



Top Stories

Tensions between the U.S. and Russia flare before the G8 Summit

Russian President Vladimir Putin has accused the U.S. of starting another arms race and called the U.S. an imperial power. Putin's comments were in defense of Russia's new missile system, tested Tuesday.

Alexander Litvinenko was British spy, claims alleged killer

Andrei Lugovoi, a suspect in the poisoning death of Alexander Litvinenko, says that the British government tried to recruit him to be a spy and that Litvinenko worked for MI6.

Featured story

Thai Rak Thai dissolved, ex-premier Thaksin banned from politics

Thailand's former ruling party, Thai Rak Thai, was found guilty of election fraud by a Constitutional Tribunal, and ordered to be dissolved. Its former leader, ousted prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra and 110 party leaders are banned from politics for five years, the court also ruled.

Wikipedia Current Events

- South Thailand insurgency: At least 10 soldiers have been killed in a bomb attack by suspected militants in southern Thailand, officials say.
- Alleged Internet spammer Robert

Wikipedia Current Events

Soloway is arrested after being indicted on charges of identity theft, money laundering, and mail, wire, and e-mail fraud.

- Qatar Airways orders 80 Airbus A350 planes.
- The Parliament of Latvia selects Valdis Zatlers as the new President of Latvia.
- A suicide bomber explodes in a police recruitment centre in Falluja, Iraq killing at least 20 people.
- Nepal's ruling coalition government announces that elections to a special assembly to write a new constitution will be held in November.
- Approximately 100 pro-Taliban insurgents attack the home of a government official in northwest Pakistan, killing 13 people.
- The Malaysian Federal Court rejects the appeal of Christian convert Lina Joy to have the word "Islam" removed from her identity card.

Tensions between the U.S. and Russia flare before the G8 Summit

Ahead of the G8 summit next week, Russian President Vladimir Putin accused the U.S. starting an arms race and called it an "imperial power." "We are not the initiators of this new round of the arms race," Putin said during a joint Kremlin news conference.

On Tuesday, Russia test-fired a

new missile with multiple warheads and a new cruise missile, which Russian generals say are sufficient to ensure the country's security for the next 40 years.

President Putin defended the missile technology saying that it is: "aimed at maintaining the balance of forces in the world."

Putin, alarmed by U.S. plans to deploy parts of its global missile defence system in Poland and the Czech Republic said: "There is a clear desire by some international players to dictate their will to everyone without adhering to international law," Putin said. "International law has been replaced by political reasons."

"In our opinion it is nothing different from diktat, nothing different from imperialism," he added.

U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice fired back saying Russia's fears are "ludicrous." The Russian Foreign Minister, Sergei Lavrov responded to Rice's claims by saying that "There is nothing ludicrous about it"

Putin, who has been faulted both in Russia and abroad for curtailing civic freedoms, is in his second term as President of Russia. The term will expire in 2008.

US tuberculosis patient moved to Denver hospital

A United States man, identified recently as 31-year-old Andrew

Speaker from Fulton County, Georgia, has left Grady Memorial Hospital. Officials have confirmed that he was transported on a chartered Learjet overnight to Denver, Colorado. He is now at the National Jewish Medical and Research Center, which specializes in respiratory, immune system, and allergy research and treatment.

The National Jewish Medical and Research Center was founded in 1899 to treat tuberculosis, and is today considered one of the world's best medical research and treatment centers. It is a non-sectarian institution but received funding from B'nai B'rith until the 1950's.

Meanwhile, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has released the complete itinerary of the patient, who travelled to Europe while infected with extensively drug resistant tuberculosis (XDR-TB).

Speaker, an Atlanta-based lawyer, travelled on the following flights, according to the CDC:

- Air France / Delta 385 / 8517
- Air France 1232
- Olympic Air 560
- Olympic Air 655
- Olympic Air 239
- Czech Airlines 727
- Czech Airlines 0104

US Homeland Security has said it will launch an investigation into CDC officials' handling of this case, which has created an international health incident. The investigation will look into whether the man should have been placed in quarantine and under guard before he had the opportunity to fly to Europe.

Speaker was put on a no-fly list

and had his passport flagged. Nevertheless, he still managed to fly to Canada and then drive a car across the border into the United States. A border agent, who has since been suspended from duty, ignored a warning on his computer to put on protective gear and detain Speaker.

Speaker's father-in-law, Bob Cooksey, is a 32-year veteran of the CDC, where he works in the CDC's Division of Tuberculosis Elimination. In a statement issued through the CDC, Cooksey said that although he routinely works with infectious organisms including TB, he was not the cause of his son-in-law's TB.

"As part of my job, I am regularly tested for TB. I do not have TB, nor have I ever had TB," said Cooksey. "My son-in-law's TB did not originate from myself or the CDC's labs, which operate under the highest levels of biosecurity."

Malaysian court rules Christian woman can't remove Islam from ID

A Malaysian Christian woman who has been fighting a six-year legal battle to have the word Islam removed from her national identification card, has lost an appeal with the Malaysian Federal Court. The three-judge panel rejected the appeal in a 2-1 decision on Tuesday in Putrajaya.

Lina Joy, 42, was born Azlina Jailani to Malay parents, and was raised as a Muslim. Malaysia's constitution guarantees freedom of religion, but by law, all ethnic Malays are Muslim.

Joy converted to Christianity at age 26, and after some bureaucratic difficulties had her named legally changed in 1999. However, on her MyKad national

ID, the National Registration Department retained her stated religion as Islam. In order to have her religion changed, the National Registration Department said Joy would have to obtain a certificate of apostasy from the Muslim Sharia Court.

"I am hoping that my case would have made a difference to the development of constitutional issues in the plight of many others." —Lina Joy

But under Sharia law, Muslims are not allowed to convert, nor may they marry outside their religion. But since she is no longer a Muslim, Joy has said she should not be bound by that law.

She applied to Malaysia's High Court in April 2001 to legally renounce her religion, but was refused, with the court saying the issue must be decided by the Sharia Court. The Court of Appeal rejected the case in September 2005.

In Tuesday's ruling at the Palace of Justice, Justice Ahmad Fairuz and Federal Court Judge Alauddin Mohd Sheriff rejected the appeal, while Justice Richard Malanjum dissented. The hearing was the final legal step Joy could take, although her lawyer, Benjamin Dawson, said he was considering filing for a review of the judgment.

Joy received the verdict with "great sorrow", the New Straits Times reported.

"I am disappointed that the Federal Court is not able to vindicate a simple but important fundamental right that exists in all persons; namely, the right to believe in the religion of one's choice and equally important, the right to marry a person of one's

choice and to raise a family in the Malaysia context," Joy was quoted in a statement from her lawyer, and published in The Star. "The Federal Court has not only denied me that right but to all Malaysians who value fundamental freedoms.

"I am hoping that my case would have made a difference to the development of constitutional issues in the plight of many others."

Joy has since been disowned by her family, and forced to quit her job. A Muslim lawyer who supported her case received death threats. Joy went into hiding last year, and is believed to be living outside Malaysia. Now, it's not likely she will return, The Star reported. "It would extremely difficult to exercise freedom of conscience in the present environment," she was quoted as by the paper.

Muslim groups welcomed the verdict, while rights groups condemned it.

"It's clearly justified and fair," Yusri Muhd, president of The Defenders of Islam Coalition, was quoted as saying by Channel NewsAsia. "We hope that we've seen the last of such an attempt."

Ivy Josiah of the Women's Aid Organization said was "deeply disappointed" by the ruling, she said her group was encouraged by the dissenting judgment "which means there's still light at the end of the tunnel."

The lone dissenting justice, Chief Judge of Sabah and Sarawak Richard Malanjum, wrote: "To expect the appellant to apply for a certificate of apostasy - when to do so would likely expose her to a range of offenses under the

Islamic law - is, in my view, unreasonable."

Man eats dog to protest animal cruelty

In an unusual protest, British performance artist, Mark McGowan ate meatballs which were made from a Corgi, a breed of dog often kept by the Royal Family.

McGowan is protesting alleged cruelty exhibited by Prince Philip. The husband of Queen Elizabeth II is reported to have beaten to death a fox, during a fox hunt.

The event was broadcast live on a radio program hosted by Bob and Roberta Smith. Yoko Ono, widow of John Lennon, was also there and tasted some of the Corgi meatballs.

People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) seemed to approve of the protest: "The idea of eating a corgi will make many people lose their lunch," said Poorva Joshipura, European director. "But foxes, who are hunted for so-called entertainment, are no less capable of feeling fear and pain." McGowan said the corgi he consumed had died recently at a breeding farm and had not been killed for the purposes of the protest. It was minced with apple, onion and seasoning, turned into meatballs and served with salad, but McGowan said: "It's disgusting. It's really, really, really disgusting."

The Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA) claimed however that there was no evidence that Prince Philip had mistreated the fox or that it had suffered.

Alexander Litvinenko was British spy, claims alleged killer

Andrei Lugovoi, the man who

British authorities say poisoned and killed a ex-Russian spy Alexander Litvinenko with polonium-210, a radioactive isotope, says that the British government tried to recruit him to be a spy and that Litvinenko was working as a spy for British intelligence. He also claims that the British government is connected with the murder of Litvinenko and that he "has evidence" to prove his claims, but did not state what the evidence might be.

According to Lugovoi, who spoke to reporters during a press conference in Moscow, the British government wanted him to collect personal information that related to the Russian President, Vladimir Putin.

"[I was] openly recruited as the British security service agent. They asked me to collect any...compromising information about [Russian] President [Vladimir] Putin and the members of his family," said Lugovoi.

Lugovoi also stated that Litvinenko and a Russian tycoon named Boris Berezovsky were also working for the British government saying "Litvinenko became an agent who left the control of (British) special services and was killed. In the words of Sasha himself, first he was recruited and afterwards, on his advice, Boris Abramovich gave to the British some security council documents [from Russia] and also became an MI6 agent."

Lugovoi also told the press that he had no motive to commit the murder and that Litvinenko was not an enemy of his.

"Sacha [Litvinenko] was not my enemy. I didn't feel cold or hot from whatever he was doing, from

the books that he was writing. I've been in business for a long time and I was not really interested. [Litvinenko was killed] If not by the British intelligence services themselves, then under their control or with their connivance," added Lugovoi.

So far, British officials denied to comment on the claims saying that the incident is a matter for the criminal system.

"This is a criminal matter and not an issue about intelligence. A request for extradition for Mr. Lugovoi to face trial in a UK court has been handed over. We await the formal Russian response," said the Foreign Office of the U.K..

Litvinenko died on November 23, 2006, due to complications from his Polonium-210 poisoning.

Treatment of Indonesian governor in Sydney causes diplomatic stir

Relations between Australia and Indonesia have been strained due to an incident in Sydney, New South Wales involving a visiting Indonesian governor.

Governor of Jakarta Sutiyoso claims New South Wales police entered his harbourside hotel room whilst he was taking a nap, using a master hotel key, failing to knock or announce their presence before entering.

The police were requesting that the governor give evidence at an inquest into the 1975 death of an Australian cameraman Brian Peters in the neighbouring country of East Timor. Peters was killed in crossfire, along with four fellow Australian-based newspeople, in Balibo, just prior to the Indonesian military's invasion of East Timor. The circumstances around their

death have been the centre of allegations regarding a cover-up by Indonesia and Australia, particularly from some of the families of those killed.

Sutiyoso is a retired Lieutenant General who served in the Indonesian military for three decades, and was involved in Indonesia's occupation of East Timor.

The now-governor refused to accept the request for summons, saying "I have nothing to do with the case."

Indonesian reaction

The Indonesian Ambassador to Australia's office has lodged a formal protest with the New South Wales government in Sydney over the treatment of Sutiyoso, who was a guest of the New South Wales Government. The governor was in Australia's most populous city to try and revive a possible co-operation agreement between the two neighbouring countries.

Since the incident, Sutiyoso cut short his trip, which involved an official visit to Canberra, Australia's capital city. He has also been outspoken about his treatment, accusing those involved of acting in an exceedingly inappropriate way.

"I really feel slighted by such treatment", Sutiyoso said. "If there is no apology, I will deem it as arrogance on their part, and do we need to continue relations with Australia?"

The incident caused a demonstration outside of the Australian Embassy in Jakarta. Hundreds of protesters rallied outside the complex, demanding

an explanation and apology from the Federal Government. They also threatened to find Australians living in the Indonesian capital city and force them to leave the country if an apology wasn't given.

The Foreign Ministry of Indonesia has expressed their opinion that any findings from the Brian Peters inquest will be ignored by Indonesia, and will only serve to make the presently-weak relations between Australia and Indonesia more fragile.

Australian reaction

The Federal Government of Australia, through Foreign Affairs Minister Alexander Downer, has expressed that they understand Indonesia's feelings on the matter. He also stated that Australians need to be more sensitive to Indonesia's notion of humiliation in the future, saying that Indonesian people would see this as "an enormous humiliation for a major Indonesian figure."

The Federal Government also expressed their view that the issue was one that needed to be handled via the New South Wales Government, as the incident involved one of the state police, and Sutiyoso was an official guest of the NSW government at the time of the event.

New South Wales Premier Morris Iemma has scheduled a meeting with Indonesian officials for early next week to discuss the issue, with the intent of easing the diplomatic tension involving Sutiyoso. Iemma expressed, however, that the police were not acting under the direction of the NSW Government, and added that "[Australia] have a system that is different to the Indonesians, where

the political arm [of government] is independent from the judiciary and the police."

According to Sutiyo, Australia's Ambassador to Indonesia, Bill Farmer, has spoken to the governor about his treatment by police, and has personally apologised.

9,000 gallons of liquid butane spilled as tanker truck overturns

A semi-tractor carrying 9,000 gallons (34,000 litres) of liquid butane overturned at the weekend on the United States highway 50 east of Salida, Colorado, rupturing the tank and spilling its contents.

The road was closed to traffic for 20 hours during one of the busiest times of the year, and traffic rerouted along a three-hour diversion route.

Colorado State Patrol reports state the driver, Roger Meely, 62, was hauling a pressurised tank full of butane when he lost control and crashed near Mile Marker 228. Colorado State Patrol Sgt. William Holt described the accident, "He lost control of the vehicle in the curves, veered across the lanes and rolled it." Meely was treated and released from the Heart of the Rockies hospital in Salida after the crash, but escaped serious injury.

The truck rolled at about 6:50 p.m. six miles from Salida, prompting closure of the highway. Although the driver escaped unharmed, 10-15 homes and an unknown number of campsites along the Arkansas River were evacuated as fumes began to drift downstream towards the town of Swissvale. Rafters were ordered away from the area, but Hazmat crews were able to prevent butane from contaminating the river.

Emergency workers were forced to allow the butane to vent itself through the night. Capt. Jack Cowert of the Colorado State Patrol said, "I would say those of us on scene were surprised it didn't explode."

In total, the following organisations responded: the Colorado State Patrol Hazardous Materials Unit, South Arkansas Fire Protection District, Howard Volunteer Fire Department, Arkansas Valley Ambulance, Chaffee County Emergency Services, Alpine Towing and the Colorado Department of Transportation.

"The driver either wasn't paying attention or he was driving too fast" —William Holt, Colorado State Patrol

An attempt was made at 9:00 a.m. Monday to right the tanker and tow it away, but in the process of securing it to the tow truck it slipped and a dolly axle buckled, further lengthening the delay.

The road was not reopened until 3:10 p.m. Monday. Sheila Johnson, a flagger working for Alpine Towing, later said of the commuters affected that they were mostly understanding, saying of them, "For the most part people were pretty good about the road being closed,".

Holt blamed the driver for the accident, saying he "will be cited for something," and that "anytime a crash like this happens, the driver either wasn't paying attention or he was driving too fast." It was later determined that the driver's excessive speed was to blame. He was ultimately charged over the incident.

The incident sparked a full review evaluating the emergency response, which included about ten agencies.

Arnold Schwarzenegger marks three day visit to Canada

Arnold Schwarzenegger, the current governor of California, started his three day visit to Canada yesterday.

Upon arrival at the Pearson International Airport in Toronto, Schwarzenegger was met with Ontario premier Dalton McGuinty and U.S. Ambassador David Wilkins.

He arrived at the Delta Chelsea hotel in downtown Toronto, where Canadian reporters waited to ask him questions. At a Liquor Control Board of Ontario (LCBO) store, workers and shoppers were stunned to see the former actor, who came to promote California wine with LCBO chairman Phillip Olsson; after, he gave autographs to his many fans. Schwarzenegger then arrived at a local grocery store promoting California fruits and vegetables.

He was presented with a Special Olympics jacket at the hotel, where the unveiling of Team Canada's new uniforms took place.

He then arrived at the Liberty Grand hotel to give a speech.

"It's great to be here in Canada -- a trade mission means not just trading good and services but also ideas," Schwarzenegger told reporters.

Both politicians signed an agreement today for Ontario and California to donate \$30 million over 5 years for stem cell research. They also signed an agreement today for low-carbon

fuel standards.

"All great things start on the grassroots level," said Schwarzenegger. "Eventually, the federal government is going to get it."

McGuinty told reporters that he doesn't want to "over-power" the Canadian government itself by being the only province in the country to have limited emissions from vehicles, noting the whole country should follow Schwarzenegger's plan.

Schwarzenegger, today, made a brief speech at Toronto's Economic Club at The Sheraton Centre Grand Ballroom, 123 Queen Street West, at around 12:50 p.m. ET and is expected to receive the Newsmaker of the Year award there.

He is set to meet with Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper today in Ottawa as well as British Columbia premier Gordon Campbell in Vancouver on Thursday. He will talk more about Climate change and stem cell research.

Schwarzenegger also put his bid for the Ducks to win the 2007 Stanley Cup Finals tonight in Anaheim, California against the Ottawa Senators, whom McGuinty put his support behind.

Today in History

1779 - Benedict Arnold, a general in the Continental Army during the American Revolutionary War, was court-martialed for malfeasance.

1831 - British naval officer and explorer James Clark Ross led the first expedition to reach the Magnetic North Pole.

1922 - The Royal Ulster Constabulary, a police force in Northern Ireland, was founded.

1943 - Eight German Junkers Ju 88s shot down British Overseas Airways Corporation Flight 777, killing actor Leslie Howard and several other notable passengers.
2001 - Crown Prince Dipendra of Nepal killed King Birendra and several members of the royal family in a shooting spree.
June 01 is International Children's Day, Madaraka Day in Kenya.

Quote of the Day

Strength of character does not consist solely in having powerful feelings, but in maintaining one's balance in spite of them. Even with the violence of emotion, judgment and principle must still function like a ship's compass, which records the slightest variations however rough the sea.
~ Carl von Clausewitz

Word of the Day

sylph; n

1. A spirit of the air.
2. A slender, graceful girl or woman.

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