largest share of delegates who could be won in the long slog of primaries and caucuses since the snows of January.

If there were to be practical dividends in that achievement, they would come from persuading the remaining uncommitted superdelegates—the party insiders who are not tied to primary or caucus results—to pick up the pace of their endorsements.

Obama planned to spend the latest primary day in Iowa, the state of his opening electoral success.

Washington, Caracas Clash Again



Venezuelan Foreign Minister Nicolas Maduro (c) speaks during a press conference with Defense Minister Gustavo Rangel (l) and the Chief of the Army's Operation Strategic Command, general Jesus Gonzalez in Caracas, on May 19.

Venezuela wants the US ambassador to explain a violation of its airspace by a US Navy plane, the country's foreign minister said on Monday.

The US Navy plane was detected in Venezuelan airspace on Saturday night near the Caribbean island of La Orchila, and questioned by the Caracas airport control tower, AP quoted Defense Minister Gen. Gustavo Rangel Briceno as saying.

The Navy S-3 Viking, used for counter-narcotics missions, may have accidentally crossed into Venezuela's airspace while experiencing "intermittent navigational problems" on a training mission in international airspace, a US defense official said, speaking on condition of anonymity due to the issue's sensitivity.

The Navy crew on the plane, which is based in Curacao, had some language problems during the three-minute radio conversation, the official said.

"They promptly responded and identified themselves as US Navy, on a training mission in international airspace, and that a navigational error had possibly occurred," the official said.

US State Department spokesman Sean McCormack said the US respects Venezuelan sovereignty.

But Venezuelan Foreign Minister Nicolas Maduro said US Ambassador Patrick Duddy will nevertheless be called in for talks, and "we will ask for an explanation." Venezuela believes the flyover was deliberate, Rangel said.

The incident could aggravate tensions between

the US and its fifth largest oil supplier. President Hugo Chavez has repeatedly accused Washington of plotting an invasion and trying to destabilize his government, despite US denials.

Maduro also alleged that Colombia's US-allied government, as a "provocation," sent 60 troops about 875 yards across the nation's shared border on Friday. Colombia's defense minister denied any incursion.

Venezuelan Gen. Jesus Gonzalez said a group of Colombian troops again crossed the border on Monday in the same general area of Apure state. The matter was resolved when they left at the request of Venezuelan troops, he said.

> Series of Provocations

"This is just the latest step in a series of provocations in which they want to involve our country," Defense Minister Gustavo Rangel said at a news conference.

According to Reuters, Venezuelan authorities contacted the US plane and the pilot said he would head back to another Caribbean island, Curacao, a former Dutch colony which the United States uses for training, Rangel said.

Chavez frequently says the United States and Colombia plot to invade Venezuela, one of the largest oil exporters to the United States. The two countries dismiss the general accusation and Colombia specifically denied Saturday's incursion charge.

The new accusations came against a backdrop of tensions between Venezuela and Colombia and the United States, which both said last week

an Interpol investigation showed Chavez's links to Marxist Colombian rebels, despite his denials.

The BBC's James Ingham in Caracas says Colombia says various documents prove that Venezuela has funded the rebels. Chavez insists he has never provided any support.

The US violation of Venezuelan airspace comes two days after a similar claim was made against Colombia.

The Bogota government denied that its troops had crossed into Venezuelan territory on Friday.

Rangel said such airspace violations probably happened in the past but that Venezuela now has equipment to detect flights in the area.

"This sort of event cannot be allowed, just left to one side," Rangel said. "As a serious state we have to really and truly assume a defensive stance."

Washington for years has had tense relations with the leftist government of President Hugo Chavez, who has said that US agents are funding plans to remove him from power. Chavez also says Washington was behind the April 2002 coup that ousted him for 47 hours, AFP reported.

> Justification

A spokesman for the US Southern Command (SOUTHCOM) in Miami said it was reviewing counter-drug flights that were conducted in the Caribbean over the weekend.

"What I can tell you is we go to great lengths to respect the sovereign air space of all the countries in the region," said SOUTHCOM spokesman Jose Ruiz.

In Focus

Malaysia's Ruling Party Shaken

Malaysia's ruling party tried to stem a potential hemorrhage of members on Tuesday after former leader Mahathir Mohamad resigned and urged others to follow him to pressure the prime minister to step down.

According to AP, a few prominent figures have so far heeded Mahathir's call on Monday to abandon the United Malays National Organization party, but Deputy Prime Minister Najib Razak offered to hold talks with Mahathir to help resolve the crisis.

The party's troubles should be "settled internally and not from outside," Najib said in a statement from Egypt, where he was attending an economic forum.

Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi on Monday ruled out any personal meeting with his predecessor, underscoring the bitterness that has plagued their relationship after Mahathir retired in 2003 after 22 years in office and handed power to Abdullah.

Mahathir, 82, has been a fierce critic of Abdullah's political and economic policies. He stepped up his calls for Abdullah to resign after the government suffered bruising losses in March general elections.

Opposition parties sought to capitalize on the conflict Tuesday by encouraging disillusioned government loyalists to defect.

Mahathir announced in a speech Monday he was leaving the party and would only return if Abdullah steps down. The party's multiethnic coalition has ruled Malaysia since 1957.

Another of Abdullah's critics, Razaleigh Hamzah, said late Monday he will remain in the party to challenge Abdullah for the party presidency in December polls.

FBI Objected To Harsh Interrogations

FBI agents raised misgivings about US interrogators' mistreatment of terror suspects detained in Iraq and Afghanistan and at Guantanamo Bay during the three years after Sept. 11 but in some cases were slow to report it, an imminent Justice Department report concludes.

Additionally, in a few isolated cases, FBI agents did not immediately withdraw when they witnessed harsh treatment of detainees who were being questioned, according to two law enforcement officials familiar with the report.

The report by Justice Department Inspector General Glenn A. Fine is expected to be released Tuesday after more than three years in the making, AP reported.

It is certain to fuel debate over whether the Bush administration knowingly allowed the use of interrogation tactics widely defined as illegal forms of torture.

Overall, the report gives the FBI fairly positive marks for repeatedly objecting between 2001 and 2004 to interrogation methods at three military prisons: Abu Ghraib in Iraq; in Bagram, Afghanistan; and at the U.S. Naval Base at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

According to the two law enforcement officials, who have seen the report, its 12 chapters touch on a range of issues, including the interrogations of terror suspects who were thought to have had valuable information. The officials spoke about the report on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss it publicly.