

WORLD/NATION

COURT

Post-9/11 roundup detainees get \$1.26M

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Five immigrant men who were detained in roundups in New York and eventually deported following the Sept. 11 attacks have reached a \$1.26 million settlement with the U.S. government.

The men were part of a lawsuit against the government over the roundups that put them in federal detention and the abuse they say they suffered while they were there. Two other plaintiffs are still part of the lawsuit.

Rachel Meeropol, a lawyer for

the Center for Constitutional Rights, which represents the detainees, said she hoped the settlement would serve as a deterrent to prevent similar government practices.

“Our hope is that it will keep the government from rounding up individuals based on religion and ethnicity,” she said Tuesday. “My clients were really treated as terrorists based on nothing more than their religion and where they came from.”

The center notified the court Monday of the settlement. The Department of Justice did not immediately respond to an e-mail from The

Associated Press seeking comment Tuesday.

The men were among more than 170 Arab and Muslim men jailed for immigration law violations at the Metropolitan Detention Center in Brooklyn. The suit, filed in 2002, claimed that former Attorney General John Ashcroft, prison personnel, FBI supervisors and other officials violated the men’s rights by imprisoning them on the basis of their race and religion.

The men said they were denied access to phones and lawyers for weeks at a time, locked in tiny cells where lights burned all night, kept

awake by guards pounding on their doors, put in handcuffs and shackles whenever outside their cells, and beaten at random.

The case was bolstered by a 2003 report by the Justice Department’s Office of the Inspector General, which found “significant problems” with the treatment of nearly 800 detainees nationwide, including abusive conditions at the Metropolitan Detention Center.

Reached in Alexandria, Egypt, Yasser Ebrahim said that after seven years, “I just couldn’t wait any longer.” The settlement, he said, is “an end of one phase of my life and the

beginning of a new one. This whole nightmare, we can just let it go.”

The lawsuit is currently awaiting a decision from the 2nd U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals on whether key claims should have been dismissed. Meeropol said a request has been made to amend the suit to add five new names to the remaining two plaintiffs.

Ehab Elmaghraby, a detainee who made similar claims in another lawsuit, settled his portion of that case for \$300,000. He was held at the center for almost a year, and was deported in 2003 after pleading guilty to credit card fraud.

NEW YORK

Buffett makes big bet on economy

Firm buys 2nd-largest U.S. railroad for \$34 billion

Associated Press

NEW YORK — The biggest name in investing is making what he calls an “all-in wager” on the U.S. economy — \$34 billion to own a railroad that hauls everything from corn to cars across the country.

The acquisition of Burlington Northern Santa Fe, the nation’s second-largest railroad, would be the biggest ever for Warren Buffett’s Berkshire Hathaway investment company.

It’s a natural fit for the Oracle of Omaha, a city with a special place in railroad history. It was the starting point for the westward push of the transcontinental railroad. Today, Omaha is the headquarters of Union Pacific, and BNSF trains rumble through every day.

In a statement, Buffett, whose investing decisions are carefully scrutinized by the world of finance, voiced confidence in the railroad industry.

“Most important of all, however, it’s an all-in wager on the economic future of the United States. I love these bets,” he said Tuesday.

Berkshire Hathaway Inc. already owns a 22 percent stake in Burlington North-



Warren Buffett, CEO of Berkshire Hathaway, waves to the crowd prior to the annual Berkshire Hathaway shareholders meeting in Omaha, Neb., in May. Berkshire Hathaway announced Tuesday it has agreed to buy Burlington Northern Santa Fe in a deal valuing the railroad at \$34 billion.

ern and would buy up the rest under the deal, for a total value of \$34 billion. It still needs approval from Burlington shareholders and antitrust regulators, both expected early next year.

Burlington Northern is the biggest hauler of corn and coal for electricity, making it an indicator of the country’s economic health. It also carries everyday items such as refrigerators, clothing and TVs from Western ports like Los Angeles and Seattle.

Berkshire will pay \$100 a share in cash and stock for the rest of the company, more than a 30 percent premium on the Monday

closing price of Burlington Northern shares. Shareholders will have the option of a \$100 cash payment per share or common stock in Berkshire.

Burlington Northern Santa Fe Corp. stock shot up \$20.93, or 27 percent, to \$97 on Tuesday. Stock in other rail companies also rose. Berkshire owns a 2 percent stake in Union Pacific’s stock and a less-than-1 percent stake in Norfolk Southern.

Buffett has said he realized a few years late that railroads were an appealing investment. As diesel prices rise, shipping by rail instead of truck becomes more attrac-

tive, and it would be extremely difficult for a competitor to build a new railroad.

“They do it in a cost-effective way and extraordinarily environmentally friendly way,” he said. “I basically believe this country will prosper and you’ll have more people moving more goods 10 and 20 and 30 years from now, and the rails should benefit. It’s a bet on the country, basically.”

Burlington Northern made about 31 percent of its money last quarter from shipments of consumer products from the West to major hubs like St. Louis, Kansas City and Chicago.

LOUISIANA

Justice resigns after interracial wedding flap

Associated Press

BATON ROUGE, La. — A Louisiana justice of the peace who refuses to marry interracial couples resigned Tuesday, after weeks of calls for his ouster from civil rights groups and several public officials, including the governor.

Keith Bardwell quit with a one-sentence statement to Louisiana Secretary of State Jay Dardenne: “I do hereby resign the office of Justice of the Peace for the Eighth Ward of Tangipahoa Parish, Louisiana, effective November 3, 2009.”

Gov. Bobby Jindal called Bardwell’s resignation “long overdue.”

Beth Humphrey, who is white, has said she and her now-husband, Terence McKay, who is black, received their marriage license from the parish clerk of court, where they also got a list of people qualified to perform the ceremony.

When she called Bardwell’s office on Oct. 6 to ask, Humphrey said Bardwell’s wife

told her the justice wouldn’t sign their marriage license because they were a “mixed couple.”

When questioned, Bardwell, who is white, acknowledged he routinely avoids marrying interracial couples because he believes children born to them end up suffering. In interviews, he said he refers the couples to other justices of the peace, who then perform the ceremony, which happened in this case.

“There is a problem with both groups accepting a child from such a marriage,” Bardwell said in an October interview with The Associated Press. “I think those children suffer, and I won’t help put them through it.”

Bardwell didn’t return repeated calls Tuesday to comment about his resignation, which followed calls for his removal from officials including Jindal and U.S. Sen. Mary Landrieu.

Humphrey and McKay have filed a federal civil rights lawsuit against Bardwell. His wife is named as a defendant.

PARIS

Anthropology giant Levi-Strauss, 100, dies

Associated Press

PARIS — After weeks crossing the high seas, Claude Levi-Strauss breathed in his first lungful of the New World, a perfume tinged with pepper or tobacco. The sensory awakening was the start of a journey that turned a young Parisian scholar into a founder of modern anthropology.



Levi-Strauss

On that 1930s trip that took him across the Atlantic to Latin America, Levi-Strauss’ scholarly upbringing guided him on a methodical search for humankind’s inner workings as he met tribes in Brazil’s jungles. His studies would later electrify — and divide — the intellectual world with the idea that cultures share similarities

underlying their myths and patterns of behavior.

Levi-Strauss’ death at age 100 was announced in Paris on Tuesday. French media said he died on Friday.

Born Nov. 28, 1908, in Brussels, Belgium, to French parents of Jewish origin, he was forced to flee France during World War II after Germany invaded and the collaborationist Vichy regime passed anti-Jewish laws. He ended up in New York, which he called “the most fruitful period of my life.”

He was widely regarded as having reshaped anthropology, becoming the leading advocate of what is now known as structuralism. His ideas reached into fields including the humanities and philosophy.

France reacted with emotional tributes led by President Nicolas Sarkozy, who called him the “indefatigable humanist” and noted his environmental side.

WASHINGTON

Climate debate has rocky start in Senate

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — European leaders pressed Congress and the White House on Tuesday to unite on a plan to combat global warming, even as a Republican boycott forced a delay of votes in a key Senate committee, demonstrating the deep partisan rift.

An emotional plea for action by German Chancellor Angela Merkel in an address before Congress was met with silence from most Republicans, while Democrats stood and applauded.

The Europeans as well as the U.S. were pressured in turn by African nations to do more, at a conference in Spain leading up to next month’s international cli-

mate summit in Copenhagen, Denmark.

In Washington, shortly before Merkel spoke in the House chamber, GOP senators on the Environment and Public Works Committee shunned the planned startup of voting on amendments to a 959-page Democratic bill that would curb greenhouse gases from power plants and large industrial facilities. They protested that the bill’s cost to the economy — in the form of more expensive energy and the impact on jobs — had not been fully examined.

The action underscored the difficulties Democratic leaders face in moving climate legislation this year — or even in showing significant momentum ahead of the Co-

penhagen conference. At that meeting, nations will try to forge an agreement on cutting heat-trapping pollution beyond levels established in 1997 in Kyoto, Japan.

“We all know we have no time to lose,” Merkel said, arguing that at Copenhagen “the world will look to us, to the Europeans and to the Americans” for leadership on setting binding reductions of greenhouse gases. It’s a matter “in the interest of our children and grandchildren and in the interest of sustainable development all over the world,” she said.

“I liked her speech, but I disagree with her completely on the climate comments,” said Sen. John Barrasso, R-Wyo., a sharp critic of the Senate bill.

Merkel made the same plea on climate action earlier in a meeting with President Barack Obama on a day of far-flung developments concerning the contentious climate change issue:

- European Union leaders, also meeting with Obama at the White House, pressed anew for U.S. action. European Commission President Jose Manuel Barroso told reporters that he was worried about the progress being made ahead of the Copenhagen conference and called a climate agreement “a defining moment” for this generation of world leaders.

- The European officials pressed for a larger U.S. contribution to an international aid fund to help developing countries adapt to a warmer world.

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