

## US, S Korea stage naval exercise amid nuke threats

Washington, and some 200 fixed-wing aircraft. Around 8,000 service personnel from the two allies were to take part in the show of force.

"The USS George Washington left the southern port of Busan around 7:00am Sunday (2200 GMT Saturday). It's sailing towards the Sea of Japan (East Sea) for the exercise," a US military spokesman told AFP.

Officials at Seoul's defence ministry said other navy ships had also left Busan and the nearby port of Jinhae for the drill, with some from the US 7th Fleet set to join them off the peninsula's east coast.

The ministry has said the drill had been relocated from the sensitive Yellow Sea to the Sea of Japan, also known as the East Sea, in deference to Chinese protests.

But future drills would be held in both seas.

North Korea, which has routinely criticised US-South Korean drills as a rehearsal for war, denounced the exercise as "very dangerous sabre-rattling" and threatened to respond with nuclear weapons at the weekend.



A woman visits a makeshift memorial site where candles and flowers have been left near the entrance to the Loveparade in western Germany yesterday. At least 19 people were killed and more than 300 were injured in stampede during the Loveparade on Monday. Inset, Revellers rush up a hill after panic broke out during the Loveparade.

PHOTO: AFP

## GULF OF MEXICO SPILL Ships head back to oil well, ready to resume work

Ships were getting back in place yesterday at the Gulf of Mexico site of BP's leaky oil well as crews raced to resume work on plugging the gusher before another big storm stops work again.

Now that Tropical Storm Bonnie has fizzled on Louisiana's coast, engineers are hoping clear weather lasts long enough for them to finish their work on relief wells. But as peak hurricane season approaches, the potential for another storm-related delay is high.

"We're going to be playing a cat-and-mouse game for the remainder of the hurricane season," retired Coast Guard Admiral Thad Allen said Saturday. Sure enough, another disturbance already was brewing in the Caribbean, although forecasters said it wasn't likely to strengthen into a tropical storm.

Meanwhile, British media reported that BP chief executive Tony Hayward was negotiating the terms of his departure ahead of the company's half-year results announcement Tuesday.

Citing unidentified sources, the BBC and Sunday Telegraph reported detailed talks regarding Hayward's future took place over the weekend. A formal announcement was expected in the next 24 hours, the BBC reported.

BP spokesman Toby Odone said Sunday that Hayward "remains BP's chief executive, and he has the confidence of the board and senior management."

Hayward, who angered Americans by

minimizing the spill's environmental impact and expressing his exasperation by saying "I'd like my life back," has been under heavy criticism over his gaffe-prone leadership during the spill.

Back on the Gulf, a rig drilling the relief tunnel that will pump in mud and cement to seal the well returned to the spill site after evacuating the area.

Crews corked the relief tunnel Wednesday and the temporary halt had an unpleasant consequence: Efforts to solidly seal the well were pushed back by at least a week, Allen said.

Completion now looks possible by mid-August, but Allen said he wouldn't hesitate to order another evacuation based on forecasts similar to the ones for Bonnie.

## Death toll from German music fest rises to 19

The death toll rose to 19 yesterday and police said that 342 had been injured in a panicked crush of partygoers in an overcrowded tunnel that served as the sole entrance to a German festival billed as the world's largest techno music party.

The founder of the Love Parade said it would never be held again.

"The Love Parade was always a peaceful event and a happy party" but would forever be overshadowed by the tragedy, Rainer Schaller said.

"It's over for the Love Parade," he said.

He spoke at a press conference where authorities faced tough questions, but provided few details, about why hundreds of thousands of people were funnelled through a single highway underpass into the former freight railway station used to host the party.

German media reported that there were at least 1.4 million people but police did not confirm that estimate.

Detlef von Schmeling, the police chief in

Duisburg, said that 16 of the 19 people killed have been identified so far. He said they include an Australian, an Italian, a Chinese citizen and a person from Holland.

Von Schmeling said their ages ranged from just over 20 to 40.

Witnesses said officers in Duisburg, a city near Duesseldorf in western Germany, closed the end of the tunnel emptying onto the festival grounds after they become overcrowded around 5 p.m. They told revelers over loudspeakers to turn around and walk back in the other direction. But the entrance to the tunnel did not appear to have been closed and people continued piling in, sparking a panic and then a deadly crush.

Witnesses described a desperate scene, as people piled up on each other or scrambled over others who had fallen.

Partygoer Udo Sandhoefer told n-tv television that even though no one else was being let in, people still streamed into the tunnel, causing "a real mass panic."

## Gujarat's ex-state minister arrested

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, New Delhi

A day after resigning as Gujarat's junior home minister, Amit Shah, a key aide of Chief Minister Narendra Modi, was arrested yesterday by India's Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) in connection with the killing of an alleged gangster in a fake encounter with the state police five years ago.

After remaining untraceable for three days since CBI filed a charge sheet in a court in Ahmedabad charging him with murder and abduction, Shah, a BJP leader of Gujarat, yesterday made a dramatic appearance before the media there before surrendering to the CBI that arrested him.

Earlier, a court in Gujarat had rejected Shah's anticipatory bail plea after he had failed to appear before the CBI on Friday for questioning for the second time in two days following summons issued twice.

The CBI had sent teams for arresting Shah after he refused to appear before the investigating agency team by Friday's 1:00pm deadline for questioning.

BJP had accused India's ruling Congress party of indulging in political vendetta and misusing the CBI against political rivals.

"Shah is completely innocent and the charges against him are fabricated. The CBI is being misused by the Congress against its political rival", Modi had said on Saturday, a charge denied by Congress that said the CBI was only complying with the directive of the Supreme Court in the case.

## South American leaders to debate Venezuela and Colombia crisis

BBC ONLINE

The South American regional group Unasur has called a special meeting to address the breakdown in relations between Venezuela and Colombia.

Foreign ministers will meet in Ecuador next week to discuss the crisis, triggered by Colombia's claim that Venezuela harbours Colombian rebels.

Venezuela denies this, and has broken off diplomatic relations with Colombia.

President Hugo Chavez also ordered the military to be on maxi-

mum alert on Venezuela's border with Colombia.

Chavez has accused Colombia of trying to create a pretext for US military intervention against him.

However, Colombia says it has detailed evidence that Farc and ELN rebels are operating from bases inside Venezuela.

Bolivian President Evo Morales, who called for the Unasur meeting, said relations had deteriorated to such a point that "a war is in the making", and that Unasur "should not allow that war to happen between brother countries".

US State Department spokesman Philip Crowley told reporters that Mr Chavez' decision on Thursday to sever all diplomatic relations with Colombia and put border troops on alert was "a petulant response".

But Venezuela's Defence Minister Carlos Mata said the army was ready to "give a robust response" if Colombian forces attacked.

The issue over whether Venezuela has rebels on its territory has dogged ties between the two South American nations for the past eight years.

The latest exchange plunges bilateral relations to a new low.

## EU to hammer Iran with oil sanctions

AFP, Brussels

The European Union will hit Iran with tough sanctions against its vital oil and gas industry today in a bid to lure Tehran back to the negotiating table over its disputed nuclear programme.

"This (package of sanctions) is about applying pressure, but applying pressure in order to bring the Iranians to the table to talk," a European diplomat said.

EU foreign ministers will formally approve the sanctions following Iran's repeated refusals to halt sensitive nuclear activities, which the West fears are aimed at building a bomb.

Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad warned the EU against imposing unilateral sanctions, saying Tehran would react swiftly and cause "remorse."

"We do not welcome any tension or a new resolution. We seek logic and friendship," Ahmadinejad said in remarks directed at the EU, which were translated into English by the Press TV channel.

"I should tell you that anyone who adopts a measure against the Iranian nation, such as inspection of our ships and planes, should know that Iran will react swiftly," the hardliner said.

"Experience shows that such a reaction by the Iranian nation will cause remorse to it (the EU)," he added.

The UN Security Council imposed a fourth set of sanctions on Tehran in early June, but EU leaders and the United States decided shortly after to impose their own penalties against the Iranian energy sector.

The sanctions are part of a twin-track approach with EU foreign affairs chief Catherine Ashton seeking to revive moribund talks between Iran and six world powers -- the United States, Britain, France, Germany, Russia and China.

Western powers have demanded that Iran suspend its uranium enrichment programme, fearing that Iran would use the material to build a nuclear bomb. Tehran says that its atomic programme is a peaceful drive to produce energy.

The new EU sanctions include a ban on the sale of equipment, technology and services to Iran's energy sector, hitting activities in refining, liquefied natural gas, exploration and production, diplomats said.

The EU will ban dual-use goods that can be used for conventional weapons. It will also step up vigilance of the activities of Iranian-connected banks operating in the EU and bar them from setting up branches.

"A number of (EU) member states have had to overcome considerable problems with their economic interests in order to adopt this package," the European diplomat said.

"It will be in some way the most substantive and far-reaching autonomous sanctions package which the EU has adopted against Iran or any other country," he said.



People pay tribute in front of a memorial plaque for the 113 victims of the Air France Concorde plane crash for the 10th anniversary of the accident, yesterday in Gonesse, in the northeastern suburbs of Paris. The plaque reads "On July 25, 2000, the Concorde crashed in Gonesse, taking the life of 113 people aboard and on the ground".

PHOTO: AFP

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