

Washington DC

Lethal heat: Dozens of people have died in the past two weeks as a result of the heatwave that has been spreading across several states in the Midwest and on the eastern seaboard, shrivelling crops and buckling railway lines. Among the worst-affected cities was Washington DC, where a plane sank into the heat-softened runway at Reagan airport as temperatures soared above 105°F (41°C), just short of the highest ever recorded there. The heatwave lasted for 11 days around the city, with the mercury consistently above 95°F (35°C) in many areas. In Indianapolis, a baby girl died after being left in a car. Elsewhere, the heat claimed several elderly victims after storms cut off power lines, leaving 400,000 people without fans or air conditioning for a week. The temperatures were blamed on a dome of high-pressure air that prevented cooling winds reaching vast swathes of the country (see page 17).

Washington DC

Obama's tax proposal: With dismal unemployment figures threatening his chances of re-election this November, President Obama placed fiscal fairness firmly at the centre of his campaign this week, by calling for higher taxes on the wealthy. At a White House event on Monday, the president said that Congress should extend the tax cuts introduced by George W. Bush for those earning less than \$250,000 a year, but cancel them for anyone earning above that amount. His Republican opponent, Mitt Romney, wants all the cuts made permanent. Though opinion polls suggest that most Americans support Obama's plan, it does not have the full backing of his party. Some Democrats think the threshold should be \$1m.

**Los Angeles, California**

Crime queen arrested: Police in Los Angeles have arrested one of Mexico's most notorious female criminals – a 27-year-old drugs cartel boss known as *La Reina del Crimen* (The Queen of Crime). Anel Violeta Noriega Rios (pictured) is believed to be the senior US representative of La Familia, one of six criminal cartels that control the multi-billion-dollar business of shipping drugs across the US's southern border. A 64-page warrant issued in 2010 revealed some of her methods, including the use of a gardening company to import drugs into LA in shipments of fertiliser. There was a £250,000 reward on her head.

San José

Post office campaign: The Costa Rican post office has launched a £1.5m campaign to persuade people to use addresses on envelopes instead of improvised descriptions of their intended destinations. The rock band U2 reportedly wrote their song *Where the Streets Have No Name* after visiting the country, where most people – including post office employees – take pride in flouting the address system (there is, in fact, no shortage of street names or house numbers). The designations they invent – such as “150m west of McDonald's”, or “Steps past the dead parrot” – are often obscure, outdated or inaccurate, and a quarter of letters are never delivered as a result. “You have to be a mind reader, a historian and a detective in this job,” said a postman.

**Cartagena, Colombia**

Nobel laureate's decline: The Nobel Prize-winning Colombian author Gabriel García Márquez is suffering from dementia, and will not work again, his younger brother has revealed. Jaime García Márquez said that the 85-year-old (left) now often phones him to ask basic questions. “Sometimes I cry because I feel like I'm losing him,” he said. García Márquez, who now lives in Mexico, is perhaps best known for his 1967 novel *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, which has sold more than 30 million copies.

This week, a spokesman for his foundation said he had not been diagnosed with dementia, but was suffering from memory lapses.

Wolfeboro, New Hampshire

The Romney Olympics: Mitt Romney was accused of handing a gift to his political rivals last week, when he retreated for a week-long holiday at his 13-acre, \$8m waterfront estate on Lake Winnepesaukee in New Hampshire. As commentators wrung their hands about the economic crisis, daily photographs emerged of the presumptive Republican presidential candidate and his relatives cavorting on jet skis and speedboats on the lake, and competing in something known to the family as “the Romney Olympics”. President Obama was quick to capitalise on the affair: on the campaign trail, he spoke of his own favourite childhood holiday, spent travelling between modest Howard Johnson hotels. “You were very excited to go where the vending machine was and the ice machine and get the ice,” he recalled. However, more recently Obama has spent his vacation at Martha's Vineyard.

**Buenos Aires**

Dictators sentenced: The former Argentinian dictator Jorge Videla has been found guilty of the systematic theft of babies from Leftist activists who were tortured and killed by the military regime; he was sentenced to 50 years in jail. Reynaldo Bignone – Argentina's last dictator, from 1982 to 1983 – was also convicted, and sentenced to 15 years. Hundreds gathered outside the court to celebrate the verdict, led by the Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo, a group founded by relatives of those lost during the “Dirty War” of 1976 to 1983. The case focused on 34 babies, from an estimated 400 that “disappeared”. Many were given to families with links to the regime. Videla, 86, and Bignone, 84, are already serving life terms for other crimes.