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BARBARA DAVIDSON Los Angeles Times

BRUSH FIRE THREATENS HOMES

Firefighters get into position to protect a home from an approaching brush fire that started Wednesday morning near California Highway 154 and Painted Cave Road in Santa Barbara County. The fire burned about 15 acres, forced evacuations from about 40 homes and threatened 60 more homes, authorities said. No structures were damaged. One firefighter suffered a minor leg injury.

CAMPAIGN 2012

Change drives up cost of state politics

Redistricting and new primary rules have made House races tougher and pricier.

BY RICHARD SIMON

WASHINGTON — California congressional races rarely drew the big bucks that more competitive races in other states did — after all, only one seat in the state had flipped between the parties in the last decade — but that was before new district boundaries shook up the political status quo.

Now, the Sacramento-area race between Republican Rep. Dan Lungren and Democrat Ami Bera has drawn more spending by outside groups than any congressional race in the country — more than \$6.2 million — as the parties battle for control of the House.

In the San Fernando Valley, Democratic colleagues-turned-bitter-rivals Howard L. Berman and Brad Sherman have, along with outside groups, spent more than \$11 million on the race, one of the nation's costliest.

Bill Bloomfield, a Manhattan Beach businessman running as an independent against Democratic Rep. Henry A. Waxman of Beverly Hills, has put more than \$3.7 million of his own money into his campaign. Waxman, who has raised about \$1.4 million, had more than \$1 million in the bank as of [See House races, AA5]

CHINA'S GROWTH SLOWEST SINCE '09

The economy much of the world is tied to weakens for seventh quarter in a row.

BY DAVID PIERSON

BEIJING — China grew at its slowest pace in 3½ years, the latest sign that the nation long famed for its economic miracle is still struggling to pull out of a steeper-than-expected slide.

The Chinese economy expanded 7.4% in the three months ended in September compared with the same period a year ago. That's a tick below the full-year growth target of 7.5% and the lowest quarterly performance since the country grew 6.6% in the first three months of 2009.

By comparison, China grew 7.6% in the second quarter and 8.1% in the first quarter. Chinese growth has now weakened for seven consecutive quarters.

The slowdown in China is already rippling across the globe, sinking demand for commodities and eating away at profits for multinational corporations such as Coca-Cola and Caterpillar.

Though the country's growth is robust compared with other major economies, it's a far cry from the double-digit pace that had been the norm in the three decades during which the world's most populous country transformed itself from a backwater to an economic juggernaut.

Analysts say China is [See China, AA2]

State ranks low in student debt

Despite rising tuition, California college grads carry one of the lightest financial loads in the U.S. **AA3**

Man accused of miscarriage plot

Restaurateur poisoning his L.A. girlfriend in a bid to end her pregnancy. **AA3**

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Killings at border draw scrutiny

U.S. reviews policies for agents after death of a Tasered man and other fatalities.

BY RICHARD MAROSI

The Department of Homeland Security is reviewing guidelines for use of force by border agencies amid a sharp increase in agent-involved killings along the U.S.-Mexico border.

The scrutiny of U.S. Customs and Border Protection enforcement practices

comes in response to a request by 16 members of Congress who expressed concern over the death of a Mexican man who suffered a fatal heart attack after being Tasered by a customs officer in 2010.

The review by Homeland Security's Office of Inspector General will determine whether the incident at the San Ysidro port of entry in San Diego reflected systemic brutality or use of excessive force, and whether the rapid rise in staffing in recent years has affected training.

Since 2010, at least 16 civilians have been killed by

agents, many during rock-throwing confrontations involving suspected smugglers. Critics have grown increasingly vocal about rocks being met by bullets, which they consider disproportionate force.

Under the agency's guidelines, agents are permitted to use lethal force in such situations because rocks and other projectiles have caused serious injuries. Most agents involved in fatal incidents recently have been cleared of wrongdoing.

"CBP law enforcement personnel are trained to use deadly force in circumstances that pose a threat to

their lives, the lives of their fellow law enforcement partners and innocent third parties," U.S. Customs and Border Protection said in a recent statement.

Human rights advocates and civil rights groups hailed the inspector general's move as a way to counter what they call a growing culture of impunity. It is believed to be the first time that the agency has come under such scrutiny in recent years. The inquiry was not announced publicly, but was in the inspector general's annual performance plan, which was released [See Border, AA4]



ANDREW GOMBERT European Pressphoto Agency

POLICE STAND WATCH outside the Federal Reserve Bank of New York, which authorities say was never in danger because the "bomb" involved wasn't real.

FBI says man targeted Fed

Bangladeshi is held in a sting operation after allegedly trying to bomb the Reserve Bank of New York.

BY TINA SUSMAN AND ANDREW TANGEL

NEW YORK — A 21-year-old Bangladeshi man who wanted to "destroy America" tried to detonate what he thought was a 1,000-pound bomb in front of the Federal Reserve Bank in Manhattan on Wednesday, but the explosive was a dud provided by agents as part of an FBI sting, authorities said.

The FBI and New York police said Quazi Mohammad Rezwanul Ahsan Nafis, whom they described as an Al Qaeda loyalist, was arrested in a hotel room after



AFP/Getty Images

QUAZI MOHAMMAD Rezwanul Ahsan Nafis as seen on his Twitter page.

several futile attempts to detonate the fake bomb by remote control. He was arraigned in federal court hours later on charges of attempting to use a weapon of mass destruction and at-

tempting to provide material support to Al Qaeda.

"Attempting to destroy a landmark building and kill or maim untold numbers of innocent bystanders is about as serious as the imagination can conjure," said Mary Galligan, acting assistant director of the FBI in New York. She said there was no danger to the public because two "accomplices" were working with the FBI and because the purported bomb contained no explosives.

Officials said that did not reduce the seriousness of the threat.

"He was arrested, but he clearly had the intent of creating mayhem," New York's police commissioner, Raymond Kelly, told reporters. Kelly said the alleged plot — one of more than a dozen thwarted in New York since the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist at- [See Fed, AA2]

Warner Bros. wins fight over Superman

BY BEN FRITZ

Superman won't be going up, up and away from Warner Bros.

In a crucial legal victory for the Burbank studio, a federal judge in Los Angeles on Wednesday denied an effort by the heirs of Superman co-creator Joe Shuster to reclaim their 50% interest in the world's most famous superhero.

Superman is one of Warner's most valuable characters, having generated more than \$500 million at the domestic box office with five films and billions more from television series such as "Smallville," toys, games and 74 years' worth of comic books.

Had Warner and its DC Comics subsidiary lost the case, they would have



Associated Press

A JUDGE'S ruling lets Warner Bros. keep its 50% stake in Superman.

soon been unable to continue using certain key elements of the Superman mythos — including his super strength and speed, se- [See Lawsuit, AA4]

Head of recreation center accused of embezzlement

BY KATE LINTHICUM

The director of a Los Angeles city recreation center is facing felony charges after she allegedly stole up to \$15,000 from the facility, including lunch money from children in her care.

Carol Brandt, 47, who served as the director of the Montecito Heights Recreation Center northeast of downtown from 2008 to 2011, was charged Tuesday with embezzlement and misappropriation of public funds. She is accused of pocket-

ing more than \$10,000 from members of several basketball and soccer teams who paid to use the facility's courts and fields in 2009 and 2010. She is also accused of stealing from snack bars at the recreation center and at an adjacent senior citizens' center, as well as money from young participants in a summer day camp.

Brandt was released without having to post bail Wednesday afternoon, according to Los Angeles Deputy Dist. Atty. Dana Aratani. Brandt and her attorney [See Embezzle, AA4]