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IAAF WORLD YOUTH
BAHAMAS READY TO ROLL
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Car scam using dead people



MAN IN CRITICAL CONDITION AFTER ANOTHER GARDEN VILLAS SHOOTING

By DENISE MAYCOCK
Tribune Freeport Reporter
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FREEPORT: A 20-year-old man is in critical condition in hospital after yet another shooting in Garden Villas. This is the fourth shooting in the area in as many months. So far this year, three young men have lost their lives in the area due to gun violence.

SEE page six

Stolen vehicles registered in names of deceased persons

STOLEN vehicles involved in this recently exposed luxury car scam are being registered in the names of deceased persons to avoid detection, The Tribune has learned.

While these vehicles are registered and licensed as if they have insurance, a quick inspection has shown that some of the vehicles have no coverage whatsoever with the insurance provider having "no record" of the said vehicles ever being in their system.

The police also believe that diverse groups of people, ranging from local businessmen to politicians are believed to have been duped into purchasing these stolen vehicles.

"This is an elaborate scheme, and it is not hard to see why persons were unwittingly drawn in by these unscrupulous people. We have certain information that would lead us to believe that there is a system they have operating that would allow

them to bring these cars in discreetly, license them, sell them over, and duplicate this process very effectively. How this has been in operation is anyone's guess, but we can easily say at least a few years," an investigator revealed.

Yesterday, a source close to the investigation told this newspaper that the port of entry for these shipments of cars would likely still be Arawak Cay, with some shipments coming by way of Clifton Pier, where it is claimed security is known to be "slack."

"They use what is commonly referred to as 'river rats'; boats that can traverse the Miami river and hit the ports that are not as well policed such as the Port of Miami or Fort Lauderdale. These boats would utilize a 'roll on, roll off' system what would make it easy for three cars to be stored in and driven out of each container that is

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MARITIME SUMMER CAMP TOURS RBDF BASE

FELIPE MAJOR/TRIBUNE STAFF



ALL ABOARD: Campbell Shipping and COB maritime summer camp students enjoy a tour of the Royal Bahamas Defence Force Base at Coral Harbour yesterday.

• SEE PAGE NINE

REPORTS SAY BAHAMIAN BOY DROWNS ON FLORIDA VACATION

By AVA TURNQUEST
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US MEDIA reports are claiming a Bahamian boy has drowned while on summer vacation in Florida, however foreign affairs officials could not confirm the death yesterday.

According to reports, seven-year-old Carrington

Clarke drowned during a July 4 family gathering at a Fort Lauderdale beach.

Carrington, with three other children, had attempted to swim out to a sand bar when the tragedy occurred shortly before 3.30pm, according to Broward Sheriff's Office spokeswoman Dani Moschella, who was

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DR NOTTAGE: TOO EARLY TO TELL ON DNA'S POLL CHANCES

By TANEKA THOMPSON
Deputy Chief Reporter
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IT is too early to tell whether or not the Democratic National Alliance can harness its surge in popularity and public interest into votes at the polls, said former third party leader Dr Bernard Nottage.

Dr Nottage, who once led

the Coalition for Democratic Reform (CDR), said his party and its candidates also felt as if they had secured a good portion of the public's support but came face to face with the harsh realities of Bahamian politics when the ballots were counted.

"All of our candidates experienced what they

SEE page six

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LOCAL NEWS

ATLANTIS HOSTS PIRATES IN PARADISE

AHOY MATEY! Guests of Atlantis were treated to a good ol' swashbuckling time Monday as the Atlantis waterscape from the Royal Walk through the Royal, Mayan Temple and Dig Decks were transformed into the largest spectacle ever for a 4th of July celebration.

Aye, "Pirates in Paradise" it was, complete with pirates and lasses, carnival-styled games and prizes, delicious food and beverage treats, a live DJ and yes, of course, fireworks.

Aura's Candy Cane Girls, adorned in red, white and blue, also made an appearance to spread some Independence cheer to delighted guests.

Hundreds turned out and filled the decks for what can only be dubbed a overwhelmingly successful.



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COAST GUARD SENDS HOME 122 HAITIAN AND CUBAN BOATERS

MIAMI Associated Press

THE US Coast Guard has returned more than 120 Cuban and Haitian migrants to their Caribbean homelands.

The Coast Guard says 82 Haitians were aboard a 40-foot sailing vessel intercepted Friday northwest of Great Inagua, Bahamas. They were all returned Monday to Cap-Haitien, Haiti.

Fifteen Cuban migrants were returned Monday to Bahia de Cabanas, Cuba. The Coast Guard says they were picked up at sea in three separate interdictions since Thursday.

Another 25 Cuban migrants were repatriated Sunday.

A Coast Guard vessel picked them up Wednesday after a Coast Guard aircraft spotted their vessel south of Key West.

Meanwhile seven rafters rescued Friday by a Royal Caribbean cruise ship returning to Port Everglades remain in Coast Guard custody.

They are expected to be repatriated later this week.

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LOCAL NEWS

COMMERCIAL SHARK FISHING BANNED!

By MEGAN REYNOLDS
Tribune Staff Reporter
mreynolds@tribunemedia.net

COMMERCIAL shark fishing has been banned in the Bahamas following a 10-month campaign to protect the essential apex predators in the shark diving capital of the world.

Minister of Agriculture and Marine Resources Larry Cartwright signed off on the legislation prohibiting commercial shark fishing in approximately 630,00 sq km (243,244 sq miles) of the country's waters as well as the sale, importation and export of shark products at a press conference in the British Colonial Hilton yesterday.

The government increased shark-fishing fines from \$3,000 to \$5,000, announced Deputy Prime Minister Brent Symonette, who attended the conference with Minister of the Environment Earl Deveaux.

The Bahamas is the fourth country to ban the commercial fishing of sharks after Palau, the Maldives and Honduras, and director of global shark conservation for the Pew Environment Group Matt Rand said he hopes the move will inspire others in the region.

Shark tourism generates \$78 million a year, and has contributed \$800 million for the Bahamian economy over the last 20 years.

The healthy shark population is attributed to the ban on onshore fishing gear in 1993, and lack of commercial shark fishing to date.

But when a seafood export company in Andros told *The Tribune* it planned to export shark meat and fins to Hong Kong last September, the Pew Environment Group and Bahamas National Trust (BNT) launched their campaign.

A total of 5,000 Bahamians signed a petition in support of the legislative change to protect sharks, and talks by visiting shark enthusiasts Pierre Yves-Cousteau, scientist and marine biologist Guy Harvey and *Sherman's Lagoon* cartoonist Jim Toomey attracted large crowds.

The result has been, "a magnificent step for global shark conservation



THANK YOU FOR MAKING THE BAHAMAS SAFER FOR SHARKS.

Cartoon designed by Sherman's Lagoon cartoonist Jim Toomey

efforts," Mr Rand said.

"We work on this issue globally trying to save the world's sharks, but there is no place more synonymous with island environments as the Bahamas, it's an icon around the world."

Mr Cartwright said the amendments to the Fisheries Resources (Jurisdiction and Conservation) Act were in keeping with the government's commitment to pursue conservation policies and strategies to safeguard the environment and was in response to calls for strengthened protection of sharks in the Bahamas.

"Sharks are heavily fished in the world's oceans and there is concern that the current levels of fishing, including an increased level of illegal unreported and unregulated fishing, cannot be sustained and will lead to a lapse of many shark stocks," Mr Cartwright said.

Around 73 million sharks are killed annually for their meat and fins, primarily to be served in the expensive

Asian delicacy shark fin soup, but as sharks are slow to reproduce, these 400 million year old predators, critical to the health of reef ecosystems and commercial fisheries, are at risk of becoming extinct.

Mr Cartwright said the department of Marine Resources will enforce the legislation over import and export of shark products, while the Royal Bahamas Defence Force and United States Coast Guard will watch out for lawbreakers at sea.

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Brent Symonette said he did not think the legislation would affect relations with China, nor would the influx of more than 8,000 Chinese workers set to build Baha Mar present an immediate demand for the expensive delicacy shark fin soup.

"There may be a market," he said, "but the overriding concern of the environment is far greater."

140 DRIVERS CITED FOR TRAFFIC INFRACTIONS

IN THE past week police in New Providence cited 140 drivers for various traffic infractions and placed 300 matters before the Traffic Court.

Persons were ticketed for driving unlicensed or uninspected vehicles; driving on a closed street; failing to keep left; parking in a no-parking area and having heavily tinted windows. "The police commend members of the public who continue to adhere to the traffic rules and regulations. Additionally, we wish to encourage members

of the public to be alert to your surroundings and to obey all laws as police will continue with their efforts to make this Bahamas a safer place for all," said press liaison officer Sergeant Chrislyn Skippings.

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AIRCRAFT DEVELOPED PROBLEMS SHORTLY AFTER TAKEOFF

PILOT SURVIVES PLANE CRASH, EXPLOSION

By SANCHESKA BROWN

A PILOT is lucky to be alive today after his plane crashed and exploded in Mangrove Cay, Andros Monday afternoon.

According to Inspector Delvin Major, accident investigator with the Civil Aviation Authority, the Golden Eagle 421 aircraft developed problems shortly after take off.

"The plane took off at 2.30pm and that's when the pilot noticed the engine was on fire. He tried to land back on the runway but because of the speed from takeoff, he couldn't stop in time and the plane ran off the runway into nearby bushes."

The pilot, Jack Dilman of the US, was the sole passenger of the aircraft, which was on its way to Congo Town from Mangrove Cay.

According to Inspector Major, the plane went down shortly after 2.30pm, but no one

noticed until almost two hours later.

"Because the pilot was flying against the wind when the plane went down, even after it exploded, you could not see the smoke from the fire because it drifted in the opposite direction.

"It wasn't until another aircraft was about to take off at 4.30pm that the pilot noticed a man walking on the runway."

Mr Major said luckily, the pilot was able to get out of the plane before it exploded, but passed out just after managing to escape.

The aircraft was completely destroyed, however the pilot later woke up and walked away with only minor injuries.

He was airlifted to Doctors Hospital in New Providence where he was treated and discharged.

A team of investigators are still in Andros gathering more information about the crash.

With the nearing holiday

weekend, Mr Major took the opportunity to remind Bahamians to use only authorised charters for holiday travel. He said the aviation department would be "proactive" this holiday, and question passengers when they are coming off the planes. He encouraged passengers not to lie to the investigators.

"We want to reiterate the same message we have been saying all along, please ensure you use the services of legitimate operators. These legitimate operators we can attest to the fact that they have proper training, proper maintenance, and proper oversight from our department. The unauthorised operators, we cannot attest to any of that.

Passengers should request to see official documentation, such as an air operators certificate, a pilot license and pilot medical certificate, which should be no more than one year old for a commercial pilot.

COURT NEWS

APPEAL BY MAN IN FEUD OVER ASSETS EXPECTED IN COURT OF APPEAL NEXT WEEK

AN appeal by one of two Israeli brothers locked in a long-standing feud over the division of millions in assets is expected to be heard in the Court of Appeal next week.

The appellate court has set aside July 13 and 14 to hear an appeal brought on behalf of Rami Weisfisch.

He is reportedly seeking a stay of proceedings in the Supreme Court. He is also appealing the lower court's decision to set aside a court-appointed accountant's earlier reckoning of what the distribution of the brothers' profits should be and contends that Justice Stephen Isaacs should be prevented from proceeding any further with the case because of bias, according to reports in the publication *Metal Bulletin*.

Rami's brother Amir has lodged an applica-

tion to have a receiver appointed to run the assets of the trust that owns SFP Metals, a London-based cobalt trading company.

Amir is reportedly also seeking to have attorney Philip "Brave" Davis replaced as the trustee of the APW Trust by a court-appointed receiver.

The brothers' dispute was thrust into the spotlight two years ago when it was revealed during a hearing before then Senior Justice Anita Allen that Justice John Lyons had been dating the sister of an accountant he had appointed to provide a forensic accounting report of the \$100 million in dispute. Justice Lyons subsequently resigned.

The Court of Appeal also ruled that then Senior Justice Allen, who now serves as the appellate court president, should recuse herself from hearing the case.

GRAND CAY RESIDENTS 'ADVISED TO CONSERVE WATER'

By AVA TURNQUEST
Tribune Staff Reporter
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GRAND Cay residents were advised to conserve water today as Water and Sewerage Corporation servicemen work to repair a malfunctioning pump.

The corporation explained the circumstances leading up to the low pressure and supply inconsistency experienced on the northern Abaco cay since Monday, in a press statement yesterday.

According to the statement, an unusual sound was heard coming from the high pressure

pump at the cay's reverse osmosis water plant at around 3am.

The statement read: "In an effort to be proactive, and avoid any damage to the pump it was turned off.

"As is typical of these scenarios, it is industrial practice to reduce the pressures and levels of service to customers in an effort to conserve water.

During this period, consumers at higher elevations, or at the end of the system may experience reduced levels of service, especially during peak hours."

The corporation advised that

water tank levels were being closely monitored to ensure there is adequate water supply to accommodate morning peak hours; however, residents in affected areas were advised to conserve water yesterday evening.

It was also noted that the plant had been serviced last week.

The statement added: "As soon as further information is available regarding the nature of the equipment failure and the anticipated repair time, this information will be shared with our customers and the general public."

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Hezbollah poised to ride out indictments

BEIRUT — In a country with a history of scores left unsettled, Hezbollah is in a strong position to ride out an indictment accusing a high-ranking member of one of the most dramatic political assassinations in the Middle East.

The Shiite militant group has spent the past year laying the groundwork for thwarting any move to implement the all-but-inevitable indictment in the 2005 murder of former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri. It has warned to "cut off the hand" of anyone who tries to arrest its members and repeatedly cast doubt on the tribunal's investigation.

The work appears to have paid off. Since the Netherlands-based court released the indictments Thursday, there has been no real sign that Lebanese authorities are willing to arrest the four suspects, including Hezbollah militant Mustafa Badreddine. To do so, they would have to directly confront the Iran- and Syria-backed militant group that is firmly in control of the Lebanese state.

Hezbollah leader Sheik Hassan Nasrallah planned a speech Saturday to address the indictment.

The most prominent of the four people named in the indictment is Badreddine, who appears to have a storied history of militancy. He is suspected of building the powerful bomb that blew up the U.S. Marine barracks in Beirut in 1983, killing 241 Americans, mostly Marines, according to a federal law enforcement official and a book "Jawbreaker," by Gary Bernsten, a former official who ran the Hezbollah task force at the CIA.

He also is the brother-in-law of the late Hezbollah military commander Imad Mughniyeh and is suspected of involvement in the 1983 bombings of the U.S. and French embassies in Kuwait that killed five people.

Hezbollah has always had serious muscle, boasting a guerrilla force that is better armed and stronger than the national army.

But the group has amassed unprecedented political clout in the government, having toppled the previous administration in January when then-Prime Minister Saad Hariri — the slain man's son — refused to renounce the tribunal investigating his father's death.

The new premier, Najib Mikati, was Hezbollah's pick for the post. He issued a vague promise Thursday that Lebanon would respect international resolutions as long as they did not threaten the civil peace.

The ambiguous wording leaves ample room to brush aside the arrest warrants if street battles are looming. The Cabinet is packed with Hezbollah allies, so there is little enthusiasm within the current leadership

to press forward with the case.

And the indictments do indeed threaten to ignite fresh violence in Lebanon. In the six years since Hariri's death, the investigation has sharpened the country's sectarian divisions — Rafik Hariri was one of Lebanon's most powerful Sunni leaders, while Hezbollah is a Shiite group. It has also heightened other intractable debates, including the question of the role of Hezbollah — and its vast arsenal, which opponents want dismantled.

Walid Jumblatt, a Hezbollah ally and leader of the tiny Druse sect, warned Friday that the indictments could lead to new civil strife in Lebanon and painted the case as a matter of justice versus stability.

"As much as justice is important for the martyrs and the wounded, so too civil peace and stability is the hoped-for future," said Jumblatt, whose own father was a victim of a political assassination in Lebanon and who was once an ardent supporter of the tribunal before switching alliances. "Civil peace is more important than anything else."

He pointed to widespread fears that the case could further divide the country, which has been recovering from decades of bloodshed, including a 15-year civil war that ended in 1990 and more recent sectarian battles.

The younger Hariri and his allies, now relegated to the opposition, and the international court will likely push for action against the four. But there is little they can do to force the government to do so.

Lebanese authorities have until the end of July to serve the indictments on suspects or execute arrest warrants. If they fail, the court's recourse is to publish the indictment. Details in the indictment about the investigation into the killing — so far kept under wraps — might in theory prove embarrassing to Hezbollah, but the group is unlikely to be severely hurt by them.

While Jumblatt appeared to be offering a stark choice — either turn a blind eye to a dastardly crime, or run the risk of chaos — Hezbollah's leader has taken another tack.

Nasrallah has worked tirelessly to convince the Lebanese that the tribunal is not fit to deliver justice. For more than a year, he has gone on a media offensive against the tribunal, taking nearly every opportunity to call it biased, politicized and a tool of arch-enemy Israel.

He also said early on that he knew Hezbollah would be accused of the crime, a pre-emptive strike that dampened the impact of Thursday's indictment and bolstered his credentials as the man in charge in Lebanon.

(This article was written by Elizabeth A. Kennedy, Associated Press chief of bureau for Syria and Lebanon).

I beseech PLP supporters to stop labelling Grand Bahamians stupid

EDITOR, The Tribune.

Would you please print this letter in your prestigious daily. Thank you.

I am writing in reference to several PLP supporters who have a habit of calling in to the various radio talk shows in New Providence to berate Grand Bahamians for supporting the Free National Movement in the 2007 general election.

These chronic callers appear to be very incensed at Grand Bahamians for giving the FNM five seats in the last election.

It cannot be doubted, however, that without Grand Bahama's support in 2007, the FNM would've still been in opposition.

Grand Bahama gave to the FNM the Eight Mile Rock, Lucaya, Pineridge, Marco City and High Rock constituencies. The Progressive Liberal Party was able to hold on to the West End and Bimini constituency.

The FNM took away the Marco City and Pineridge constituencies from the PLP in 2007. Marco City was represented by Freeport attorney Pleasant Bridgewater, and the Pineridge constituency was represented by Ann Percentie-Russell.

Both of them won those seats in 2002. Ann Percentie-Russell shocked the political world by defeating C A Smith. Pleasant Bridgewater defeated Freeport attorney David Thompson.

The fact that Pleasant Bridgewater and Ann Percentie-Russell could come into FNM country and defeat two seasoned FNM parliamentarians is an indication that Grand Bahamians are not as loyal to the FNM as some have made them out to be.

The hue and cry from several of these PLP supporters in Nassau who love to call in to the radio talk shows is that the economy in Grand Bahama was vibrant when the FNM came to power in 2007. A few of them have even stated that Freeport's economy went into a recession because of PM Ingraham's stop, review and cancel policy.

According to one of the callers who appeared to be a dyed in the wool supporter of the PLP, Grand Bahamians are getting their just deserts. One very old lady also called in to a popular radio talk show and said that Grand Bahamians are too stupid for voting for the FNM; and that it is good that we are going through a recession. According to her, we should have supported the PLP instead.

One other PLP supporter called in to a radio talk show and criticised the FNM for not attracting any major foreign investor to Grand Bahama. He stated that the FNM has done nothing in "FNM country" during the last four years; and that the PLP gave to Grand Bahama the Ginn Development.

There is really no need for me to explain what Grand Bahama's economic dilemma is. We all know what is going on here in Grand Bahama. But suffice to say, Grand Bahama has been in a recession now for over ten years. This just didn't happen in 2007. If those PLP supporters really believe that Grand Bahama's economy went into a recession in May of 2007, then they are either living on the moon, or they are just being naive. Two-thousand-seven was the year the FNM defeated the PLP. That is why these rabid PLP supporters are always saying that was the year that Grand

LETTERS

letters@tribunemedia.net

Bahama went into a recession.

In regards to the Ginn Development that these people love to credit the PLP for. I would like for them to travel to this island and go drive up West End and take a good, hard look at what is happening at that site.

That development has come to a virtual standstill.

There is hardly anything happening up there. Further, I have a relative who works for Ginn. She told another relative of mine that she is working only two or three days a week. It is obvious to all sensible Grand Bahamians that the Ginn Development has not lived up to all the hype.

The people of New Providence need to know what is going on at Ginn. I am often given the impression that the people from Nassau really believe that the Ginn Development is a phenomenal success.

However, the way things are going on right now with that project, I don't even think that the PLP would want to be mentioned in the same breath with Ginn. The people who are saying that Ginn is doing well are simply lying through their teeth.

As to the PLP supporters in Nassau who love to berate Grand Bahamians for voting for the FNM in 2007. When I last checked, this country was still considered to be a democracy.

If Grand Bahamians want to vote for the FNM, CDR, PDP, BDM, NDP, DNA or the Workers' Party then that's their constitutional rights. That's their business. I take grave exception to anyone who would want to berate a citizen for exercising his right to vote for whomever he believes is best suited to run this nation. Sir Lynden had rep-

resented the constituency of South Andros for 25 years. When the FNM came to power in August of 1992, they discovered that the people of South Andros were still living in the Dark Ages. However, no one, to the best of my knowledge, had ever called in to a radio talk show and berated them for supporting the father of the nation for a quarter of a century.

Furthermore, we here in Grand Bahama had given the PLP an opportunity to fix our broken economy in 2002. The only major investor that they had attracted to this island was Ginn. Ginn, as I have already noted, has not lived up to the hype. Moreover, we here in Grand Bahama thought that the FNM would have resuscitated the economy. But that has not happened, owing to the economic meltdown of the economy in the United States.

You cannot blame us for trying the FNM. Let us bear in mind that Grand Bahama's economy had experienced an economic boom during the mid to late nineties under the FNM. We were hoping that the FNM could have done the same thing again for us.

Therefore, I beseech the PLP supporters in New Providence to stop calling Grand Bahamians stupid for voting FNM in 2007. Rather than worry about who we support at the polls, try to do something about all those murders that are occurring every other day in Nassau.

I understand that approximately 60 murders have been committed so far in Nassau for 2011.

If anything call the ruthless murderers who are terrorising Nassau, stupid.

But please don't insult law-abiding Grand Bahamians for exercising their constitutional rights. Grand Bahamians are not stupid. Thank you!

KEVIN EVANS
Freeport, Grand Bahama,
June 30, 2011.

OPEN YOUR EYES, WE MIGHT BE LOSING 'THE CAVES'

EDITOR, The Tribune.

Dear Friends,
Please open your eyes and see that as Bahamians, we might be losing one of our historic places, The Caves on West Bay Street, near Blake Road.

These Caves, dark and mysterious, hundreds of years ago, were once the homes of Arawak Indians, and it is also written that the "Pirates of Nassau" made these chambers their dwelling places. They are a part of our history.

In this 38th year of Independence, we cannot allow persons who were given permission to build on the top of our national treasure to own them.

In the United States, "The Grand Canyon", "The North Carolina Historic Latta Plantation", "The Presidential Log Cabin", etc are protected historical areas. We have so little to be proud of, and the Caves West Bay Street is one of the "little."

The condo owners have started to build steps down the historic rocks. Come on Bahamians, we must stop this. This is our Bahamas to be preserved for future generations.

These foreigners are disrespectful to our country and culture, and are testing us to the limit. The condo people, I understand had promised to beautify this area when construction was completed, but instead the cave area is overgrown with weeds and is "smelly". Visitors are stopping to take pictures on their way to the airport.

I was embarrassed when I took students there while on a historic tour on Saturday past.

And if our government has sold "The Caves" to an investor who will eventually "cement" them shut until the end of time, I say to you all, don't let this happen. Go and look for yourselves.

Let's write letters and call the "Talk Shows" until we find out who actually owns "The Caves."

The Bahamian people or the condo owners? The persons who allowed this construction on the top of this historic place should be "shame" of themselves.

VERA CHASE
Writer,
Published Author
Researcher of
Bahamian History
Concerned Citizen
of The Bahamas
Nassau,
July 5, 2011.

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LOCAL NEWS

POLICE NEWS

HANDGUN AND AMMUNITION RECOVERED

POLICE recovered a handgun and ammunition from a home in Pinewood Gardens. According to police reports, officers from the East Street South Police Station went to a bushy area at Bamboo Boulevard, Pinewood Gardens around 5.45 pm Monday where they discovered the weapon with a quantity of ammunition.

Nearly an hour later, officers from the Mobile Division made a similar discovery.

Police said that at 6.40 pm Monday, officers acting on a tip went into bushes at the rear of a residence on Darling Lane off Wulff Road where they discovered a handgun.

No one was arrested in either incident, however investigations continue.

A 49-year-old man of Step Street was arrested Monday night after he was found in possession of cocaine.

The man was arrested by officers of the Rapid Strike operation sometime at 8pm at Step Street.

Police investigations continue.

A 20-year-old man who was turned into police by a family member is now assisting officers with the investigation into a recent murder.

Police reports indicate that two men got into a fight while at Windsor Lane and Market Street and at some point one of the men was stabbed.

The incident occurred around 5pm Sunday. Paramedics arrived and pronounced the victim dead at the scene. Police investigations continue.

TROPICAL EXTERMINATORS FOR PEST PROBLEMS
PHONE: 322-2157

THE NEWLY PAVED intersection of Baillou Hill Road, Chapel and Meadow Streets.

THE government said its \$120 million New Providence Road Improvement and Infrastructure Project is making "steady" progress.

The project aims to improve the road network by constructing new road corridors, reconstructing existing road corridors and improving major intersections.

The works have been heavily criticised by merchants in some areas, who say their businesses have suffered because of lengthy road closures, but the government insists many Bahamians are already benefiting from new and improved roads.

In a statement issued yesterday, the government noted that so far:

- The corner of East Street and Robinson Road has been resurfaced, beginning at Claridge Road. New traffic signal lights and drainage wells have also been placed at this junction.

- The Wulff Road/Poinciana and Baillou Hill Road junction has been paved. Fleming to Chapel Streets has also been paved.

- New traffic lights have been installed at the Robinson and Claridge Road junction and are in the process of being attached to the BEC grid. Sidewalks, pedestrian crossings and bus stops are also planned for this area.

- Traffic is flowing on the new lanes that have been built on East Street. The improvements to this corridor also include curbing, street light columns and sidewalks. Underground drainage infrastructure has been installed on both sides of the road.



NEW TRAFFIC LIGHTS at the junction of Baillou Hill and Wulff Roads.



SCHOLARSHIPS AWARDED TO GB'S HIGH SCHOOL ACHIEVERS

FREEPORT – Eleven of Grand Bahama's top graduating students have been awarded partial tertiary scholarships under the Top Achiever Programme launched by the Grand Bahama Port Authority.

Instituted in 2009 under the GBPA's "Making it Happen" initiative, the programme is committed to awarding scholarship donations to the top Bahamian graduating student in each high school on Grand Bahama who meets the criteria.

"We are proud to recognise the outstanding achievements of our island's top achievers. Additionally, we want to encourage our young people to obtain necessary skills through higher education, so that they in turn can contribute to our economy," stated GBPA-president, Ian Rolle.

The recipient of the GBPA Top Achiever award at Lucaya International School (LIS) was Frumentia Leon. During commencement exercises at the Pelican Bay Resort, she also received the Salutatorian, English and biology awards.

A previous head girl and valedictorian of Sunland Baptist Academy, some of Frumentia's notable past experiences include travelling to the United Nations Conference in England for 10 days for the Oxford IB Study Course. A descriptive assessment by her teachers depicts her as positive, resilient, intelligent, and curious.

"Frumentia displays great work ethics, always strives to improve and is an effort learner," they added. Her peers consider her to be an over-achiever, humble, kind, intelligent and old-fashioned.

Walking away with the GBPA Top Achiever award at Bishop Michael Eldon High School's (BMES) graduation was Brandi Wheeler.

The diminutive scholar was also the recipient of six BJs, eight BGCSEs and received a SAT score of 1730.

Brandi plans to further her studies at Georgia Southern University.

The 71 BMES graduates were addressed by Deputy Commissioner of Police, Quinn McCartney, who offered four pieces of meaningful advice: Have sight of your destination; make use of the weapons you possess; remain focused; and celebrate each milestone.

Daniel McKinney, valedictorian and head Boy at the Grand Bahama Academy of Seventh-day Adventists, captured a slew of awards during graduation exercises held at Our Lucaya Resort Convention Centre. In a moving valedictorian's address, he expressed how years of bullying and teasing because of his love of books, led to him becoming rebellious and withdrawn at school. However, due to strong faith and help from others, he chose to reject negativity and pursue a course of excellence.

"In life, we will all face many obstacles and challenges," Daniel said. "But always remember, a journey of 1,000 miles begins with the first step."

Receiving a partial tertiary scholarship as the GBPA Top Achiever, Daniel walked away with numerous other achievements including subject



LUCAYAN INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL graduate, Frumentia Leon (right) proudly accepts a GBPA Top Achiever scholarship from director of GBPA community relations Geneva Rutherford.



GENEVA RUTHERFORD (right) presents Brandi Wheeler with the Top Achiever award for Bishop Michael Eldon High School.



DANIEL MCKINNEY, head boy, Grand Bahama Academy (left) accepts his Top Achiever GBPA scholarship from Geneva Rutherford.

awards for: History, Mathematics, Chemistry, Physics, Combined Science/Biology, Spanish, and the Most Outstanding Student Academically. He also received the second highest GPA amongst graduating high school students on Grand Bahama.

These three recent graduates now join an elite group of top graduating local achievers who've received GBPA scholarship donations. In addition, more than 90 students are currently pursuing tertiary-level studies as Port Authority scholarship recipients.

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LOCAL NEWS

MAN IN CRITICAL CONDITION AFTER ANOTHER GARDEN VILLAS SHOOTING

FROM page one

Garden Villas is already a known hot-spot for criminal activity, including drug trafficking, gambling and a number of other illegal businesses, and police are worried the trend is worsening.

A group of senior officers held a walkabout in the area following the earlier shootings and were told by concerned residents the criminal activity is caused by "outsiders" who come into the community and create mayhem.

The latest victim was shot at around 2am on Tuesday at Weddell Avenue, police reported.

Assistant Superintendent Loretta Mackey said detectives are continuing their investigations into the matter.

According to initial reports, the victim was attending an event in the area on Monday evening when he was shot in the upper right side. He was rushed to the Rand Memorial Hospital for treatment.

On March 9, Patrick Russell, 42, of Lewis Yard, was discovered dead in a car on Weddell Avenue.

Russell had sustained multiple gunshot wounds and was found slumped in the driver's seat of his gold-coloured Nissan Maxima.

Two months later, 31-year-old Kiano Javier Martinborough was discovered shot in the head.

Sonny Anopolis, 29, was shot on May 17 at Weddell Avenue. He was airlifted to the Princess Margaret Hospital where he died two weeks later.

No one has been arrested in connection with the earlier shootings or this latest case, and police are appealing to anyone with information that might assist with the investigations to call 911, 350-3107/8 or the Central Detective Unit at 352-9774/5.

Dr Nottage: too early to tell on DNA's poll chances



DR BERNARD NOTTAGE

FROM page one

thought was support from the electorate. Obviously there was a range of responses but we were very optimistic, not that we could win the government, but that we could win a number of seats. As it turned out at the end of the day we did not. So the day of (results) was very disappointing for us. But one of these days, who knows it can happen," the MP told *The Tribune*.

"We did have enthusiastic support, I think that Mr McCartney's party also seems to be enjoying very enthusiastic support. I think however there are realities of politics in the Bahamas and I think that people in the country today generally do want some change and do appear to want fresh faces and the DNA certainly represents that at the present time.

"Whether that will translate into

votes on election day is a different issue. For that I think you have to examine the situation as it exists today. You also have to look at our history of third parties in elections in the Bahamas where very often third party members are disappointed in the results."

However, the Bain and Grants Town MP conceded that many persons – even some in his constituency – want "change" from the status quo of Bahamian politics, a selling point the DNA is attempting to capitalise on.

"In my particular area there are some persons who are indicating that they are looking at that party but I wouldn't say as of yet that it's been overwhelming. I haven't seen any release of a candidate for the (Bain & Grants Town) area. Once that happens we will see what the response is.

"I think it's a little too early to pass a verdict on that because we have to see how things play out over the next sev-

eral months. I think a lot is going to depend on when the election is, the conditions of the country at the time of the election but I think that any third party at any stage in our country having regard to the core supporters of the two (major) political parties that have been around for a long time.

"Initially in any case the results are not likely to be very positive but I wouldn't declare a position on that right now, we'll see how things work out."

Dr Nottage left the now-opposition Progressive Liberal Party before the 2002 general election and formed the CDR.

His party ran a nearly full slate of candidates, however they did miserably at the polls.

He soon rejoined the PLP, which won that election, and was appointed minister of health in the Christie administration.

Reports say Bahamian boy drowns on Florida vacation

FROM page one

quoted in a Sun Sentinel article.

Only one child – an 11-year-old girl – was able to reach the sand bar, according to Moschella, who estimated it to be about 50 yards from the shore. A lifeguard noticed the other three children struggling in the water.

The Sun Sentinel article reports: "Adults jumped in to rescue the children, but

Carrington slipped under water, and the adults lost sight of him. About 10 to 15 minutes later, a BSO helicopter located him about 100 yards south of where he was last seen.

"A Lauderdale-by-the-Sea volunteer firefighter on a personal watercraft and lifeguards pulled him from the water. Paramedics performed CPR."

Carrington was pronounced dead at Holy Cross

Hospital shortly before 4.30pm.

CBS 12 News, who also carried the story, listed the other young swimmer's ages as 13 and 14.

The entire group was said to include three adults and eight children.

Lifeguards, volunteer firefighters and American Medical Response workers were already at the beach, according to Moschella, as the city had planned a rescue

demonstration that included a simulated drowning.

The Sun-Sentinel identified Carrington's uncle as Omar Ferguson, of Fort Lauderdale. It was believed the young boy had just travelled to the US with his brother on Sunday.

According to the article, Mr Ferguson said the family had only been at the beach about 20 minutes before Carrington went into the water.

Mr Ferguson said his nephew stayed with him every summer, and he described Carrington as a "pretty good" swimmer for his age.

"He was a beautiful boy. He wanted to grow up to be a lawyer. He loved to swim," said Mr Ferguson.

Up to press time, the Broward Medical Examiner's Office had not yet determined the cause of death.

Foreign Affairs Perma-

nent Secretary Dr Patricia Rodgers could not confirm the report yesterday as the consular division had not received any information concerning the matter.

CAR SCAM USING DEAD PEOPLE

FROM page one

loaded onto a vessel. These containers could then be driven on to, and off a vessel at any given point if the right Customs officer was in on the deal. It's as simple as that," another source said.

So far to date, it has been suggested that there are at least 85 persons who could have been affected by this latest scam which is reported to include a number of high end vehicles, including Mercedes, Lexus, Jaguars, BMWs and other high-end vehicles.

The Tribune will continue with its investigation into this matter.

MAN 'STABLE' IN HOSPITAL AFTER BEING STRUCK BY CAR

By DENISE MAYCOCK
Tribune Freeport Reporter
dmaycock@tribunemedia.net

FREEPORT – A pedestrian who was struck by a car on Queens Highway on Monday evening is in stable condition in hospital.

Asst Supt Loretta Mackey reported that the 22-year-old Eight Mile Rock man was walking around 11.40pm when the accident occurred near Polymers International.

The victim was taken to the Rand Memorial Hospital for treatment.

The driver, a 53-year-old male resident of Pinder's Point, is assisting police with their investigation.

Ms Mackey appealed to motorists to drive with extreme caution at all times.

"We want to take this opportunity to remind the motoring public to pay attention to the speed limit, pedestrian crossings, and stop signs," she said.

Ms Mackey said drivers should avoid distractions, such as talking on cell phones or fiddling with the radio.

She added that pedestrians should walk on the right hand side of the road, facing on-coming traffic.

They should also wear light-coloured or florescent clothing when walking late at night or during the early morning, she said.



Share your news

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LOCAL NEWS

THESE MEN worked together to install a water heater attached to a solar panel on top of a roof. The solar panel was able to produce hot water in the home, which is not connected to the BEC grid.



THOSE WHO ATTENDED a training session put into practice what they learned. A solar panel has been installed on the roof of a government built home in order to test the National Energy Plan. Solar panels may become a part of the building code of Bahamian homes.



GOVERNMENT PROMOTES SOLAR PANELS

ENERGY SOLUTIONS

BLACKOUTS resulting from electrical load shedding has the government taking the solutions provided in the National Energy Policy seriously.

And, the residual effect of global climate change is teaching Bahamas Electricity Corporation (BEC) employees a hands-on lesson about why Bahamians are being encouraged to buy solar photovoltaic panels.

"The majority or the largest consumer of petroleum products in the Bahamas is BEC... our electrical companies. And so we want to reduce the demand on them. About 40 per cent of the energy they produce are primarily to households for residential use," said Phenton Neymour, Minister of State for the Environment.

"If we could lower their demand, we could in fact reduce the amount of petroleum products we import into the Bahamas and at the same time assist in addressing climate change in the region.

"Essentially, climate change in the Bahamas is a matter of life and death because 80 per cent of the Bahamas is within 10 feet of sea level. If sea level rises significantly, the majority of our land will be under it. I tell people regularly, if you're talking about 10 feet of sea level, that's all of the South Beach constituency," he said.

According to Mr Neymour, 99 per cent of the Bahamas' energy is drawn from petroleum – from diesel to heavy fuel oils.

Recently, the price of oil has been rising and is not expected to fall significantly. The Ministry of

the Environment is encouraging Bahamians to minimise their usage of petroleum products in the Bahamas.

"It is time that the Bahamas addresses energy consumption seriously. We are an archipelago and BEC has 30 plants throughout the Bahamas, which is very costly to maintain.

"So if we can reduce the amount of energy they have to produce, we also help ourselves," said Mr Neymour.

He said recent studies recognised the great potential for renewable energy in the areas of wind and solar technology and that the Bahamas is now moving forward into other forms of energy.

It was noted that between the rising cost of importing oil and the rising temperature of the Earth's surface, the Bahamas is "between a rock and a hard place", and Bahamians are encouraged to ease the electrical demand placed on BEC.

"What is most important is to get the greatest impact to the average Bahamian," said Mr Neymour. "The majority of our bill, about 30 per cent of it, is estimated to be as a result of our water heaters. If we can eliminate that cost, or minimise that cost to individuals, we are significantly helping Bahamians in terms of reducing their expenses and improving their lives in the future," he said.

"We brought in 134 solar water heaters. Some of them will be installed in government subdivisions. So we want to begin this process to demonstrate how much



INSTALLING a solar panel.

we can save. There are over 60,000 residential homes in New Providence who can benefit from solar

water heaters and it's estimated they will pay for themselves within two to three years, so we want

you also to promote solar water heaters and solar systems throughout the Bahamas."



Antoine Wallace

Cleveland A. Williams

Candace Bostwick

AS the country battles the problems of homicides, drug abuse and domestic violence the Nassau City Opera will take on these themes and more in their production of Porgy and Bess.

The Opera will present the celebrated drama at the Rainforest Theatre on July 7, 9 and 10 - on the occasion of the Bahamas' 38th anniversary of Independence.

This week will mark the first time that the groundbreaking opera will be performed locally since its premiered in New York in 1935.

"It is a fantastic work," said Dr Cleveland Williams, director and producer of the show. "The themes that run through Porgy and Bess are the themes that run in the tapestry of our country. One is that of the abuse of (a) woman, Bess. Others are love and acceptance and murder."

Dr Williams noted the large number of homicides recorded for the year so far.

"Today, if you average the number of murders taking place, they average 10 per month," he said.

Dr Williams believed Porgy and Bess was an appropriate work to bring to the Bahamas after his group successfully staged another black opera – Treemonisha – in 2009 for the 36th anniversary of Independence.

Porgy and Bess is the musical work of George Gershwin who wrote the opera based on the Gullah people, who are found in large numbers now in South

Carolina and have successfully retained their strong African traditions and culture, Dr Williams explained. Bahamian are descendants of the Gullah people, some believe.

The story hinges on the relationship between disabled beggar Porgy and a prostitute, Bess, who he fights to rescue from the clutches of her abusive lover, Crown.

Dr Williams pointed out the artistic and logistic complexity of the production, which includes a cast of more than 50 singers. Many roles have been double cast in case of illness or another emergency and performances will feature various singers. In addition, Nassau City Opera has added 14 musicians from Canada to join its Bahamian orchestra of retired police musicians for the performances.

"This is a massive undertaking, especially when you look at Porgy and Bess being performed by opera houses all over the world," he said.

The production features Antoine Wallace and Dr Williams as Porgy; Candace Bostwick and Kali Wilder as Bess; Nikita Thompson Wells, Tammie Woods and Annette Dorsett as Serena.

Lisa Fritz Charles and Portia Barnett as Clara; Esther Zonicle Vincent as Annie; Virginia Zonicle as Maria; Charles Zonicle, the Undertaker; Darrell Hurtson as Crown; Wilfred Adderley and Scott Adderley as Sporting Life and Allan Butler as Fraizier.

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Bahamas branches out with new Forestry Act

By LARRY SMITH

EVER since the pine forests of the Bahamas were logged during the first 60 or so years of the last century, their ultimate survival has been in jeopardy due to conflicts with agricultural and commercial development. But a new Forestry Act passed last year could change that.

This landmark legislation created a small Forestry Unit within the Ministry of the Environment that is charged with managing this important natural resource. And for the first time in many decades, a sawmill is operating again on Abaco.

The Forestry Unit has signed an agreement with a local company called Lindar Industries for the harvesting of pine trees on Abaco to make finished lumber, initially for the local market. Lindar is owned by Rob Roman, a Canadian engineer with a background in mining and forestry who is married to a Bahamian.

He is building an \$800,000 sawmill south of Marsh Harbour to process up to 25,000 board feet of lumber every few weeks, with a forecasted production of one million board feet in 2012. By the end of this year the mill expects to employ 20 people directly while creating another 45 indirect jobs. Regular production of flooring, ceiling bead board, wall paneling, mouldings and trim is expected to begin by the end of September.

"Our pine trees are among the fastest growing in the



TOUGH CALL
LARRY SMITH

world," according to the new Forestry Director, Chris Russell. "They can also produce a uniquely hard and attractive lumber that is highly resistant to termites. This lumber was used extensively for the construction of Bahamian homes in earlier years."

Pine trees of various sizes will be systematically selected for harvesting as thinnings, Russell told me, with the retention of the better quality trees as the future crop suitably spaced on a sawlog rotation.

Resource

"The better quality logs will be used for construction lumber and high-value timber products. Logs of lesser quality will be converted to charcoal, mulch and fence posts. Lindar Industries is partnering with the Ministry of the Environment to ensure responsible stewardship of the forest resource to support a sustainable lumber industry."

For decades, conservationists have called for legislation to govern forest resources in order to ensure their long-term survival. Forests are important for the protection of groundwater resources, maintenance of the hydrological cycle, soil conservation, and biodiver-

sity protection.

When regulations are implemented this year, the Forestry Act will create a new framework for the sustainable use of Bahamian forests. And the Forestry Unit will set fees and process applications for the harvesting of forest produce, as well as supervise the exploitation, transportation, milling and selling of forest produce by the government or the private sector.

The Forestry Unit will be required to prepare a national forest plan every five years, to detail the contribution of forests to the national economy, including timber and water production. Under the Act, the Environment Ministry may declare any Crown land to be a Forest Reserve, a Protected Forest or a Conservation Forest.

A Forest Reserve is to be managed as a permanent forest estate for the sustainable utilization of timber and non-timber forest produce. A Protected Forest is to be managed as a Forest Reserve until the land is required for other purposes. A Conservation Forest is to be managed strictly for the preservation of its unique natural resources and biological diversity.

Forest Reserves and Conservation Forests represent

the highest level of protection, with only Parliament having the authority to alter their status. Forest Reserves and Protected Forests can be logged sustainably using best management practices. The land use of Protected Forests can be changed by ministerial order, subject to an environmental impact assessment.

The Forestry Unit will also establish nurseries to help maintain forests and forest crops. A small research centre is being set up at Adelaide for this purpose. Cutting of trees and roads in the various forest estates will be limited by regulation, and plans and funding for replanting or restocking an area must be in place before any timber is harvested. Penalties for breach of the Act's regulations include fines of up to \$25,000 and two years imprisonment.

The Director of Forestry will work with the Bahamas National Trust to implement the new Forestry Act. The BNT will administer a special annual budget to allow its park wardens to act as forest officers on Abaco, Andros, Grand Bahama and New Providence. The Forestry Unit is presently reviewing applications for the sustainable harvesting of pine timber in several forest areas, hoping to generate revenue from royalties, leases and license fees.

Since commercial logging ceased here in the late 1960s, thousands of acres of pine forest have been cleared for agriculture and other developments. In the 1980s, when the citrus industry was booming on Abaco, the government intended to put some 80,000 acres of forest lands under cultivation, which would have placed Abaco's remaining forests under serious threat. But the citrus farms were later bankrupted by disease.

The government's seminal 1977 land resources study put this conflict of interest into clearer context: "Although it is inevitable that the acreage of forest land will diminish because of agriculture...it is essential that such encroachment should be carefully controlled." In other words, the study said, destruction of valuable tree crops should only be considered where the benefits are clear and where alternatives have been examined and rejected. The new forestry law codifies this approach for the first time in our history.

According to Environment Minister Earl Deveaux, the biggest conflict

"For decades, conservationists have called for legislation to govern forest resources in order to ensure their long-term survival."

Bahamians face is between development and trees. That is to say, how much coppice, pine forest and mangrove wetlands should be destroyed to build roads, houses, shops, hotels and marinas. The environmental cost of deforestation is a far more critical equation for the future of the Bahamas than the issue of how much land we use to grow corn. In other words, we should stop regarding our forests as mere wastelands.

Since the early settlers of the Bahamas virtually eradicated the most valuable hardwood trees (like Braziletto Mahogany and Cedar), our most productive forests have been the 500,000 acres of pineland on Abaco, Andros, Grand Bahama and New Providence.

License

The first license to log these pine forests was awarded to a Canadian named William Robert Bell in 1900. It allowed the cutting of trees with a diameter greater than seven inches (later reduced to six inches) on all vacant Crown land in south Abaco. The license fee was 100 pounds sterling per annum plus royalties of US\$37.5 cents per 1,000 board feet. There was also a fee of one cent per gallon of turpentine and 10 cents per barrel of rosin produced.

The Bahamas Timber Company was incorporated in 1906 and assigned rights to cut trees on Abaco, Grand Bahama and Andros. Exploitation was by hand, with the removal of logs mainly by light railway, traces of which still exist on Abaco and Grand Bahama. A sawmill for the first area worked on Abaco was built on the coast at Wilson City, not far from where the new BEC power plant stands today.

The loggers later moved to Grand Bahama, building a mill at Pine Ridge in 1944 (where future prime minister Hubert Ingraham was born). Large quantities of pit props were subsequently extracted for use in British coalfields. In 1956 the logging companies agreed to the

conveyance of their lands to the newly formed Grand Bahama Port Authority (Freeport founder Wallace Groves had been previously involved in the timber industry).

Concessions were also granted to Sir Harry Cordeaux and Arthur Sands to cut the pine forest on New Providence in 1923, and a sawmill was built south of Gambier Village near Jack Pond. But this license was never profitable and was relinquished in 1930. The New Providence forests continued to suffer damage from charcoal burners and others removing timber for domestic purposes.

Although charcoal burners also operated on Andros for many years, logging did not begin there until 1947, when a sawmill was established at Stafford Creek. Both pulpwood and telephone poles were exported from Morgan's Bluff on Andros through the late 1960s. In fact, all the logging licensees turned to pulpwood operations from the mid-1950s, resulting in the clear felling of the forest regardless of trunk diameter. Pulpwood was exported from North Riding Point on Grand Bahama and Snake Cay on Abaco.

Revenue yields from these operations were minimal. It is estimated that the overall return per acre per annum for the Abaco operation from 1900 to 1967 was only \$2.78. A minimum of five well-developed trees were left standing in each acre by the loggers to regrow the forest.

Although a draft forestry bill was prepared in the 1950s it was never introduced to parliament. In fact, the 1977 land resources study urged the government to enact forestry legislation "at the earliest appropriate date" to ensure protection, conservation and proper management and exploitation of forest resources.

Well, better late than never.

What do you think?
Send comments to
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Tribune Trivia

Yesterday's Question

Where did BEC customers go to vent their frustrations over recent power cuts?

Yesterday's Answer

On the internet to the BEC Facebook page

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PM RETURNS FROM CARICOM MEETING



PRIME MINISTER Hubert Ingraham is greeted by Minister of National Security Tommy Turnquest at the Lynden Pindling International Airport on July 3, after returning from the CARICOM Heads of Government meeting held in St. Kitts. Also pictured deplaning is Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Affairs Minister Brent Symonette.

BIS photo/Peter Ramsay



CORAL HARBOUR DEFENCE FORCE BASE TOUR

MARITIME SUMMER CAMP

CAMPBELL SHIPPING AND COB MARITIME SUMMER CAMP students spent time yesterday at the Defence Force Base at Coral Harbour. Leading Mechanic Rolle took them on a tour of the base and showed them the daily operations.

Felipé Major/Tribune staff



A LOOK at a mural of the first Defence Force commanders.



A MARINE answers questions.



DOCTOR SAUNDERS shows the students around the sick bay.



INTERNATIONAL NEWS

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OFFER FOR IRAQBAGHDAD
Associated Press

THE WHITE HOUSE is offering to keep up to 10,000 troops in Iraq next year, U.S. officials say, despite opposition from many Iraqis and key Democratic Party allies who demand that President Barack Obama bring home the American military as promised.

Any extension of the military's presence, however, depends on a formal request from Baghdad — which must weigh questions about the readiness of Iraqi security forces against fears of renewed militant attacks and unrest if U.S. soldiers stay beyond the December pullout deadline.

Iraq is not expected to decide until September at the earliest, when the 46,000 U.S. forces left in the country had hoped to start heading home.

Already, though, the White House has worked out options to keep between 8,500 and 10,000 active-duty troops to continue training Iraqi security forces during 2012, according to senior Obama administration and U.S. military officials in interviews with The Associated Press. The figures also were noted by foreign diplomats in Baghdad briefed on the issue.

All spoke on condition of anonymity to frankly discuss the sensitive matter during interviews over the past two weeks.

An email statement Tuesday from White House national security spokesman Tommy Vietor said there currently are "no plans" to keep U.S. troops in Iraq beyond the Dec. 31 withdrawal deadline. But Vietor added that any request by Iraq to keep American forces "would be given serious consideration" by the White House.

Any change in the U.S. military withdrawal timetable in Iraq — after more than eight years and more than 4,450 U.S. military deaths — could open up difficult political confrontations for Obama as pressure builds to close out the Iraq mission and stick to pledges to draw down troops in Afghanistan.

The Senate's top Democrat, Sen. Harry Reid, told the AP that the high cost of keeping U.S. troops in Iraq — given a mounting U.S. debt crisis and Iraq's fledgling security gains — is no longer necessary.

Reid, the Senate majority leader, estimated nearly \$1 trillion has been spent in Iraq since the U.S. invaded in 2003, including \$50 billion this year alone.

"As Iraq becomes increasingly capable, it is time for our own troops to return home by the end of the year and for these precious resources to be directed elsewhere," Reid, Democrat of Nevada, said in the statement. "There is no question that the United States must continue to provide support for the Iraqis as they progress, but now is the time for our military mission to come to a close."

Reid was responding to a request for comment after 15 U.S. soldiers were killed in Iraq in June, mostly by Shiite militias, in the deadliest month for the American military here in two years. It was the first public statement by a top party leader to oppose Obama's policy in Iraq, what is now Operation New Dawn has ironically become a forgotten war," said Ashwin Madia, a former Marine who served in Iraq in 2005-06 and is now interim chairman of VoteVets.org. "That is about to change."

The group has raised millions of dollars for Democratic Party candidates.

LIBYANS WHO
FLED TRIPOLI
DESCRIBE
FURTIVE
PROTESTS

A LIBYAN FLASHES the victory signs in front of a rebel flag aboard a ship in Misrata port, Libya. (AP)

BENGHAZI, Libya
Associated Press

REBEL SYMPATHISERS, driven underground by a security clampdown in Tripoli, have resorted to furtive protests such as writing "No" next to pro-government wall graffiti and releasing balloons with rebel flags attached, according to two Libyans who have escaped the capital.

The two men spoke after reaching the eastern rebel stronghold of Benghazi, offering a rare snapshot of anti-government resistance in the capital. Tripoli residents, fearing regime reprisals, are generally reluctant to speak to foreign reporters based there who can only move with government minders and are almost never allowed access to rebel sympathisers.

Rebels have seized eastern Libya, while Gadhafi clings to much of the rest of the country and is believed to be hunkering down in the capital, his main power base.

Government troops loyal to Gadhafi have stepped up pressure in the past two days near the port city of Misrata and a key western mountain range to try to block rebel fighters from advancing toward Tripoli, rebels said Tuesday. They said at least 11 people were killed in fighting that began late Monday and continued the next day.

Libyan government troops have been unable to retake two main rebel strongholds in the Gadhafi-controlled west — Misrata and several towns in the Nafusa mountain range. The rebels have been trying to break out of these bridgeheads and advance toward Tripoli.

Men speak out after
reaching rebel stronghold

Gadhafi's forces maintain a tight grip on the capital, said Abdulbasit Ouf, a chemical engineer in his 40s who arrived in Benghazi last week on a Red Cross ship from Tripoli, accompanied by his wife and three children.

"The atmosphere is one of fear and paranoia," he said.

During the day, life in the streets appears almost normal, though fuel shortages have left motorists waiting as long as a week to fill up a gas tank, he said. He said he's observed fights between drivers and troops at gas stations, and heard reports of people killed and wounded.

An Associated Press reporter in the capital has seen fuel lines hundreds of cars long. One queue packed with empty taxis and private cars curls from a highway ramp around a major traffic circle in the center of the city. Many gas stations in and around the city appear closed down altogether, with rubble or earthen beams blocking the entrances.

Omran Bukra, the newly appointed energy minister, last week said Libya is now producing just 20,000 barrels of oil per day, a tiny fraction of prewar output.

At night, opposition activists occasionally attack troops and try to snatch their weapons, Ouf said. Bursts of gunfire can be heard throughout the night in Tripoli, but government officials insist it is

mainly supporters firing celebratory shots into the air.

Ahead of Friday noon prayers, security is extremely tight around mosques, traditionally a staging ground for protests in the Arab world. "People are not allowed to gather and only certain mosques are open," Ouf said. "Only loyal imams are allowed to lead prayers and there's always a large number of troops surrounding the mosques ... and snipers on the roofs of every house in the neighborhood."

Rebel sympathisers can't protest openly or in large numbers. From time to time, they release balloons with rebel flags attached or scribble anti-government graffiti, Ouf said.

"Gadhafi's people always paint it over," he said. Protesters have resorted to writing "No" next to pro-Gadhafi wall slogans or marking them with a large "X" because it takes less time than to white-wash them and reduces the risk of being caught, he said.

Ouf said he hasn't spoken to friends or neighbors about his political views, for fear of getting arrested. He said he was automatically considered suspect by regime loyalists because he is originally from Ajdabiya, a town in the rebel-held east. A security officer came to his home in Tripoli every day to question him, he said.

He and his family left

Tripoli late last week, on a Red Cross vessel that carried more than 300 passengers from Tripoli to Benghazi.

Ibrahim al-Hadad, an army officer from Benghazi, was in Tripoli for training when the uprising erupted in February.

He said he and a friend were ordered to guard a post office against mob attack. Instead, he deserted on Feb. 25, leaving behind his weapon and jumping over a back wall. Al-Hadad said he hid in Tripoli for nearly four months, not far from Gadhafi's main compound in the city.

He said he eventually obtained a passport, drove to the border with Tunisia in late June, flew to Egypt and then headed to Benghazi overland. He said he was stopped at checkpoints en route to the Tunisian border, but proceeded without problems.

In the latest round of clashes, fierce fighting was reported in the town of Dafniya, near Misrata, with seven rebels killed and 46 wounded, said anti-government activist Faraj Akwedair. Gadhafi's troops "tried to enter Misrata from several fronts but our fighters stopped them," he said.

A nurse working with the aid group Doctors Without Borders who recently returned from Misrata said medical centers in the city lack the capacity to treat those in need. Meinie Nico-

lai said in an emailed statement that there are not enough nurses, midwives and other hospital staff because many had been foreign guest workers who have now left the country.

Government troops also fired rockets and mortars at the town of Kikla, southwest of Tripoli, said Abdel-Salam Othman of the Nafusa mountain military council. He said four people were killed and eight wounded in fighting there.

Gadhafi's forces have entered schools and mosques in Kikla to hide weapons, he said. "They even raise our flags to deceive the NATO," he added, referring to the rebels' tricolor. Libya's national flag is green.

The western towns of Zintan and Nalut have come under attack as well, Othman said. "Gadhafi forces failed to advance but they keep putting pressure to stop us," he added.

Over the past few weeks, rebel fighters have gathered on the outskirts of the town of Bair al-Ghanam, some 50 miles (80 kilometers) from Tripoli. Control over Bair al-Ghanam would open the road to the capital.

"We are consolidating force there and we are waiting for the people in Bair al-Ghanam to ensure us that they are not going to open their houses to Gadhafi troops," Othman said.

NATO has been carrying out airstrikes against Gadhafi-linked military targets since March.

It is joined by a number of Arab allies, including the wealthy Gulf states of Qatar and the United Arab Emirates.

SENATE POSTPONES LIBYA VOTE AMID BUDGET DISPUTE

WASHINGTON
Associated Press

SENATE DEMOCRATIC leaders abandoned plans for a test vote Tuesday on authorizing the U.S. military operation against Libya as Republicans insisted they should instead focus on government spending and the nation's borrowing limit.

Just hours before the vote, Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, D-Nev., announced the change in plans, leaving the fate of the resolution in doubt. One after another, GOP senators had stood on the Senate floor and signaled they would oppose any effort to move ahead on the Libya measure, arguing that dealing with the debt was far more important than working on a resolution with no practical impact.

The Senate had already canceled this week's recess to deal with the financial issue.

"No real work is scheduled in the Senate this week on the budget, nor is any on the debt ceiling," said Sen. Jeff Sessions, R-Ala. "Instead, we are moving today to a Libya resolution. This resolution, not requested by the president, is not why we asked to cancel recess."

At least five Republican senators indicated they would oppose the vote.

"If the resolution we're debating is debated and passed, it would not affect one iota what we're doing in Libya," said Sen. Bob Corker, R-Tenn., a member of the Foreign Relations Committee.

Congress was already sending a muddled message on Libya to both U.S. allies and Moammar Gadhafi.



SENATE Majority Leader Harry Reid. (AP)

Bipartisan Senate support for giving President Barack Obama limited authority to continue military involvement against Gadhafi was at odds with overwhelming opposition in the House to the commander in chief's actions. Democrats as well as Republicans in the House have criticized Obama for failing to seek congressional consent for the operation in a constitutional stalemate that has dragged on for weeks.

The Senate had scheduled a vote on whether to proceed with a resolution authorizing "the limited use of United States Armed Forces in support of the NATO mission in Libya." The resolution would expire when the NATO operation ends or after one year, and it would prohibit the use of American ground forces or private security con-

tractors in Libya. The Foreign Relations Committee easily adopted the measure on a 14-5 vote last week.

Leading backers of the resolution include Foreign Relations Committee Chairman John Kerry, D-Mass., and John McCain of Arizona, the top Republican on the Armed Services Committee. They have been the strongest voices in the Senate for the military action against Gadhafi's forces. Also sponsoring the resolution are Sen. Jon Kyl of Arizona, the No. 2 Republican, and Senate Intelligence Committee Chairwoman Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif.

McCain said he understood the reason for the Senate delay, but he hoped they would return to the resolution next week.

"The Senate does need to have a debate about United States policy and military action in Libya," McCain said.

Since NATO took command of the Libya operation in early April, the U.S. role has largely been limited to support efforts such as intelligence, surveillance and electronic warfare. The U.S. has launched airstrikes and drone attacks, flying more than 3,400 sorties.

"In Libya today, no American troop is being shot at," Kerry said last week.

But that hasn't silenced the congressional debate pitting the executive branch against the legislative.

Obama last week defended his decision to order U.S. military action more than three months ago and insisted he had not violated the 1973 War Powers Resolution, which demands congressional authorization within 60 days of

first military strikes. The president contends American forces supporting the NATO-led operation are not engaged in full-blown hostilities, making congressional consent unnecessary.

Even members of the Foreign Relations Committee, which backed the resolution, rejected Obama's legal argument that the operation does not constitute full-blown hostilities. The panel adopted an amendment that specified the operation included "hostilities" that fall under the War Powers Resolution and require congressional authorization.

The sponsor of that amendment, Republican Richard Lugar of Indiana, is one of the strongest Senate critics of the Libya operation. He said Obama had ignored Congress, dealing a setback to the Constitution in a "fundamental failure of leadership that placed expedience above constitutional responsibility."

Lugar, the top GOP lawmaker on the Foreign Relations panel, also questioned the expensive, open-ended commitment of U.S. forces. Last month, the White House put the cost of U.S. military operations in Libya at about \$715 million, with the total increasing to \$1.1 billion by early September.

"Let us be clear that we are deliberately trying to overthrow the government of Libya with military force," Lugar said on the Senate floor.

In Libya on Tuesday, at least 11 people were killed in fighting that began late Monday and continued Tuesday as Gadhafi forces stepped up pressure to try to block rebel fighters from advancing toward the capital of Tripoli, rebels said.