



Top Stories

UK and Aussie troops will not fight opium in Afghanistan



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Messenger, commander of the British forces in Southern Afghanistan.

Australian children suffering from iodine deficiency



A new study reveals that almost half of all Australian primary school children are mild to moderately iodine deficient. The report has prompted calls for all edible salt to be iodized.

Featured story

Alternative to controversial hotel proposed to Buffalo, N.Y. business owners and residents

At the February 22nd meeting about the proposed Elmwood Village Hotel, Rocco Termini unveiled a new proposal. Termini's proposal will use most of the existing structures, have at least seven retail outlets and no hotel.

Wikipedia Current Events

- A bomb attack in Samarra, Iraq badly damages the Al Askari Mosque, a holy site in Shi'a Islam. Violent reactions, suspected to be reprisals, result in over 100 deaths.
- Two are arrested after bank robbers in England make off with at least £50 million in the Securitas depot robbery, one of the largest

Wikipedia Current Events

ever in Europe.

- Both houses of the South Dakota state legislature vote to ban all abortions in the U.S. state, except to save the life of the mother.

Alternative to controversial hotel proposed to Buffalo, N.Y. business owners and residents

Residents and business owners in the Elmwood Avenue neighborhood and surrounding area in Buffalo heard a competing proposal for development in their neighborhood at the February 22 meeting held at the Burchfield-Penney Art Gallery, at Buffalo State College. The meeting, attended by at least 140, was originally to consider the Elmwood Village Hotel but also included a new revitalization proposal from Rocco Termini which would increase retail space, but involves less demolition and no hotel.

Rocco Termini, a Buffalo, New York developer wants to develop the corner of Elmwood and Forest, the same spot where Savarino Construction Services Corporation want to build the Elmwood Village Hotel.

Termini proposed that a similar revitalization take place on the intersection like one that incorporated 3 buildings on Aurburn and Elmwood just last year. Termini's proposal will add more retail space than Savarino's proposal with the possibility of including up to seven retail outlets.

"I just think it's necessary to preserve the streetscape that we have. That's the whole point of living and shopping on Elmwood," said Termini. "You should be able to go into little shops, that have unique

items, and that bring people to Elmwood. When you bring a big box on Elmwood Avenue, it takes something away from the urban-streetscape, just as suburban areas do not want a big box Wal-Mart. We don't want a big box on Elmwood avenue and I think that's just what this (the hotel) does, brings a big box to Elmwood," said Termini.

When asked if there were any development companies currently interested in his proposal Termini said, "I will be willing to take a look at this myself," said Termini. "Or I would be more than happy to be partners with Sam, Sam Savarino," who is President and Chief Executive Officer of Savarino Construction Services Corp.

An unnamed source close to the project stated, "Rocco has serious concerns that the Mobius's asking price could make his project infeasible."

It is unknown if Savarino Construction or the city of Buffalo will consider Termini's proposal.

Termini purchased and developed several buildings and areas including the Ellicott Lofts on Ellicott Street in Buffalo, which opened in 2003, The Oak School Lofts which used to be a Buffalo Alternative School, and 'IS' Lofts on Oak Street in Buffalo.

Eva Hassett, Vice President of Savarino Construction, and Karl Frizlen an architect from The Frizlen Group and designer of the hotel commented on the development proposal. Hassett said, "We've been thinking about it and trying to put it together for the last few months, and it was made public a couple of weeks ago."

"There are lots of different areas you

can look at. This is an Elmwood Avenue hotel. Putting it somewhere else makes a completely different kind of hotel. We wanted a hotel that people could walk to from the business on Elmwood. We wanted a hotel that people could walk to from the Albright Knox Art Gallery. This is really a location for this kind of hotel. Other locations end up being for other kinds of hotels," said Hassett

"We are excited about the concept of a boutique hotel at this corner. We think it makes sense to the various businesses in the area or the galleries just down the street. We also believe that this is a way for the visitors of Buffalo to experience what the best of what Buffalo has to offer. We think it will be a great way for people from out of town, to get to know what we know about the city," said Hassett.

Although Hassett had said that the proposal has only been around "for a few months", Karl Frizlen said that he came up with the idea "three years ago when Hans Mobius," former owner of the properties at risk, "came to me and asked what we could do with these properties." Frizlen also said that he introduced Mobius to "four different developers, who after seeing the properties, did not want to tackle them, saying that they felt like it was too much for them to take on."

Hans Mobius did not attend last nights meeting.

Frizlen is also designing the former telephone company building at 504 Elmwood which would be a "mixed use building with retail on the lowest level and lofts on the other two floors."

UK and Aussie troops will not fight opium in Afghanistan

Colonel Gordon Messenger, commander of the British forces in Southern Afghanistan, has said that troops under his command will not be engaged in the fight against

opium cultivation. "There will be absolutely no maroon berets [of the marines] with scythes in a poppy field," he said.

The United Nations has reported that a "fear that Afghanistan might degenerate into a narco-state is slowly becoming a reality."

U.S. State department officials and the CIA claim that Afghan drug trafficking is a primary source of funding for terrorists. Doug Wankel, a former Drug Enforcement Administration official who is point man for the U.S. counternarcotics initiative at the American Embassy in Kabul, said the opium industry is "financing terrorism. It's financing subversive activities. It's financing warlordism. ... And if it's a threat to the government of Afghanistan, it's a direct threat to the national security interests of the United States."

Australia recently committed 200 extra troops to Afghanistan. Prime Minister John Howard has said that they also will not be involved in destroying opium poppies. "Well, dealing with that is overwhelmingly the responsibility of the local authorities," he said.

A 2005 U.S. State department report warned that Afghanistan is becoming a "narcotics state". Afghan hectares in opium cultivation has increased by 50% since the coalition invasion; up from an average of 67,000 prior to the invasion (1998-2001), to an average of 97,000 since the invasion (2002-2005). The last year under the Taliban, 2001, saw production of 185 metric tonnes; in 2005 production was 4,100 metric tonnes.

Afghanistan produced 87% of the world's opium in 2005 with 104,000 hectares in production. President Karzai has blamed the coalition for this situation, "This particular operation (controlling opium production) was supposed to be done by an agency, a department that was funded by the international

community, by the United States, by Britain. The failure is theirs, not ours." Karzai said. "Where international money and creation of forces for destruction of poppies was concerned, it was ineffective and delayed and half-hearted." Karzai is opposed to aerial spraying which was proposed by the United States, as is done in other drug producing regions of the world, because of what Karzai called "health concerns".

Adrian Edwards of the United Nations stated 2 months ago that early reports indicate "there will be an increase in poppy cultivation in 2006".

Michael Morales execution postponed indefinitely

The execution of Michael Morales, convicted in 1983 of the murder of Terri Winchell, has been postponed indefinitely because San Quentin State Prison (California) could not comply with a federal court's order that his execution be supervised by licensed medical personnel.

Morales was originally scheduled to be executed at 12:01 a.m. on February 21, 2006, but the execution was postponed until 7:30 p.m. that evening after two anesthesiologists assigned to participate in the execution withdrew on ethical grounds. The anesthesiologists were originally asked to participate in compliance with an order by a federal judge.

In his February 14 ruling on a motion by Morales's lawyers, U.S. District Judge Jeremy Fogel required that either Morales should die of a lethal dose of barbiturates instead of the standard three drug combination used in lethal injection, or that two anesthesiologists should be on hand to ensure that Morales would feel no pain from the two drugs that caused paralysis and heart failure. Fogel also ruled that the barbiturates should be administered by a licensed medical professional.

Prison officials could not find a

medical professional willing to administer the single-drug lethal injection.

Australian children suffering from iodine deficiency

Almost half of all Australian primary school children are mild to moderately iodine deficient, researchers say. A new study documenting iodine nutritional status in Australian schoolchildren has revealed many are not getting enough iodine - which can lead to mental and growth retardation. The report's authors say iodine deficiency is "the sleeper health issue in Australia", and potentially a very serious one.

The results of the Australian National Iodine Nutrition Study published in the Medical Journal of Australia this week, revealed that children in mainland Australia are borderline iodine deficient. The report has prompted calls for all edible salt to be iodized. They say adding the mineral to salt is the simplest and most effective method of preventing iodine deficiency disorders.

A cross-sectional survey of 1709 schoolchildren - aged 8-10 years, from 88 schools - was carried out in New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, Western Australia and Queensland, between July 2003 and December 2004. Tasmania was excluded from the study - where an voluntary iodine fortification program using iodized salt in bread, is ongoing.

The authors say the results confirm the existence of inadequate iodine intake in the Australian population. They call for "urgent implementation of mandatory iodisation of all edible salt in Australia." Most iodine in food comes from seafood, milk and iodized salt.

Professor Cres Eastman, Director of the National Iodine Nutrition study, and Chairman of the Australian Centre for Control of Iodine

Deficiency Disorders, says it is crucial that children and pregnant women in particular have an adequate intake of iodine. Iodine deficiency can lead to serious health problems including brain damage, stunted growth and deafness.

Professor Eastman says manufacturers could easily remedy the situation by using iodized salt in their products in line with the United States and most European countries. "I suspect they won't do that on a voluntary basis, we've tried so far and haven't succeeded, so we've convinced the Food Standards of Australia and New Zealand that all salt should be iodised," he said.

The report says the decline in iodine intake appears to be due to changes in the dairy industry, where chlorine-containing sanitizers have replaced iodine-containing sanitizers. Iodine released from these chemicals into milk has been the major source of dietary iodine in Australia for at least four decades, but is now declining. Another contributory factor has been the decreasing consumption of iodized salt used in foods. The report states that few if any food manufacturers use iodized salt in the preparation and manufacture of foods.

Professor Eastman says iodine is added to only 10 per cent of Australian salt in contravention of a World Health Organization recommendation that all salt be iodized. He says authorities are reacting slowly to his urgent calls for mandatory iodized salt.

"The effects of iodine deficiency are dependent upon how severe it is and when it occurs. So if we go to the pregnant woman, she doesn't get enough iodine, she won't make enough thyroid hormone, and the foetus won't get the amount of thyroid hormone it needs for adequate and proper development of the brain, so you'll then see consequences being loss of IQ, learning difficulties, hearing difficulties and other neurological

problems," Professor Eastman said.

"If an infant's not getting enough iodine... brain development won't be completed and they won't grow normally, and as you get older the problem will be that you will develop a goitre and your thyroid won't function as well as it should, so that may have all sorts of pernicious effects upon normal function in life."

More than two billion people around the world live in areas prone to iodine deficiency, and yet the problem is easily fixed. The World Health Organization (WHO) recommends that every country should iodize all edible salt. The most well known effects of IDD are visible goiter and cretinism, a condition characterized by severe brain damage occurring in very early life. WHO say Iodine deficiency is the world's most prevalent, yet easily preventable, cause of brain damage.

Professor Eastman said he is alarmed by what they found. "Pregnant women in Australia are getting about half as much as what they require on a daily basis. So that alarms me, because there's quite serious potential for adverse effects and brain damage in the next generation of children born in this country," he said. "If Iodine deficiency is serious you lose 15 IQ points, on average. There shouldn't be anyone suffering from iodine deficiency in a developed country like Australia."

Lydia Buchtman for Food Standards Australia New Zealand, says they are looking at mandatory guidelines on iodine by the end of the year. She says the issue is complicated and will take time to get right. We need to "make sure there's sufficient iodine added into the food supply, to help those people with a deficiency. But at the other end of the scale we've got to make sure the people who eat a lot of food - we all know the teenage boy who comes home from school and eats a whole loaf of bread - that those people don't get too much and get overdose," Ms Bauchtman said. "One of the reasons

that iodine is going down is because people are taking that good healthy eating message and not adding salt during cooking."

Senior researcher Mu Li, of the University of NSW's school of public health, said "it is reasonable to assume that pregnant women and breastfeeding mothers are also iodine deficient, putting the next generation of children born in this country at risk of the neuropsychological consequences of iodine deficiency."

Today in History

- 303 - Roman Emperor Galerius began to persecute Christians.
- 1582 - Pope Gregory XIII issued the papal bull *Inter gravissimas* to promulgate the Gregorian calendar, a modification of the Julian calendar in use since 45 BC.
- 1803 - *Marbury v. Madison* established judicial review in the United States.
- 1848 - Louis-Philippe, the Orléanist King of the French, abdicated and escaped to England.
- 1946 - Colonel Juan Perón was elected to his first term as President of Argentina.

Quote of the Day

"Our armament must be adequate to the needs, but our faith is not primarily in these machines of defense but in ourselves." ~ Chester Nimitz

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