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BLOOMBERG News (BN) Date: Apr 12 2010

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By Alexander Kwiatkowski and Grant Smith

April 12 (Bloomberg) -- Benchmark New York oil traded at a discount to London's Brent contract for the first time since December as stockpiles surged in the U.S.

The West Texas Intermediate May crude futures contract on the New York Mercantile Exchange traded as much as 25 cents below the comparable North Sea Brent contract on London's ICE Futures Europe exchange today, the biggest intraday discount since Dec. 21. WTI was more than \$1 a barrel higher than Brent less than two weeks ago.

U.S. crude stockpiles have risen for ten consecutive weeks and are at the highest since June last year, a report by the Energy Information Administration showed last week. Inventories at the key delivery point in Cushing, Oklahoma, have gained for three weeks, and were at 31.164 million barrels as of April 2.

"Cushing also plays an important role in influencing the spread," said Hakan Kocayusufpasaoglu, chief investment officer at Archbridge Capital in Zug, Switzerland. "When Cushing inventories start building, it has to do with Canadian imports."

WTI typically trades at a premium to Brent to reflect the additional cost of shipping crude to the U.S. from other regions. A discount will make oil from west Africa and the North Sea, which are priced against Brent, less attractive to U.S. refiners.

--Editors: John Buckley, Rob Verdonck