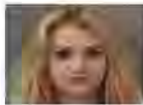


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TIMELINE-U.S. policy shifts on Syria in Obama administration

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July 27, 2012 | Reuters

July 27 (Reuters) - The uprising against Syrian President Bashar al-Assad has changed the course of U.S. policy from one of engagement when President Barack Obama first took office to a call for Assad to step down to increased support for Syrian rebels.

Here are some of the significant moments.

March 7, 2009 - The United States and Syria found "common ground" when U.S. officials Jeffrey Feltman and Dan Shapiro met with Syrian Foreign Minister Walid al-Moualem in the first high-level trip by American officials to Damascus since 2005.

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Feb. 16, 2010 - Obama nominated Robert Ford to be the U.S. ambassador to Syria, the first since Washington withdrew its ambassador in 2005 after the assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik al-Hariri in Beirut.

Feb. 17, 2010 - Assad held security talks in Damascus with U.S. Under Secretary of State William Burns, after which the U.S. official said he was "hopeful" of progress.

April 8, 2011 - In a statement on the uprising, which began on March 15, Obama called on Assad to halt the "abhorrent violence committed against peaceful protesters."

April 22, 2011 - Obama condemned use of force against demonstrators and called on Assad to "change course now."

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April 29, 2011 - United States slaps sanctions on Syria's intelligence agency and two relatives of Assad, in Washington's first concrete steps in response to the crackdown on protests.

July 12, 2011 - Obama sharpened rhetoric against Assad, saying the Syrian president had "lost legitimacy" for failing to lead a democratic transition.

Aug. 11, 2011 - Obama and Turkish Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan in a phone call spoke about the violence in Syria and the need for a transition to democracy, the White House said.

Aug. 18, 2011 - For the first time, Obama called for Assad to step down, saying: "For the sake of the Syrian people, the time has come for President Assad to step aside." Britain, France and Germany also called for Assad to step aside.

Oct. 24, 2011 - The United States pulled its ambassador, Robert Ford, out of Syria over threats to his safety.

May 18, 2012 - Group of Eight leaders at Camp David discussed the need for political transition in Syria.

June 18, 2012 - Obama and Russian President Vladimir Putin at the Group of 20 summit in Mexico agreed violence in Syria must end but showed no signs of reaching a deal on tougher sanctions against Damascus.

June 22, 2012 - U.S. Defense Secretary Leon Panetta defended the administration's decision to not arm the Syrian rebels, which has been criticized by some Republicans in Congress.

July 18, 2012 - Obama called Putin to discuss the deteriorating situation in Syria after a bombing in Damascus killed members of Assad's inner circle, but the two leaders ended the call divided over the best way forward.

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July 19, 2012 - U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Susan Rice called the Russian and Chinese vetoes of a U.N. Security Council resolution on Syria "dangerous and deplorable."

July 23, 2012 - Obama says Assad will be held accountable if he makes the "tragic mistake" of using Syria's stockpile of chemical weapons.

(Reporting by Lauren French; Editing by Stacey Joyce)

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Timeline of the Blagojevich investigation

Gov. Rod Blagojevich became the state's first Democratic chief executive in more than a quarter of a century after vowing to reform what he labeled the culture of corruption surrounding his predecessor that had fed deep cynicism among Illinoisans. advertisement

But little more than a year after replacing George Ryan in office in 2003, Blagojevich found his administration at the early stages of what became a host of state and federal investigations into allegations of wrongdoing involving state hiring, board appointments, contracting and fundraising that battered his tenure.

In their prosecution of Blagojevich fundraisers and allies, dubbed "Operation Board Games," federal prosecutors detailed a scheme that began only months after Blagojevich took office in which top fundraiser and adviser Antoin "Tony" Rezko conspired with longtime GOP government apparatchik Stuart Levine to split kickbacks from a state pension deal. Rezko also helped ensure Levine's reappointment to a state pension board.

As part of the investigation, in which 13 people have been indicted or convicted, kickbacks were often the prescribed price of doing high-level business, be it the pension board for state teachers or the panel that decided whether hospitals could expand their facilities. And the extortion efforts went beyond merely enriching the participants to include soliciting campaign funds for Blagojevich.

At the same time, as Blagojevich began gearing up for his 2006 re-election bid, the clouds of scandal grew deeper. U.S. Atty. Patrick Fitzgerald acknowledged federal prosecutors had spent more than a year investigating fraud in state hiring that involved "multiple state agencies" and developed "a number of credible witnesses." Federal prosecutors also were looking into a \$1,500 check written to one of Blagojevich's children by the husband of a recently appointed state worker.

In the month before Blagojevich was re-elected, Rezko was indicted on corruption charges while his ally, Levine, pleaded guilty to wringing cash from firms seeking state business. Federal prosecutors also were alleging Rezko and Christopher Kelly, another top fundraiser and adviser to the governor, had been influence peddling. Kelly later was indicted on unrelated federal tax charges.

They also began investigating real estate deals by First Lady Patricia Blagojevich in which she received hundreds of thousands of dollars in commissions from politically connected clients, some of whom won millions of dollars in state business.

As prosecutors won a conviction in June of this year on Rezko's corruption charges, they also began climbing the ladder of Blagojevich's inner circle. In October, the Tribune disclosed that John Wyma, the governor's longtime friend, former congressional chief of staff and major state lobbyist, was named in a subpoena over his work for a hospital client.

On Friday, the Tribune disclosed Wyma was cooperating with federal authorities and his cooperation led

to investigators recording the governor.

Here is a timeline of the investigation:

June 7, 2004: Stuart Levine, a longtime Republican reappointed to the powerful Illinois Health Facilities Planning Board, abruptly resigns on the eve of several important hospital expansion votes. The revelation is the first indication that the Blagojevich administration is under federal criminal investigation.

June 27, 2004: The Tribune discloses that an official for one hospital seeking permission to expand was wearing a federal bug during meetings in an effort to expose extortion attempts by Levine and others for contributions to Blagojevich.

July 2, 2004: Levine resigns from his seat on the board of the state Teachers' Retirement System. It remains undisclosed that federal authorities had secretly taped Levine's conversations.

May 9, 2005: Levine is indicted on corruption charges. Federal subpoenas are issued to numerous administration sources, including top Blagojevich fundraiser Antoin "Tony" Rezko

May 20, 2005: The governor's office acknowledges to the Tribune that Rezko has an ongoing eight-year professional relationship with Patricia Blagojevich's home-based real estate brokerage, River Realty Inc.

Sept 15, 2005: Prominent Democratic fundraiser Joseph Cari and a former lawyer for the state's teacher's pension board pleads guilty in an extortion scheme that steered state pension business to favored companies in exchange for campaign contributions to a high-ranking public official described in court documents only as "Public official A."

Oct. 25, 2005: The Tribune discloses a federal grand jury investigation into the alleged political hiring practices of the Blagojevich administration, including the governor's top hiring aide, Joseph Cini.

Sept. 10, 2006: The Tribune reveals that the FBI is investigating allegations by a one-time Blagojevich family friend that she had concerns her state job may have come in return for a \$1,500 personal check her husband wrote to one of Blagojevich's children.

Sept. 17, 2006: The Tribune reports that the Blagojevich administration skirted state hiring rules to give jobs to at least 360 people whose applications were sent through back channels by the governor's offices and politically connected officials.

Aug. 5, 2006: The Tribune reports that Levine is cooperating with the federal investigation of state government.

Oct. 11, 2006: Blagojevich confidant and top fundraiser Rezko is indicted on federal charges he sought millions of dollars in kickbacks and campaign donations from firms seeking state business.

Oct. 27, 2006: Political insider Levine pleads guilty in a scheme to squeeze millions of dollars from firms seeking state business. In court papers, federal authorities spell out allegations that Rezko and another schemer, identified by sources as Blagojevich confidant and top fundraiser Christopher Kelly, were using their influence for corrupt purposes.

Oct. 27, 2006: The Tribune reveals that Blagojevich's wife, Patricia, earned more than \$113,000 in real estate commissions in 2006 through a woman with a no-bid state contract whose banker husband--a

major Blagojevich fundraiser--has business pending before state regulators. Both the FBI and the Cook County state's attorney's office begin investigations.

March 9, 2007: Cook County prosecutors charge the woman, Anita Mahajan, with billing the state for more than \$2 million in services her drug-screening firm never performed.

March 14, 2007: The Tribune reveals Mahajan's husband, Amrish, is the driving force behind his wife's company and helped raise more than a half million dollars for Blagojevich's campaigns since 2001.

April 8, 2007: Tribune reports that a close business associate of Amrish Mahajan, Amrit Patel, hosted a fundraiser for Blagojevich and was involved in a real estate deal with Patricia Blagojevich, while seeking to expand his Dunkin' Donuts business into the state's tollway oases. The deal was never consummated.

May 23, 2007: The Tribune reveals that federal prosecutors have subpoenaed records from Blagojevich's campaign fund as part of the sweeping corruption probe into whether top aides and advisers exchanged state business and jobs for political support.

Nov. 4, 2007: A Tribune investigation reveals that influential lobbyist John Wyma, a longtime Blagojevich friend and confidant, bought a \$650,000 home from one of his clients that sent real estate commissions of more than \$30,000 to the governor's wife. The client, Mark Wight, later won \$10 million in state road contracts.

Dec. 7, 2007: The Tribune reports that authorities are investigating Patricia Blagojevich's real estate business as part of their three-year corruption probe into allegations of favoritism and fraud within the administration.

Dec. 13, 2007: Kelly, a Chicago area businessman and chief Blagojevich fundraiser, is indicted on unrelated federal tax evasion charges involving huge gambling losses.

March 6, 2008: The federal trial of Rezko begins.

April 22, 2008: Ali Ata, appointed by Blagojevich as executive director of the Illinois Finance Authority, admits buying the \$127,000 job by contributing to the governor's campaign, pleads guilty to obstruction of justice and agrees to cooperate.

April 26, 2008: A Tribune investigation reveals at least three of every four \$25,000 donors to Blagojevich got something from the administration--including jobs, contracts or favorable regulatory rulings.

June 4, 2008: After nearly three months of testimony that lays bare some of the innermost workings of the Blagojevich administration, Rezko is convicted of using his political ties to the governor to orchestrate a multimillion-dollar kickback scheme.

May 31, 2008: Lawmakers pass ethics reforms targeted directly at Blagojevich and his record-setting efforts to collect campaign contributions from state contractors.

July 30, 2008: The Tribune reports that in the month since lawmakers passed an ethics bill outlawing the governor's ability to take donations from state contractors, the governor ramped up his efforts by collecting more than a quarter of a million dollars from those with business before the state.

Aug. 25, 2008: Blagojevich vetoes the ethics bill saying he wants it to be tougher and to include lawmakers as well as him.

Oct. 19, 2008: The Tribune reports that more than three quarters of the \$700,000 in real estate commissions earned by Patricia Blagojevich's home-based sales company since 2000 came from state contractors, Blagojevich's family and others with political ties.

Oct. 23, 2008: The Tribune reports that Wyma, the longtime friend and former congressional chief of staff to Blagojevich, is under investigation by federal authorities, who are probing his lobbying activity for at least one hospital client.

Oct. 30, 2008: Springfield millionaire and longtime political power broker William Cellini, who for four decades played an enormous role in Illinois' political leadership, is indicted on charges he extorted campaign contributions for Blagojevich.

Dec. 5, 2008: The Tribune reveals that federal authorities have made covert tape recordings of Blagojevich and that Wyma has cooperated with investigators.

Dec. 9, 2008: F.B.I agents arrest Blagojevich and his chief of staff at their homes on a broad array of corruption charges, including asking for favors in exchange for his selection of a replacement in the senate for President-elect Barack Obama.

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Exhibit 19



Firestone recall timeline September 20, 2000: 11:13 p.m. ET

The short, unhappy history of the second-largest tire recall in U.S. history

NEW YORK (CNNfn)- Ford and Firestone officials face a new set of Congressional hearings Thursday concerning the recall of millions of tires reportedly tied to fatal accidents involving sport/utility vehicles. But this time around, it is the design and testing of Ford's popular Explorer SUV that will come under scrutiny.

Here's a brief history of the massive tire recall:

Aug. 3, 2000: The U.S. National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) said it had opened an investigation of Firestone ATX, ATX II and Wilderness AT tires after receiving 193 complaints -- including 21 involving fatalities -- that the rubber peeled off the tire casing. Ford Motor Co. (F: Research, Estimates) said it was also reviewing the safety of the tires.

Aug. 4: Sears (S: Research, Estimates), the nation's No. 1 tire retailer, said it stopped selling the tire models.

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Aug. 9: Bridgestone recalled 6.5 million tires -- the second largest tire recall in U.S. history -- in response to complaints the tires might be linked to fatal accidents. The Firestone Web site crashed hours after the announcement, crippled by the number of people trying to access it at once.

Aug. 10: Firestone retail locations across the U.S. were jammed with consumers requesting new tires.

Aug. 11: Customers trying to return Firestone tires said they were frustrated by an inadequate supply of replacement tires.

Aug. 12: Ford, responding to customer complaints that a phased tire recall wasn't moving quickly enough, authorized its nearly 3,000 dealers to replace the tires with other brands if Firestone's substitutes weren't available.

Aug. 13: On the very day Ford ran full-page Sunday newspaper ads reassuring its customers of the safety of Ford autos equipped with Firestone tires, two Ford Explorers -- fitted with Wilderness AT tires -- suffered blowouts in Florida.

Aug. 14: A group of South Florida families filed a class-action lawsuit against Firestone, demanding the immediate replacement of potentially unsafe tires.

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Aug. 14: Ford said it would continue using Bridgestone/Firestone tires, but the company would increase scrutiny of quality standards at the tire manufacturer.

Aug. 15: The NHTSA said it found there had been 62 fatalities in accidents involving vehicles using the recalled tires.

Aug. 16: Bridgestone said it would reimburse customers up to \$100 a tire for exchanging tires involved in the company's recall and began running ads in 41 newspapers nationwide detailing the reimbursement policy. However, Bridgestone said customers who exchanged tires for non-Bridgestone replacements after Aug. 16 wouldn't be reimbursed.

Aug. 16: A Kentucky judge ordered Firestone to extend its Aug. 16 deadline for reimbursing consumers who replaced tires at independent shops with competitor's tires. The company wiped out the deadline, but said it had nothing to do with the judge's order.

Sound off: Take the CNNfn poll about the Firestone tire recall.

Aug. 21: Ford said it would halt production at three truck assembly plants for two weeks beginning Aug. 28 in order to free up 70,000 tires so they could be used as replacements in the recall.

Aug. 22: Wall Street analysts cut Ford's earnings estimates, saying consumer worries about the tire recall would temporarily hurt Ford's sales.

Aug. 25: The House Commerce Committee said it would send investigators to Ford's headquarters to talk to Ford executives and study documents about the recall.

Aug. 26: U.S. Transportation Secretary Rodney Slater said the U.S. wasn't seeking the recall of Firestone tires beyond those models already identified.

Aug. 28: The U.S. Congress said it planned to hold hearings on the recall on Sept. 6, under the auspices of the House Subcommittee on Telecommunications, Trade and Consumer Protection.

Aug. 29: Ford said it knew of problems with Firestone tires on Explorer sport/utility vehicles in Venezuela in 1998, two years before they began replacing tires for customers there.

Aug. 31: Ford Motor Co.'s Chief Executive Officer Jacques Nasser said he would testify at congressional hearings in Washington Sept. 6. Ford chose Michelin as an additional supplier of tires for the 2002 Explorer, removing its exclusive arrangement with Bridgestone/Firestone. Separately, U.S. Firestone workers threatened to strike unless they received a new contract.

Sept. 1: The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) warned consumers to consider replacing an additional 1.4 million tires, on top of the 6.5 million already being recalled. Bridgestone/Firestone refused to recall those tires. Eight thousand of the company's workers threatened to walk off the job in the face of a strike deadline.

Sept. 4: Bridgestone/Firestone and union officials reached tentative agreement on a labor contract. In addition, an agreement was reached with the Venezuelan consumer protection agency Indecu to recall 62,000 tires that the agency has linked to at least 46 deaths there.

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Sept. 6: Congressional hearings began in Washington. U.S. lawmakers sharply criticized Bridgestone/Firestone and Ford Motor Co. for not acting quickly enough to recall the tires. In testimony, the heads of both companies pointed the finger of blame at the other.

Sept. 7: U.S. Attorney General Janet Reno said the Justice Department would review whether criminal charges are warranted against the tire maker.

Sept. 8: In an SEC filing, Ford estimated that 30 percent of the 6.5 million recalled Firestone tires had already been replaced, reflecting a pace somewhat faster than early estimates of the recall. In addition, the company announced that it would extend by one week the shutdown of three assembly plants, which the automaker had closed in August in order to divert tires to consumers.

Sept. 12: At the congressional hearings, Bridgestone/Firestone officials made their clearest acknowledgment yet of defects in their tires and expanded their recall, but also said the design of Ford vehicles may have contributed to the fatal accidents. Meanwhile, a House panel threatened to subpoena Ford and Firestone documents about tire tests if both companies did not release them promptly.

Sept. 15: Ford told analysts in New York that its Firestone tire recall problems will affect the company's results into the third quarter, as expected, as well as the fourth quarter. Also, three Bridgestone/Firestone officials filed depositions in the first defective tires case against the company scheduled to go to trial.

Sept. 18: Bridgestone Corp. president Yoichiro Kaizaki said the company plans to decide on a reshuffle of top management at its U.S. Firestone unit this month and may temporarily close a key U.S. plant.

Sept. 19: Federal transportation officials said Tuesday they are investigating an additional 15 deaths linked to the Firestone tire recall, bringing the total to 103 from 88. NHTSA also said it has received 400 reports of injuries and more than 2,226 complaints about the tires.

Sept. 20: Congressional investigators and plaintiffs' lawyers are trying to determine if the design of Ford Motor Co.'s Explorer sport/utility vehicle could have contributed to the accidents being blamed on faulty tires. ■

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TIMELINE-Gulf of Mexico oil spill

August 05, 2010: 04:37 AM ET



(Reuters) - Here is a timeline on the Gulf of Mexico oil spill and its impact since an explosion on a rig killed 11 workers. It is the worst accidental offshore oil spill in history.

April 20, 2010 - Explosion and fire on Transocean Ltd's drilling rig Deepwater Horizon licensed to BP Plc; 11 workers are killed. The rig was drilling in BP's Macondo project 42 miles (68 km) southeast of Venice, Louisiana, in 5,000 feet (1,525 metres) of water and 13,000 feet (4 km) under the seabed.

April 22 - The Deepwater Horizon rig, valued at more than \$560 million, sinks and a 5-mile (8-km) oil slick forms.

April 25 - The well's blowout preventer fails.

April 29 - U.S. President Barack Obama pledges "every single available resource," including the U.S. military, to contain the spreading spill and says BP is responsible for the cleanup.

April 30 - An Obama aide says no drilling will be allowed in new areas, until the cause of the accident is known.

-- BP Chief Executive Tony Hayward says the company takes full responsibility and will pay all legitimate claims and the cost of the cleanup.

May 2 - Obama visits the Gulf Coast. U.S. officials close areas affected by the spill to fishing for 10 days. BP starts drilling a relief well alongside the failed well, a process that may take two to three months to complete.

May 7 - An attempt to place a containment dome over the spewing well fails.

May 11/12 - Executives from BP, Transocean <RIG.N> and Halliburton appear at congressional hearings in Washington. The executives blame each other's companies.

May 14 - Obama slams companies involved in the spill, criticizing them for a "ridiculous spectacle" of publicly trading blame in his sternest comments yet.

May 19 - The first heavy oil from the spill hits fragile Louisiana marshlands. Part of the slick enters a powerful current that could carry it to the Florida Keys and beyond.

May 28 - Obama tours the Louisiana coast, saying, "I am the president and the buck stops with me."

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-- Hayward flies over the Gulf.

May 29 - BP says the complex "top kill" maneuver, started three days earlier to plug the well, has failed.

June 1 - BP shares plunge 17 percent in London trading, wiping \$23 billion off its market value, on news the latest attempt to plug the well has failed.

-- U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder says the Justice Department has launched a criminal and civil investigation into the rig explosion and the spill.

June 2 - BP tries another capping strategy but has difficulty cutting off a leaking riser pipe.

-- U.S. authorities expand fishing restrictions to cover 37 percent of U.S. federal waters in the Gulf.

June 4 - Obama, on his third trip to the region, warns BP against skimping on compensation to residents and businesses.

June 8 - Obama says he wants to know "whose ass to kick" over the spill, adding to the pressure on BP.

June 9 - U.S. Interior Secretary Ken Salazar says BP must pay the salaries of thousands of workers laid off by a moratorium on drilling, at a congressional hearing.

June 10 - In first comments, British Prime Minister David Cameron says Britain is ready to help BP deal with the spill.

June 11 - Supportive comments from Britain lift BP's shares in London by 6.4 percent. But the rise does not mend the damage done -- the company is worth 70 billion pounds (\$102 billion) against more than 120 billion pounds in April.

June 14 - Obama, makes a fourth trip to the Gulf.

-- Two U.S. lawmakers release a letter to Hayward saying: "It appears that BP repeatedly chose risky procedures in order to reduce costs and save time and made minimal efforts to contain the added risk."

June 15 - Lawmakers summon top executives from Exxon Mobil, Chevron, ConocoPhillips, Royal Dutch Shell and BP.

-- Obama says in his first televised speech from the Oval Office: "But make no mistake: we will fight this spill with everything we've got for as long it takes. We will make BP pay for the damage their company has caused."

June 16 - BP agrees to set up a \$20 billion fund for damage claims from the spill, suspends dividend payments to shareholders and says it will pay \$100 million to workers idled by the six-month moratorium on deep-sea drilling.

June 17 - Hayward faces the wrath of U.S. lawmakers as he appears before a congressional hearing. He apologizes for the spill and says everything is being done to stop it. Members of Congress accuse BP of cutting corners for the sake of profit.

June 18 - Anadarko Petroleum, part owner of the gushing well, says BP's behavior before the blowout was "reckless" and likely represented "gross negligence or willful misconduct" that would affect obligations of the well owners.

June 20 - Internal BP document released by U.S. congressman shows BP estimates that a worst-case scenario rate could be 100,000 barrels (4.2 million gallons/15.9 million litres) a day. This is far higher than the U.S. government estimate of 60,000 barrels (2.5 million gallons/9.5 million litres) a day.

June 22 - Hayward is handing day-to-day control of the spill operation to Bob Dudley -- a reflection, says BP, of the need for the CEO to return to other aspects of the business.

June 24 - A U.S. judge refuses to put on hold his decision to lift a ban on deepwater drilling imposed after the spill.

June 30 - Obama formally directs officials to draw up a long-term economic and environmental plan to help the Gulf Coast region get back on its feet after the oil spill.

July 3 - A supertanker converted into a "super skimmer" begins tests. The vessel can remove up to 500,000 barrels (21 million gallons/79.5 million litres) of oil and water from the sea surface a day.

July 7 - Tests show tar balls washed up on the Texas coast are from the spill, meaning every U.S. Gulf state -- Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Florida and now Texas -- has been soiled by the spill.

July 12 - BP installs a "capping stack," which has a better seal than the last cap placed on the well and aims to stop oil from spewing out.

-- BP starts shutting a sequence of valves after getting approval from the U.S. government, delaying testing by 24 hours on fears the process could irreparably damage the well.

July 15 - BP says it has stopped the leak -- at least during testing -- with the new tight-sealing containment cap.

July 19 - BP says it has spent \$3.95 billion so far on efforts to tackle its leaking well.

July 20 - BP says it has reached a deal to sell \$7 billion in assets to Apache Corp as it raises money to cover costs related to the spill. It later says it plans to sell assets worth up to \$30 billion over the next 18 months.

July 23 - BP says it is temporarily suspending relief well activities due to the approach of Tropical Storm Bonnie.

July 27 - BP names American Bob Dudley as its next CEO, saying Tony Hayward will stand down on Oct. 1.

-- BP reports a Q2 loss of \$17 billion after covering the cost of the explosion and resulting spill.

Aug. 2 - U.S. government data shows 4.9 million barrels of oil leaked before the well was capped in mid-July, suggesting the company had underestimated the cost by at least \$1 billion.

-- BP had estimated the well had leaked some 4 million barrels and that it would be fined \$1,100 per barrel under the Clean Water Act. The company faces fines of \$4,300 per barrel if gross negligence is proven.

Aug. 3 - U.S. securities regulators are investigating potential insider trading in shares of BP, including by BP employees, two sources familiar with the probe say.

-- BP says heavy drilling mud injected into it the ruptured well is stemming the flow of crude.

Aug. 4 - BP says it is close to subduing its ruptured well, and the White House hails the "beginning of the end" of the crisis.

-- Government scientists say about 50 percent of the spilled oil has been captured, evaporated, burned or skimmed, while another quarter had been naturally or chemically dispersed.

Aug. 5 - Following the initial success of its "static kill," BP says cement pumping is to begin. (Writing by David Cutler, London Editorial Reference Unit;)

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