



Drumbeat: April 23, 2011

Posted by [Leanan](#) on April 23, 2011 - 10:29am

[Iraqi cleric's followers demand U.S. troops leave](#)

(Reuters) - Hundreds of followers of anti-American cleric Moqtada al-Sadr took to the streets of Baghdad on Saturday, trampling U.S. flags and vowing to escalate military resistance if U.S. troops fail to leave Iraq this year.

It was the second major demonstration by Sadr's followers in recent days after the cleric issued a warning on April 9 he would unleash his Mehdi Army militia if U.S. troops were not out of Iraq by December 31. More than 5,000 marched in the streets of Basra, Iraq's southern oil hub, on Thursday.

[Weekly Address: "Instead of Subsidizing Yesterday's Energy Sources, We Need to Invest in Tomorrow's"](#)

WASHINGTON – In his weekly address, President Obama laid out his plans to address rising gas prices over the short and the long term. While there is no silver bullet to bring down prices right away, there are a few things we can do. This week, the Attorney General launched a task force dedicated to rooting out fraud or manipulations in the oil markets. The President called for finally ending the \$4 billion in taxpayer money that the oil and gas companies receive annually. And, we need to continue safe, responsible production of oil at home. But in the long term, we need to invest in clean, renewable energy. That is why the President strongly disagrees with a proposal in Congress that cuts our investments in clean energy by 70 percent.

[Behind the Rising Cost of Food](#)

Fuel costs are to blame, and so is a shift in how the rest of the world eats. The demand for food is up around the globe, driving prices up. The cost of food worldwide rose 37 percent from February 2010 to this year, according to figures compiled by a United Nations organization.

The cost of meat in particular is running high, according to a wholesale price survey by the Agriculture Department. At the retail level, that means that the brisket on the Passover table costs 17 percent more this year than it did last.

[What's Driving Gas Prices, From An Energy Insider](#)

The average price for regular gas is now well above \$4 a gallon in seven states, and some analysts say we could reach \$6 a gallon in some parts of the country as the summer driving season approaches. Host Scott Simon talks with John Hofmeister, founder and CEO of the non-profit group Citizens for Affordable Energy and former CEO of Shell Oil, about viable energy policy.

[Gov't to help TEPCO pay for damages if survival at risk](#)

TOKYO — The government is arranging to help Tokyo Electric Power Co pay for damages incurred from the nuclear accident at its Fukushima Daiichi power plant if it comes to a point where the company's survival is at risk due to ballooning compensation costs, government sources said Saturday.

The government is considering the specific situation in which it would exempt the utility from further burdens, but its actual assistance is expected to be limited considering the possibility of a public outcry in the event the state decides easily to inject public money, the sources said.

[South African Govt Places Moratorium on Fracking](#)

South Africa's government placed a moratorium on licences for fracking, a technique used to extract gas in the Karoo Basin region, pending further research.

[Mubarak Faces More Questioning on Gas Deal With Israel](#)

Persistent public suspicions about corruption and mismanagement that swirl around Egypt's secretive deal to sell natural gas to Israel prompted Egypt's public prosecutor on Friday to extend the questioning of former President Hosni Mubarak for 15 days, judicial officials said.

[Egypt orders ex-energy minister, former officials tried](#)

(Reuters) - Egypt on Saturday ordered former energy minister Sameh Fahmy and six other officials to stand trial on charges related to a natural gas deal with Israel, the public prosecutor said.

The decision is part of a crackdown on graft during the 30-year rule of deposed President Hosni Mubarak by the government appointed by the military generals who now rule Egypt.

[Libyan Forces Withdraw From a Besieged City, and the Rebels Wonder Why](#)

BENGHAZI, Libya — In a sudden shift after nearly two months of heavy siege, government forces withdrew from the western city of Misurata on Saturday.

By afternoon, forces loyal to Col. Muammar el-Qaddafi had abandoned all but two buildings, where they were surrounded and under pressure to surrender, rebel spokesmen and independent observers said.

But there was little celebration in Misurata as government forces on the city's outskirts continued to launch barrages of artillery into the heart of the city, killing 24 people on Saturday alone, local doctors said.

[Syrian Security Forces Fire on Mourners in Several Towns](#)

BEIRUT, Lebanon — Syrian security forces fired their weapons into crowds of mourners in at least three towns on Saturday as tens of thousands of people buried protesters who were killed a day earlier in the worst bloodshed since the uprising began last month. Human rights activists and witnesses said at least 11 people were killed on Saturday.

The death toll from the protests on Friday, one of the bloodiest days in the so-called Arab Spring, had risen by Saturday to 109 people, a number that activists said was likely to rise as more bodies were returned to their families. Another group said 114 people had been killed.

[Myanmar set to sign contracts with foreign firms for oil and gas exploration, state media say](#)

YANGON, Myanmar — Myanmar's state oil firm is set to sign contracts with companies from China, Singapore and South Korea for oil and gas exploration, state media reported Saturday.

[The Crash Course: The Book](#)

Many of you are already familiar with Chris Martenson's "The Crash Course" video and website. Chris now has a book version which joins the small shelf of books I recommend as starting points for understanding our collective future: *The Crash Course: The Unsustainable Future Of Our Economy, Energy, And Environment*.

[Saudis see need to pump 9m bpd of oil](#)

SINGAPORE: Top oil exporter Saudi Arabia needs to pump at least 9 million barrels per day (bpd) of crude for the next few years and is considering boosting capacity to meet rising demand, Petroleum Intelligence Weekly (PIW) said in a report citing Saudi sources this week. Rising fuel demand led by growth in China, India and the Middle East has outpaced Riyadh's expectations, and Saudi Arabia now sees medium to long-term oil consumption higher than it had previously anticipated, trade publication PIW reported.

Saudi sources expect the kingdom will need to keep oil output around 9 million bpd or higher over the next few years," PIW said. Saudi Oil Minister Ali al-Naimi said on Sunday the kingdom's April oil output may rise from March, when it pumped 8.292 million bpd. Output was above 9 million bpd as recently as February, when the kingdom produced 9.125 million bpd to plug the gap left by Libya, where civil war cut exports.

[Why gas is so expensive, when oil isn't](#)

NEW YORK (CNMoney) -- Gasoline prices have been rising for months and are within striking distance of their 2008 all-time high of \$4.11 a gallon. But while oil prices are above \$100 a barrel, they're still 24% below their 2008 all-time high.

So why is gasoline so expensive, when oil is so far off its record price?

[Gas prices hit smaller companies](#)

Rising gas prices hurt most small businesses, but sometimes they help others.

[Orlando gas station charges \\$5.69 a gallon](#)

NEW YORK (CNMoney) -- Gas prices are on the rise nationwide, but one filling station in Florida has earned the dubious distinction of having the highest prices in the country.

Suncoast Energys, located near the Orlando International Airport, was charging \$5.69 a gallon for regular gasoline on Friday. That's the highest of any gas retailer in the nation, according to price tracker gasbuddy.com.

[Total to Boost Russia Output 30-Fold by 2020 on Projects to Develop Arctic](#)

Total SA (FP) is seeking to boost output in Russia more than 30-fold within a decade, as the French producer develops Arctic projects.

Total plans to produce between 300,000 to 400,000 barrels of oil equivalent a day by 2020, Pierre Nerguararian, head of Total E&P Russie, said in a presentation in Moscow today. In June, the producer marks its 20th anniversary in Russia.

[Coast Guard Report Helps BP's Quest for Transocean Payment](#)

A U.S. Coast Guard report that cited safety failures by drilling-rig owner Transocean Ltd. may help bolster BP Plc's effort to recover some of the costs of last year's oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico, an analyst said.

[An Ecologist's Surprising Assessment of the BP Spill](#)

Much of Safina's book recounts the worst-case assumptions common in the early weeks of the spill — that huge areas of the gulf would be rendered lifeless, that "dozens of vulnerable fish species" might fall extinct, that toxic dispersants used by BP to reduce the visual shock value of the spill might do more harm than the petroleum, that government was supine while BP relentlessly lied about the spill volume. "Oil companies basically own the whole gulf region," Safina writes, viewing American addiction to petroleum, indifference to greenhouse gases and political genuflection to the oil lobby as more disturbing than the failure of supposedly foolproof devices to prevent the blowout.

[Schlumberger Misses Analysts' First-Quarter Estimates on Libya Disruption](#)

Schlumberger Ltd. (SLB), the world's largest oilfield services provider, said first-quarter profit missed analysts' estimates after the company shut its Libyan operations due to political unrest.

[Qatargas to supply LNG to Centrica](#)

DUBAI (Reuters) - Qatargas said on Saturday it signed a 2.4 million tonnes per year three year contract to supply liquefied natural gas to Britain's Centrica.

"As per the agreement, Qatargas will deliver up to 2.4 million tonnes per annum of LNG from the Qatargas 4 project to the UK Isle of Grain Terminal for the next three years," it said in a statement.

[Source: Security forces in Syrian town fire at funeral procession](#)

(CNN) -- Security forces in a Damascus suburb opened fire at a funeral procession Saturday, a witness said, as thousands of people across the country turned out to mourn the dozens of protesters slain the day before.

The eyewitness told CNN that the assault in Douma occurred as thousands of people shouted "the people want to topple the regime" and "leave, leave," an apparent reference to the government of President Bashar al-Assad.

[Wash. considers electric car fee to make up for lost gas taxes](#)

After years of urging residents to buy fuel-efficient cars and giving them tax breaks to do it, Washington state lawmakers are considering a measure to charge them a \$100 annual fee — what would be the nation's first electric car fee.

State lawmakers grappling with a \$5 billion deficit are facing declining gas tax revenue,

which means less money to maintain or improve roads.

“Electric vehicles put just as much wear and tear on our roads as gas vehicles,” said Democratic state Sen. Mary Margaret Haugen, the bill’s lead sponsor. “This simply ensures that they contribute their fair share to the upkeep of our roads.”

Other states are trying to find solutions to the same problem, as cars become more fuel-efficient and, now, don’t use any gas at all.

[Chicago's New Incentive for Hybrid Taxi Cabs](#)

CHICAGO — A new program may bring more hybrid taxi cabs to the city of Chicago.

Mayor Richard Daley announced The Green Taxi Program yesterday. That initiative will reimburse cab companies for using hybrid cars or vehicles powered by natural gas.

[Obama Says U.S. Can't Afford Cuts to Clean Energy Investments](#)

(Bloomberg) -- President Barack Obama said proposals in Congress to cut investments in clean energy technology would hurt efforts to stem rising gasoline prices, which climbed to a 33-month high April 21.

In his weekly radio and Internet address, Obama said while “there’s no silver bullet that can bring down gas prices right away” increasing U.S. oil production, investing in clean, renewable energy, and ending \$4 billion in taxpayer subsidies to oil and gas companies each year will help curtail rising gas prices.

[The Empty Pulpit: The Obama Problem](#)

Obama’s focus on jobs over the environment is especially harmful as the progressive narrative is that whether we like it or not our human economy is a wholly owned subsidiary of ecology. Wall Street investments and indeed the whole gamut of market economics and employment, if based on non-ecological principles, are not only not sustainable, but actively speed the exhaustion of the remaining stores of the earth’s resources. Appropriately, there has been much talk about peak oil. But we also face peak water, peak topsoil, pollinator collapse, and a myriad of other crises all exacerbated by climate destabilization. Obama’s unwillingness to take a leadership role in redefining our societal relationship to the natural world at this critical time may be his most lasting failure as a leader.

[Free Rain Barrels for New Yorkers](#)

New York City is giving away 55-gallon rain barrels to homeowners to help conserve water and reduce pressure on the city’s sewer system, which is often overwhelmed

during heavy storms. The city started promoting the barrels by distributing a few hundred of them in Queens in 2008 and 750 more in 2009 to homeowners who applied for them. This year, 1,000 free barrels are being distributed to owners of single- and two-family homes on a first-come-first-served basis at events in the Bronx, Brooklyn, Queens and Staten Island.

[Sizing Up the Greenest Colleges](#)

A free online listing of the 311 eco-friendliest colleges in the country is meant to help environmentally conscious students choose a school that reflects their principles.

[Worldwide, Blame for Climate Change Falls on Humans](#)

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- World residents are more likely to blame human activities than nature for the rise in temperatures associated with climate change. Thirty-five percent of adults in 111 countries in 2010 say global warming results from human activities, while less than half as many (14%) blame nature. Thirteen percent fault both.

[Will Steger laments the global warming change of heart of Tim Pawlenty](#)

Polar explorer Will Steger tells Mother Jones that he's baffled by the way former Minnesota Gov. Tim Pawlenty has changed his tune on global warming.

Steger had worked with Pawlenty on programs to fight climate change, but that ended in 2008, when Pawlenty began his run for president and came out against efforts to fight climate change. Earlier this month, Pawlenty said human efforts are only a minor contributor to global warming.

[The big city fix for climate change](#)

FORTUNE -- Jay Carson is CEO of the newly formed C40 Clinton Climate Initiative, which combines previous efforts led by former President Clinton and New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg to leverage big cities in the fight against global warming. He'll have a budget this year of \$12 million and a staff of 65.

[In Texas, Questions of Drought and Climate Change](#)

Some are wondering whether the severe drought affecting the oil and gas hub of Midland, Tex., is related to global warming. In Texas, that's a delicate question.

[Melting ice in Canadian Arctic bigger player in sea-level rise](#)

Melting glaciers and ice caps on Canadian Arctic islands play a much greater role in sea-level rise than scientists previously suspected

For instance, the 550,000-square-mile Canadian Arctic Archipelago contains some 30,000 islands. Between 2004 and 2009, the region lost the equivalent of three-quarters of the water in Lake Erie, found a study led by the University of Michigan.



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