

# U.S. Refinery Strike Widens



Members of the United Steel Workers union picket the Tesoro refinery in Carson, California February 2, 2015.

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - The U.S. refinery strike widened as workers at the nation's largest refinery walked off their jobs at 12 a.m. CST (0600 GMT) on Saturday, according to the United Steelworkers union (USW).

Shortly after talks between union and oil company representatives ended on Friday night, the union notified Motiva Enterprises [MOTIV.UL] of a strike by its members at the company's 600,250 barrel per day (bpd) refinery in Port Arthur, Texas.

The USW also gave notices on Friday of strikes to begin in 24 hours at Motiva's 235,000 bpd Convent, Louisiana and 238,000 bpd Norco, Louisiana refineries and the Shell Oil Co chemical plant in Norco, the union said.

"The industry's refusal to meaningfully address safety issues through good faith bargaining gave us no other option but to expand our work stoppage," USW International President Leo Gerard said in a statement.

Motiva is a 50-50 joint venture of Royal Dutch Shell Plc and Saudi Aramco [SDABO.UL]. Shell's U.S. arm Shell Oil Co is the lead oil company negotiator in talks with the USW for a national agreement on safety, pay and benefits.

A Shell spokesman said the company was disappointed by the Port Arthur walkout and strike notices to the Louisiana plants.

"We believe this move sets the wrong tone for both parties to move forward and reach an agreement," said Shell spokesman Ray Fisher. "We remain committed to contin-

ued safe operations and productive negotiations."

If no agreement is reached between Shell and the USW by early Sunday morning, a total of 6,550 workers at 15 plants, including 12 refineries accounting for 18.5 percent of U.S. production capacity, will be walking picket lines in the largest national refinery strike since 1980.

This is the first expansion of the strike since Feb. 6, when workers at BP Plc-operated refineries in Indiana and Ohio were told to begin a work stoppage the following day.

Workers are already on strike at Shell's 327,000 bpd joint-venture refinery in Deer Park, Texas, and an adjoining chemical plant. The Deer Park workforce walked out when the strike began on Feb. 1.

## Libyan People Protest at ISIL Attacks



Libyans take part in a protest in Benghazi on February 20, 2015.

TRIPOLI (PRESS TV) - Thousands of people in Libya have taken to the streets in the eastern city of Benghazi to protest against the ISIL terrorist group's violent attacks in a town east of the North African country.

The protesters on Friday condemned the bombings in al-Qubah, located 30 kilometers (20 miles) west of the city of Derna, the ISIL stronghold, and called for an international campaign against ISIL terrorists.

The ISIL Takfiri group claimed responsibility for the triple bomb explosions which claimed the lives of at least 45 people and injured dozens. The ISIL has been winning a foothold in Libya, far from its battlefields in Iraq and Syria.

One of the simultaneous attacks targeted the police headquarters in al-Qubah.

The bombings also targeted the home of the speaker of Libya's internationally recognized parliament, Aguila Salah Issa, and a gas station.

Al-Qubah is controlled by retired General Khalifa Haftar, an autonomous military figure whose loyalists have been instrumental in protecting the internationally recognized government in the violence-wracked North African country.

## U.S., Allies Discuss New Sanctions on Russia: Kerry

LONDON (Reuters) - The United States and its allies are discussing imposing more sanctions against Russia for undermining a European-brokered truce in eastern Ukraine, U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry said on Saturday.

Kerry made the comments as he began talks with his British counterpart Philip Hammond in London, accusing Moscow of "extraordinarily craven behavior at the expense of the sovereignty and integrity of a nation".

The Kiev military accused Russia on Friday of sending tanks and troops into eastern Ukraine despite a ceasefire that went into force last Sunday, brokered by France and Germany in a bid to end a conflict that has killed more than 5,000 people.

The Kremlin did not immediately respond to the allegation but has always denied accusations in the past that its forces are fighting in Ukraine.

Kerry, however, said the United

States "knows to a certainty" of Russia's involvement in the conflict and support it was giving to the separatists.

"Russia has engaged in an absolutely brazen and cynical process over these last days," the Secretary of State said.

"We are talking about additional sanctions, about additional efforts, and I'm confident over the next days people will make it clear that we are not going to play this game," he added.

## First 15-Minute Ebola Test Approved by WHO



Health workers in protective equipment handle a sample taken from the body of someone who is suspected to have died from Ebola virus, near Rokupa Hospital, Freetown, October 6, 2014.

GENEVA (PRESS TV) - The first rapid test for Ebola has been approved by the World Health Organization (WHO), marking a potential breakthrough towards ending a deadly epidemic in West Africa.

On Friday, WHO approved the test developed by US firm Corgenix Medical Corp, saying that although it is less accurate as the standard test, it is simpler to carryout, does not depend on electricity and shows results in less than 15 minutes.

"It's a first rapid test. It's definitely a breakthrough," said WHO spokesman Tarik Jasarevic.

Current Ebola tests are required to be carried out in a laboratory so that blood fragments can be analyzed for the deadly virus' genetic material.

The ReEBOV Antigen Rapid Test analyzes blood for a different element of the virus.

The process, which usually took 12 to 24 hours to yield results, is carried out by putting a drop of blood on a paper strip and then waiting for a reaction in a test tube.

West African trials have shown that the test correctly identifies around 92 percent of people who have contracted the virus.

Meanwhile, the Liberian president said the country plans to remove a night curfew and reopen its borders which were closed to contain the spread of Ebola, as its threat recedes.

"President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf has ordered the lifting of the curfew imposed nationwide. It takes effect beginning Sunday, February 22, 2015," read a presidential statement.

The curfew was initially imposed on August 20 and was observed from 9 p.m. (2100 GMT) to 6 a.m. (0600 GMT), but was later changed to start at midnight.

In another sign that life is returning to normal, the West African country's schools began to reopen this week.

Liberia was at one point the epicenter of the Ebola epidemic that has so far infected more than 23,250 people and claimed the lives of over 9,000 in West Africa.

## Boko Haram Attacks Island on Niger Side of Lake Chad

NIAMEY (Reuters) - Boko Haram militants attacked an island on Niger's side of Lake Chad late on Friday and heavy fighting ensued as the army sought to repel them, residents and security sources said.

The Lake Chad area - a vast maze of tiny islands and swamp-land sheltering thousands of Nigerian refugees - is thought to be serving as a hideout for the Islamist insurgent group.

"There was heavy weapons and machine gun fire from about 2000 local time," said a resident of Niger's nearby lakeside town of N'Guigmi, which Boko Haram attempted to seize earlier this month. Two security forces also confirmed the attack, without providing further details.

It was not immediately clear which island had been attacked on Friday and whether it was inhabited, but the security sources and residents said it was in Niger and within 50 km (30 miles)

of the borders with Chad and Nigeria.

One of the security sources said it would provide a strategic, concealed base for the militants to co-ordinate future attacks if they won control.

Last week, Boko Haram fighters aboard motorized canoes attacked a lakeside fishing village in Chad, killing at least five people in the group's first known lethal attack on that country.

The Sunni group, which has killed thousands of people in a six-year insurgency in Nigeria, has been gaining strength in the past year. It has carved out a territory the size of Belgium in the northeast of the country and intensified cross-border raids.

But regional forces from Nigeria, Chad, Cameroon and Niger have won battles against the group in recent weeks as they seek to hem them within their heartland.



ROME (PRESS TV) - A study by an umbrella charity group in Italy shows that poverty is growing in the country as the euro region's third-biggest economy is still in the grip of recession and crisis.

According to the study, recently published by Caritas Europa, one in four people in Italy is at the risk of poverty or social exclusion.

Caritas Europa, an umbrella group for the national Catholic Caritas charities that run kitchens and shelters for homeless people, added that Italy is one of the seven EU countries suffering from high poverty risk, along with Portugal, Spain, Greece, Cyprus, Ireland and Romania.

The worsening economic situation has also led to a rise in the unemployment rate among Italians, which now stands at around 13 percent, with more people seeking help from charities such as Caritas.

"There is an increasing number of Italians who seek a meal a shelter... many of them are very young unfortunately. Some are in their 50s - too old to be reinserted in the labor force," Mario Urbinati from Caritas Italiana told Press TV, adding, "But what worries me the most is the fact that entire families often come to see us to get a meal."

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JAKARTA (Reuters) - Indonesia recalled its new ambassador to Brazil after the South American country stopped him taking part in a credentials ceremony following the execution of a Brazilian national for drugs trafficking.

Brazil and the Netherlands earlier withdrew their ambassadors from Indonesia, which has some of the strictest drug trafficking laws in the world, after two of their citizens were among six people executed for drugs offences last month.

Indonesia is also involved in a diplomatic dispute with Australia over the fate of two Australian members of the "Bali Nine" drug trafficking ring who are due to be executed this month.

Toto Riyanto, who was chosen as Indonesia's new ambassador to Brazil in October, had been invited to present his credentials at a ceremony at the presidential palace in Brasilia on Friday along with several other new ambassadors, but his participation was postponed at short notice. The ceremony went on without him.

When asked why, Brazilian President Dilma Rousseff said: "We think it's important there is an evolution in the situation so that we can have clarity over the state of relations between Indonesia and Brazil".

Indonesia's Foreign Ministry responded angrily on Saturday.

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TRIPOLI (PRESS TV) - A group of 192 Egyptians have left Libya for Tunisia amid the rising threat of the ISIL Takfiri terrorist group in the violence-wracked North African country.

Reports said on Friday that the Egyptians left Libya from the Ras Jdir border crossing and headed towards the Tunisian island of Djerba.

Cairo said it will send planes to Djerba to transport the Egyptian nationals to their homeland.

Before their departure for the island, the Egyptians were shortly held up by a group of protesters in the Tunisian border town of Ben Guerane.

The protesters, who demanded the government's investment in the impoverished city, reportedly released the Egyptians after a while and provided them with food and water.

Earlier in the day, at least 45 people were killed and dozens of others injured in triple bomb explosions that struck Libya's northeastern city of al-Qubah. The ISIL Takfiri terrorist group claimed responsibility for the deadly blasts.

A brief statement by the terrorist group said the attacks were carried out in revenge for this week's air strikes on the group's stronghold of Derna, some 30 kilometers (20 miles) east of al-Qubah.