



Drumbeat: May 3, 2009

Posted by [Leanan](#) on May 3, 2009 - 10:45am

Topic: [Miscellaneous](#)

[Military embraces green energy](#)

The Department of Defense is the single largest energy consumer in the United States. Last year it bought nearly 4 billion gallons of jet fuel, 220 million gallons of diesel and 73 million gallons of gasoline, said Brian Lally, deputy undersecretary of defense for installations and environment.

American forces in Iraq and Afghanistan are using more fuel each day than in any other war in U.S. history. When oil prices spiked last summer, the Defense Department's energy tab shot up from about \$13 billion per year in 2006 and 2007 to \$20 billion in 2008. The Army alone had to make up a half- billion-dollar shortfall in its energy budget, said Keith Eastin, assistant secretary of the Army for installations and environment.

"That was, I think, a grand wake-up call that we somehow had to get a handle on what is loosely called energy security," Eastin said.

[Gulf NOCs eye low construction costs to build new refineries](#)

Three national oil companies (NOCs) in the Gulf are trying to use the prevailing low construction costs to build new refineries, according to industry insiders.

Construction projects of three refineries that had been put on the backburner during the real estate boom have been revived in the past week.

[Saudi Arabia most likely to host Gulf central bank](#)

DUBAI - While the race will be tight, Gulf Arab leaders meeting this week are most likely to choose Saudi Arabia, the region's largest economy, as the headquarters of their common central bank, a Reuters' poll showed on Sunday.

The world's top oil exporter will face tough competition from Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates, which were neck-and-neck in the second and third spot in the poll of 21 economists.

[After the Bubble](#)

With a massive restructuring of the U.S. auto industry under way, there is an important point to consider: Just how many cars can Americans be expected to buy in a post-bubble economy?

[Invoking the Sputnik Era, Obama Vows Record Outlays for Research](#)

Mr. Obama made clear that a new burst of advances in energy technology, medicine and other important arenas would not come from money alone, but required scientists to get out of their laboratories and find ways to inspire young people “to create, build and invent — to be makers of things, not just consumers of things.”

[US families rely on handouts in world's richest country](#)

Roach says that while some residents have been left in a desperate situation by the local lumber industry shedding jobs, most of those forced on to food stamps and other welfare are still in employment.

"I blame everything on the price of gasoline. When it went up to \$4 a gallon 18 months ago it affected everybody. It forced up the cost of food and utilities. People were working all day and they still weren't earning enough to pay all the bills," he said.

"Food prices you can combat a bit because people can grow their own gardens. They can kill deer, fox. You can eat 'coon. But gasoline affects everybody. They just can't make it."

[Russia to build floating Arctic nuclear stations](#)

Russia is planning a fleet of floating and submersible nuclear power stations to exploit Arctic oil and gas reserves, causing widespread alarm among environmentalists.

A prototype floating nuclear power station being constructed at the SevMash shipyard in Severodvinsk is due to be completed next year. Agreement to build a further four was reached between the Russian state nuclear corporation, Rosatom, and the northern Siberian republic of Yakutiya in February.

The 70-megawatt plants, each of which would consist of two reactors on board giant steel platforms, would provide power to Gazprom, the oil firm which is also Russia's biggest company. It would allow Gazprom to power drills needed to exploit some of the remotest oil and gas fields in the world in the Barents and Kara seas. The self-propelled vessels would store their own waste and fuel and would need to be serviced only once every 12 to 14 years.

[BG price protection combats 'gas glut'](#)

This is not a good time to be in the gas business. Rising supplies from new projects coming on stream have met faltering demand from businesses battered by the global recession, creating a "gas glut". While the price of oil has risen this year, the price of gas has continued to decline. This year the benchmark gas price has dropped about 40 percent in the US and 51 percent in the UK. Yet BG Group, the exploration and production company spun out of the old British Gas, is coping well under the pressure.

[Brazil will use more natural gas](#)

Brazil plans to more than double the amount of natural gas it uses to generate electricity and will increase Bolivian imports to help meet demand, said Maria das Gracas Foster, energy chief at Petrobras.

[Culture change key to growth: Shell chief](#)

When Jeroen van der Veer looks back on his five years as chief executive of Royal Dutch Shell, he reaches for a phrase from John F Kennedy. One of his priorities, he says, was to change the culture, so Shell employees thought less about themselves, and more about "what you can do for the company".

In the fevered atmosphere of the company in 2004, after it was revealed that its oil and gas reserves had been misreported for several years, that culture change was badly needed. The incentives for managers and staff had to be put straight. "If you do good for the company, you make progress in the company or you get more salary," van der Veer says now. It is an approach that is characteristic of his management style.

[Schlumberger has hope for Iraq: But energy giant doesn't see a quick comeback in North America](#)

Schlumberger cast further doubt on the prospect of a swift recovery for the oil and gas business in North America, saying it doesn't expect a rebound until at least next year.

"We do not see any significant recovery in North American gas drilling before 2010," Chairman and CEO Andrew Gould said, citing continued weakness in commodity prices and reduced exploration and drilling spending by oil companies.

[Parl. says Iraq's water share condition for signing pact with Turkey](#)

(MENAFN - Aswat Al-Iraq) An Iraqi parliamentarian on Saturday said that the Parliament had stressed the addition of an article about Iraq's share of water to the Iraqi-Turkish agreement as a condition for signing the pact.

[Kuwait Central Bank fearful of Moody's downgrade](#)

Kuwait's central bank has urged its leaders to bring in a better political climate and measures to weather the financial crisis, after Moody's said it may downgrade the country's sovereign rating.

[Saudi crown prince's surgery raises questions](#)

(CNN) -- Saudi Arabia's crown prince was convalescing Saturday in Morocco where he arrived this week after surgery for an undisclosed illness in New York City, the state-run Saudi Press Agency said.

[New Hawaii petroleum tax hike likely to raise gas prices](#)

Looking for money to finance renewable energy and food security, state lawmakers have agreed to increase a per barrel tax on petroleum products sold by distributors, which could cost consumers a few cents more per gallon of gasoline but eventually help wean the state off fossil fuel.

The barrel tax, which is now collected to help the state respond to oil spills, would increase from 5 cents per barrel product to \$1.05. The \$1 hike could generate \$31 million a year to help the state explore alternative energy and protect local agriculture.

[Russia Digs In Alongside Breakaway Territories](#)

MOSCOW — Russian border guards on Saturday began taking up long-term positions along the boundaries of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, an arrangement that will probably mean sustained tension in the two breakaway Georgian territories.

[Generating Energy From the Deep](#)

LOCKHEED MARTIN is best known for building stealth fighters, satellites and other military equipment. But since late 2006 the company has taken on a different kind of enterprise — generating renewable power from the ocean.

[An ill wind blows away renewables optimism](#)

Miliband's bubble was burst on Tuesday morning, when an announcement issued from Aarhus on the east coast of Denmark reached his desk. Danish wind energy giant Vestas was about to deal a hefty blow to his vision of building thousands of jobs and new businesses around the "low carbon" economy. Vestas chief executive Ditlev Engel revealed the company was axing 625 jobs in Britain and planned to close its manufacturing plant on the Isle of Wight.

Although the City has become almost blasé about such announcements during the recession, the surprise statement knocked policymakers sideways as it meant jobs were being lost in an industry which had been viewed as Britain's next great industrial hope.

[Here Comes the Sun. Right?](#)

Despite the recession, a German solar company sees the United States as a promising market.

[Laser quest: The scientist with a planet-saving plan straight out of Spider-Man](#)

Clean energy forever. That, in a glorious theoretical nutshell, is what nuclear fusion – the reaction that gives stars and hydrogen bombs their immense power – could deliver. The urgency of the climate-change debate and the renewed impetus to tackle the 21st century's glaring energy problems have put fusion back on the agenda... and, thanks to key contributions from the British-trained scientist Dr Brian MacGowan, the highly volatile process may be harnessed to provide us with a viable source of green electricity sooner than previously expected.

[Briefing: Electric vehicles](#)

Just how realistic is Irish politicians' target of having 350,000 plug-in vehicles on our roads by 2020?

[Brookhaven Finds Its Star on the Rise](#)

The 5,300-acre laboratory, established in 1947 on the grounds of a former Army base called Camp Upton, has moved past its local villain status of a decade ago. It has never been a scientific slouch – six Nobel Prizes have been awarded for work done at the lab – but now its star is clearly on the rise.

In late March, Energy Secretary Steven Chu selected the lab as the site to announce how \$1.2 billion in stimulus funds would be spent at the country's 10 national laboratories, with Brookhaven receiving a \$184.3 million chunk.

[Bringing Efficiency to the Infrastructure](#)

IN the mid-1990s, the Internet took off because its technological time had come. Years of steady progress in developing more powerful and less expensive computers, Web software and faster communications links finally came together.

A similar pattern is emerging today, experts say, for what is being called smart infrastructure — more efficient and environmentally friendlier systems for managing, among other things, commuter traffic, food distribution, electric grids and waterways. This time, the crucial technological ingredients include low-cost sensors and clever software for analytics and visualization, as well as computing firepower.

[At the Indian Point Nuclear Plant, a Pipe Leak Raises Concerns](#)

Some experts worry that a threat to the safe operation of aging reactors across the country may lurk in underground pipes.

[In a Senegalese Slum, a Building Material Both Primitive and Perilous](#)

In an upside-down world where garbage is sought for and dumped among homes, not removed, “people have no alternatives; they are left to themselves; they can only count on themselves,” said Joseph Gaï Ramaka, a leading Senegalese filmmaker, who made a documentary about an incomplete government effort, the Plan Jaxaay, to build modern housing for people in vulnerable neighborhoods.

“These are people who are proud of being clean,” said Mr. Ramaka, who now lives in New Orleans. “When they have to buy garbage, it’s because they don’t have any choice. The garbage, at least, allows them to sleep with their feet out of the water, and in their own house.”

[Australia: Green group calls for one child policy](#)

AUSTRALIA should consider having a one-child policy to protect the planet, an environmental lobby group says.

Sustainable Population Australia says slashing the world's population is the only way to avoid "environmental suicide".

National president Sandra Kanck wants Australia's population of almost 22 million reduced to seven million to tackle climate change.

[Depopulate and die of boredom](#)

If you believe that population growth will eventually lead to the collapse of our civilisation and planet, then the last millennium of human history must be very confusing. Over and over, we have demonstrated an extraordinary capacity to innovate our way out of any theoretical "limit to growth".

So it takes a strange sort of intellectual hubris to imagine that the exact moment you are alive just happens to be the exact moment in human history that we cross the "too many people" line. In the 1970s, zero population growth advocates were pretty sure the end was nigh, but humanity has managed to barrel on for a few more decades. Anyway, few species have found flirting with extinction a particularly effective survival strategy.

[Ethanol test for Obama on climate change, science](#)

WASHINGTON – President Barack Obama's commitment to take on climate change and put science over politics is about to be tested as his administration faces a politically sensitive question about the widespread use of ethanol: Does it help or hurt the fight against global warming?

[Proposed Federal Acid Rain and Mercury Control Act](#)

A Central New York congressman, seeing an opportunity that may never come again, has introduced a bill requiring the most drastic cuts in U.S. history to the pollution responsible for acid rain.

[Securing future harvests of farmers in dry areas](#)

The world's dry areas – which cover 41% of the earth's land area, and are home to a quarter of global population – will be facing the brunt of Climate Change. This will lead to unprecedented challenges to food security particularly with the food and economic crises on top of evermore erratic weather patterns.

"But these challenges can be overcome if policy makers, researchers and development agencies work together, in genuine partnership" stressed Dr Mahmoud Solh, Director General of the International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA).

[Thrifty Gardeners Live Lightly on the Land](#)

Water is precious and expensive. In California, moving water from its source to where it's needed requires the largest energy expenditure in the state! The energy involved in

pumping and distributing water can also be a significant source of atmospheric carbon dioxide. The less water we lavish on our gardens and lawns the better for all.

[Carbon trading could hurt coal industry](#)

LIVELY GROVE -- When the Prairie State Energy Campus cranks out its first kilowatt hour of electricity -- which is scheduled for two years from now -- it could end up costing ratepayers way more than anyone had predicted.

That's because of recent efforts by the Obama White House and Democrats in Congress to begin the regulation of carbon dioxide, the chief greenhouse gas blamed for global warming. More than half the world's industrial CO₂ comes from coal power plants.

[Big business attacks plan to cut carbon emissions](#)

NEXT YEAR Tesco will be forced to pay £40m to the government to comply with a new – and little known – regulation designed to reduce carbon emissions through energy efficiency.

The supermarket is just one of 5,000 firms that will be subject to the government's Carbon Reduction Commitment (CRC), which takes effect from April 2010.

[Buildings face carbon clean-up](#)

The internal combustion engine. The jumbo jet. The desktop computer. In the fight against climate change, they have all been targeted by lawmakers and eco-warriors alike.

Yet the biggest baddies of them all, buildings, have so far slipped under the radar. That could be about to change. According to research from the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD), the world's houses and office buildings consume 40% of global energy and emit the same proportion of gases, making them the single biggest source of pollution in the world. Transport, at 30%, is the next biggest culprit.

Yet unlike the motor sector, where stringent regulations dictate what comes out of the exhaust pipe, no similar system exists for buildings.

[Climate Change: How The '2 Degrees Celsius Target' Can Be Reached](#)

ScienceDaily — If CO₂ emissions are halved by 2050 compared to 1990, global warming can be stabilised below two degrees. This is shown by two studies by a co-operation of German, Swiss and British researchers in the journal *Nature*.



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