



DrumBeat: August 15, 2007

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Topic: [Miscellaneous](#)

[Tropical Storm Dean heads towards Caribbean](#)



Dean has a good probability of becoming "the first hurricane of the Atlantic season as it tracks west over warmer waters," said meteorologist Dennis Feltgen of the National Hurricane Center.

...Royal Dutch Shell Plc, Europe's biggest oil company, evacuated some staff from the Gulf of Mexico as a safety precaution. About 100 people were expected to be evacuated Tuesday after 88 were removed Monday, the company said on Monday in a statement on its website.

Dean could strengthen into a Category 1 hurricane with winds of 74 to 95 mph in two to three days and a Category 2 (winds of 96 to 110 mph) or Category 3 (winds of 111 to 130 mph) in four or five days, the National Hurricane Center said.

[Air Force Big: Bomb Iran's Oil?](#)

What does every war-fighting effort require? Fuel. In this instance, Iran has real vulnerabilities that the "overwhelming application of the air instrument" can exploit.

Specifically, despite huge reserves of crude oil, Iran nevertheless must import about half of its gasoline, largely because of a shortage of domestic refinery capacity. Targeting what refinery capacity Iran possesses could directly and concretely erode its ability to support Iraqi insurgents.

Oil refineries are ideal targets for air and missile attack. They are large, relatively "soft"

facilities that are difficult for even the most modern air defense to protect. At the same time, they represent wholly lawful targets generally subject to attack with a minimal risk of collateral damage.

[Myanmar's junta imposes fuel hike](#)

Myanmar's ruling military junta imposed a surprise 100 percent hike on fuel at state-owned gas stations on Wednesday, apparently to keep up with global oil prices.

As usual in the tightly controlled country, the price hike was not officially announced and car owners discovered the increases only when they drove up to fill their tanks.

...Although no official reason was given many believe the increase stems from the government's shortage of foreign currency to purchase fuel from abroad.

[Belarus to dump Russian rouble in favour of US dollar](#)

Belarus will unhook its currency from the Russian rouble to tie it to the US dollar, the Interfax news agency reported on Wednesday.

[Tbilisi natural gas distributor announces overtures towards Iranian producers](#)

Tbilisi officials have asked Iran for gas before, during last winter's energy crisis. The gas supply from Russian was cut off after explosions crippled the pipeline feeding Tbilisi. The US turned a blind eye to temporary gas imports from Iran, Khukhashvili says, given the exigent circumstances.

A number of US officials, however, have more than once voiced their country's opposition to a long-term Georgian energy pact with Iran.

[Somalia reopens to oil majors](#)

Big oil groups that declared force majeure and quit Somalia 16 years ago will be given the chance to resume their activities under the anarchic country's proposed hydrocarbon law.

[Singing the nation electric, part 2: post-oil democracy](#)

Before fossil fuels and industrial machinery transformed the way goods and services were produced, all societies had an energy problem. Some wind power and hydropower

was used, but the main energy sources were humans and animals. For the powers-that-were, slavery and serfdom were convenient ways to ensure an adequate supply of human-sourced energy. What will happen when fossil fuels are no longer available; will the global elite be in a position to reimpose serfdom and slavery?

[Brooklyn street proves yes, we all can get along](#)

What is it about Coney Island Avenue?

That's what Brooklyn College sociologist Jerry Kruse wonders as he rides the B68 bus along this 5-mile commercial strip, which is populated at various stops by pockets of West Indians, Latinos, Pakistanis, Indians, Orthodox Jews, Chinese, Russians, Israelis and Ukrainians.

How do so many different kinds of people live so closely yet so peacefully?

[Part 1: A Glimpse of the Energy Future](#)

"Creating more energy-efficient buildings is not only part of the overall solution but is the number one most cost-effective opportunity to reduce the nation's energy consumption and affect climate change," says Jeff Christian, a buildings technology researcher at ORNL and coordinator of the Habitat for Humanity project. "Yes, we must replace oil with biofuels. Yes, we must pursue other supply-side solutions in an environmentally acceptable manner. But there is enormous potential to reduce energy demand in the buildings sector, and that is by far the cheapest solution if we really want to address this problem."

[German solar firms boost capacity to meet demand](#)

Germany's solar companies are driving up capacity to meet strong demand for renewable energy, while access to silicon remained the make-or-break factor for their second-quarter results on Tuesday.

[Scientists warn Arctic sea ice is melting at its fastest rate since records began](#)

This year has seen one of the most rapid rates of sea ice melting, which began in spring after one of the most disappointing winters for ice formation. "Unless something unusual happens we're definitely on track for a record loss of sea ice. We're on track to shatter all records," said Mark Serreze, an Arctic specialist at the US National Snow and Ice Data Centre at Colorado University in Denver. "The rates of sea ice loss this year are really rather remarkable. Some of the daily rates of loss are the biggest we've ever seen. Things are happening really fast," Dr Serreze said.

[Coal-to-liquids touted as way to U.S. energy independence](#)

"It's clear to most people that the United States is too dependent on overseas sources of petroleum. The petroleum supply, we think, is becoming more limited. We believe the technology exists to expand the supply of liquid fuels by using coal for that purpose."

[Carbon market encourages chopping forests: study](#)

The current carbon market actually encourages cutting down some of the world's biggest forests, which would unleash tonnes of climate-warming carbon into the atmosphere, a new study reported on Monday.

[Disappointing 1H Douses Hope for '07 Big Oil Output Gains](#)

Halfway through the year, hopes for 2007 output growth from the major energy companies have been extinguished.

This year is forecast to be the latest in a long string of disappointments, as governments tighten their grip on hydrocarbons resources and rising costs make it increasingly difficult to shore up oil and gas production in mature, declining fields around the world.

Over the past four years, surging energy prices contributed to quarter after quarter of record profits for the large integrated energy companies, overriding investor concerns about weakening output. The worry: Big Oil is experiencing difficulties in tapping resources amid political upheaval and more stringent contract terms from key producers. Now that crude-oil and natural-gas prices have stabilized, prospects for profit growth have dimmed, and attention has refocused on production.

"These companies continue to disappoint in terms of value growth, particularly for oil," said Rod Oster, an analyst at A.G. Edwards in St. Louis, Mo. "The industry worldwide is having difficulty growing production."

[Oil prices rise to mid-\\$72 a barrel](#)

The U.S. National Hurricane Center on Tuesday said Tropical Storm Dean was heading west toward the Caribbean and forecast to be a strengthening hurricane, though it may reach major hurricane status.

"Oil prices picked up over the path that the tropical storm would take. There's projections for the path to go through various bits of oil infrastructure in the Gulf of Mexico so that's worried the market a bit," said Tobin Gorey, commodity strategist at the Commonwealth Bank of Australia in Sydney.

[Rescue crews evacuate oil platform](#)

Rescue helicopters evacuated more than 30 workers from an oil platform 125 miles off Scotland's coast late Tuesday following a fire in the engine room, the platform operators said.

[Drilling Activity Hits New High in Ultra-Deep Gulf of Mexico](#)

A record number of drilling rigs are currently working in ultra-deepwater in the Gulf of Mexico. "For the first time, 15 rigs are drilling for oil and gas in 5,000 feet of water or greater in the Gulf," MMS Director Randall Luthi announced today. "The continued increase in drilling activity is a show of confidence in the resource potential of the Gulf's ultra-deepwater frontier."

[Venezuela Setting Up Oil Services Co.](#)

Venezuela is creating its own oil-field services company to reduce dependence on foreign contractors, the country's top energy official said Tuesday.

Oil Minister Rafael Ramirez said the state-run oil company Petroleos de Venezuela SA, or PDVSA, is starting its own version of Houston-based oil-field services company Halliburton Co. to provide services within the oil-producing country.

[How to Solve Our Energy Issues—Fast](#)

Instead of forcing automakers to improve fuel economy, a better way to save gas would be to lower speed limits and encourage telecommuting.

[Alt energy boom](#)

The IEA has been criticized in the past for overestimating future possible production increases. The fact the agency is revising its view, to bring it more in line with that of the peak oil crowd, was greeted by a big "we told you so" in that community. But the big reaction to the IEA's outlook was in financial markets where the stocks of solar energy companies were up 10% on average the day after the report came out. It seems investors are equating news about tight fossil fuel markets with buying opportunities in the alternative energy sector, and that's making it feel a lot like the early days of the dot-com boom.

[China, India face water risk from biofuel](#)

Present plans by China and India for biofuel production could mean they face water scarcity by 2030, a researcher said.

Charlotte de Fraiture, a Colombo-based scientist with the International Water Management Institute (IWMI), said in an interview that she did not "see a lot of potential for biofuel production in either China or India because of the water.

"It's not that I'm saying don't go for biofuels. It's just that India and China are two water-short countries."

[Global warming boosts crop disease](#)

Global warming will fuel a disease that annually causes hundreds of million dollars in damage to rapeseed plants, used to make canola oil, according to a study released Tuesday.

[Climate change adds to Africa cotton farmers' woes](#)

African cotton farmers battling Washington over trade policies they say keep them poor have a new enemy: the shrinking rainy season.

[Man to warm planet despite natural coolers](#)

Man will keep heating up the planet over the next few years but natural factors like cooler seas could soften the blow, according to a new study by Britain's leading climate forecaster.

In its first long-term global climate forecast looking at natural and human factors behind climate change, the UK's Met Office forecasts 2014 will be 0.3 degrees Celsius warmer than in 2004, in spite of the cooling effect of natural factors in the planet's atmosphere like lower sea temperatures.



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