



Top Stories



Wildfires burn in southern California

Turkey preparing for incursion into Iraq after PKK militants kill 17 soldiers

As many as 17 Turkish soldiers were killed and 16 were injured in an ambush by Iraqi Kurdish militants (PKK) on the Iraq-Turkey border.

Featured story

BDSM as business: An interview with the owners of a dungeon

This is the first of a two part series examining the BDSM business, which focuses on the owners of an S&M dungeon, what they charge, what goes on, what the clients are like and how they handle their needs.

Wikipedia Current Events

The Kurdistan Workers Party declares a unilateral ceasefire following an attack on Turkish forces.

•The President of the United States George W. Bush asks the United States Congress for \$US189.3 billion to fund the wars

Wikipedia Current Events

in Iraq and Afghanistan.

•Al-Jazeera broadcasts an audiotape purporting to be from Osama bin Laden calling on Al-Qaeda in Iraq and other Sunni militants to unite forces.

•An investigation concludes pilot error caused the crash of Garuda Indonesia Flight 200 on March 7, killing 21 people.

•At least a dozen wildfires burning throughout Southern California have forced the evacuations of more than 250,000 residents.

•The Governor of California Arnold Schwarzenegger orders the deployment of 1500 California National Guard members to help fight the fires.

•Joaquim Chissano wins the the inaugural Prize for Achievement in African Leadership for "his role in leading Mozambique from conflict to peace and democracy".

•Georgia and Slovakia offer to send troops to support the Australian/Dutch taskforce in the south of the Afghanistan as the Dutch government is under pressure to reduce troops.

•Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) demands general elections in Pakistan in two months time.

•Voters in Fakafo go to the polls for the Tokelauan self-determination referendum.

•The United States dollar reaches a new record low on the euro, which is traded at \$1.4348.

•The 2007 Kyrgyzstani

Wikipedia Current Events

constitutional referendum is approved by about 75% of voters. President of Kyrgyzstan Kurmanbek Bakiyev dissolves the parliament and announces a snap legislative election will take place in December 2007, which he will contest with his newly founded party Ak Zhol.

•At least 25 killed when Tamil Tiger fighters attack a Sri Lankan air force base in the Anuradhapura district with heavy fighting reported.

•Four new members join the powerful Politburo Standing Committee of the Communist Party of China, China's de facto top power organ. They are Xi Jinping, Li Keqiang, He Guoqiang and Zhou Yongkang. President Hu Jintao and Premier Wen Jiabao retain their seats.

Oral Roberts returns to namesake university amid son's scandal

Former faith healer and televangelist Oral Roberts returned to as President of Oral Roberts University (ORU) on October 22. His son Richard Roberts, who served as president since 1993, stepped down last week amid allegations of illegal political and financial wrongdoing.

Oral said that all allegations made in the ORU lawsuit and an attached report are false and "said the university will begin mediation this week with the three former professors." However according to

Tulsa World, an attorney for the professors who sued ORU said, "Right now, we're a bit disturbed about attempting any type of a settlement as long as they're so adamant they haven't done anything wrong," and "We would prefer to move forward and develop the information and develop the case."

Wikisource has original text related to this article:

Swails, Brooker, Brooker v. Oral Roberts University

On Monday night alumni, clergy, and the people fired held a rally at 7:00 PM asking for Richard to permantly resign. They say Robert's temporary leave of absence "isn't enough."

Wildfires burn in southern California

Los Angeles Area: Wildfires in Malibu, California, USA have forced the evacuation of several celebrity homes, as well as the campus of Pepperdine University. High winds and low humidity in the area have only helped to strengthen the fire.

Additionally, firefighters are currently having a difficult time getting in to Malibu, as the only road that leads in to the area is the Pacific Coast Highway, which often sees heavy traffic, although it has been closed between Kanan Road and Topanga Canyon Boulevard. Currently, 700 firefighters are working on fighting the blaze. The fire has burned more than 1200 acres so far and 5 homes have been lost with another 9 damaged, however there have been no reported injuries or deaths.

Other Los Angeles County wildfires are burning in Agua Dulce (~10,000 acres), Chatsworth, and Castaic.

San Diego County: San Diego, California, USA fires are burning at Witch Creek and at Potrero in San Diego County. The Witch Creek fire, as of 5:50 AM PDT Monday, has burned 8000 acres, and has merged with another fire near the San Diego Wild Animal Park. The city of Ramona, California, USA is under mandatory evacuation and authorities have ordered evacuations in Rancho Bernardo, California, USA and Poway, California, USA as the fires surge west. So far, over 250,000 people have been evacuated in San Diego County.

Additional fires are now being reported in Fallbrook, California, USA and San Marcos, California, USA. The San Diego County Office of Emergency Services (OES) advised residents north of state Route 56, south of Del Dios Highway, west of Interstate 15 and east of Interstate 5 to evacuate, as of 8:32 AM PDT Monday. Since Del Dios Highway is a short north-south segment, it is not clear what OES' intended northern boundary was. Qualcomm Stadium in Mission Valley is opening as an evacuation center.

As of 732 AM PDT Monday, authorities are reporting 18,000 acres burning in San Diego County, with 0% containment.

As of 1016 AM PDT Monday, 250,000 people have been evacuated from their homes. Rancho Santa Fe, California, USA was ordered emptied, while dozen of homes were on fire in Ranch Bernardo, California, USA.

As of 1032 AM PDT Monday, the CHP advises that Interstate 15 is still closed in both directions between state Route 78 and state

Route 56

As of 145 PM PDT Monday, evacuations were ordered for Scripps Ranch, California, USA, specifically "Everything south of Scripps Poway Parkway, North of MCAS Miramar, East of Interstate 15, West of Highway 67." This evacuation comes almost four years to the day after the Cedar Fire of 2003.

Here is a map that shows the fires and evacuations centers in San Diego County.

Orange County: In Orange County, a 3800-acre fire is burning in Silverado Canyon.

California governor Arnold Schwarzenegger has declared a state of emergency.

Nobel laureate Doris Lessing: 9/11 'wasn't that terrible' compared to IRA attacks

British writer Doris Lessing, recipient of the 2007 Nobel Prize in Literature, has said in an interview that the terrorist attack on September 11 "wasn't that terrible" when compared to attacks the Irish Republican Army (IRA) made on Britain.

"September 11 was terrible, but if one re-examines the history of the IRA, what happened in the United States wasn't so bad," Lessing told leading Spanish daily publication El Pais. "Some Americans believe I'm crazy. Many people died, two prominent buildings fell, but it was neither as terrible nor so extraordinary as they think.

"Do you know what people forget? That the IRA attacked with bombs against our government; it killed several people while a Conservative congress was being held and in which the prime

minister, Margaret Thatcher, was (attending). People forget," She says, adding a comment that the Americans are "a very naive people, or they pretend to be."

The IRA spent decades in armed guerrilla warfare against the United Kingdom, but officially ended its militaristic practices in 2005, after a lengthy peace process. The violence in Northern Ireland killed approximately 3,700 people and horrendously injured tens of thousands. By way of comparison, about 3,000 people were killed during 9/11.

She goes on to criticize former prime minister of the United Kingdom Tony Blair and his ally current President of the United States of America George W. Bush. "I always hated Tony Blair, from the beginning. Many of us hated Tony Blair, I think he has been a disaster for Britain and we have suffered him for many years. I said it when he was elected: This man is a little showman who is going to cause us problems and he did."

"As for Bush, he's a world calamity," Lessing continues "Everyone is tired of this man. Either he is stupid or he is very clever, although you have to remember he is a member of a social class which has profited from wars."

Iran also comes in for criticism. Lessing's parents currently reside in Bakhtaran, Iran. "I hate Iran, I hate the Iranian government, it's a cruel and evil government. Look what happened to its president in New York, they called him evil and cruel in Colombia University. Marvelous! They should have said more to him! Nobody criticizes him, because of oil."

New audiotape attributed to Osama bin Laden released

The leader of al-Qaeda, Osama bin Laden, has released a new audiotape which was broadcast through Al Jazeera. The tape is entitled Letter to the people of Iraq.

On the tape, he reportedly calls for unity among insurgents in Iraq, but also says that insurgents have been "lax" in their duties. In the tape, bin Laden's main focus is on Iraq.

"Some of you have been lax in one duty, which is to unite your ranks. Beware of division ... The Muslim world is waiting for you to gather under one banner. The interest of the Islamic nation surpasses that of a group. The strength of faith is in the strength of the bond between Muslims and not that of a tribe or nationalism. Beware of your enemies, especially those who infiltrate your ranks. I advise myself and the Islamic nation not to follow individuals and countries. Everything should be seen in the light of Islam," said bin Laden on the tape.

The voice on the tape has yet to be confirmed to be that of bin Laden's and it is not known how the network received the tape.

Report blames pilot error for Garuda Indonesia Flight 200 disaster

A final report released today has found pilot error to be the cause of the crash of Garuda Indonesia Flight 200 in Indonesia on March 7, 2007. 21 people were killed when the Boeing 737 airliner, carrying 140 people, overshot the runway at Adisucipto International Airport, near Yogyakarta. It crossed a road and then struck an embankment, bursting into flames, before stopping in a rice field,

some 252m from the end of the runway.

The pilot is found to have been singing as he began the final descent, in direct contradiction to the Garuda Basic Operations Manual, which calls for activation of the Sterile Cockpit Rule at 10,000 feet and below.

The pilot was probably emotionally aroused because his conscious awareness moved from the relaxed mode "singing" to the heightened stressfulness of the desire to reach the runway by making an excessively steep and fast, unstabilised approach," the report continued. However, it does say that he was fully aware that something was wrong during the approach, as he is recorded as having said "Oh, there is something not right."

The report found that that the aircraft was flown by the pilot in command at a speed far exceeding that at which the wing flaps were able to operate properly. The report continues to criticise the pilot further, saying that a cockpit alert by the Ground Proximity Warning System informing the pilot he was flying too fast sounded no less than 15 times, but the pilot failed to abort the landing. He also ignored the co-pilot telling him to execute a 'go-around procedure' after the aircraft struck the runway at speed and bounced back into the air.

The co-pilot is himself found to be at error by the report, which points out that he should have taken over the controls from the pilot when it became clear the aircraft was being flown in a dangerous manner. However, the report did note that Garuda Indonesia had failed to give him any simulator training replicating a

situation whereby the co-pilot would take over control duties from the pilot in charge due to unsafe handling of the plane; in fact, training was found to be inadequate for both members of the cockpit crew.

In the report's own words: "During the approach, the Ground Proximity Warning System (GPWS) alerts and warnings sounded 15 times, and the copilot called for the pilot in command to go around.

"The aircraft was flown at an excessive air speed and steep flight path angle during the approach and landing, resulting in an unstabilised approach.

"The pilot in command did not follow company procedures that required him to fly a stabilised approach, and he did not abort the landing and go around when the approach was not stabilised.

"His attention was fixated or channelised on landing the aircraft on the runway and he either did not hear, or disregarded the GPWS alerts, and warnings, and calls from the copilot to go around."

Authorities were also found to be at fault, with the Indonesian Director General of Civil Aviation criticised for failing to identify inadequacies in pilot training procedures. he was also criticised for the fact that the aircraft had managed to go virtually uninspected, with only two safety checks in a decade.

The report adds that the Aircraft Rescue and Firefighting facilities at the airport were also lacking on the day of the accident, for struggling to access the crash site and for not having the appropriate fire supressant upon their eventual

arrival. The report says these delays likely had an impact on the survivability factors on board the plane in the moments after crashing, when the aircraft was in flames. It ultimately took more than two ours before the fire was put out. Another criticism leveled at the airport was that it failed to comply with international runway safety regulations.

The report has trigered a call from Caroline Mellish, sister of Australian Financial Review Morgan Mellish, one of five Australians killed in the accident, for greater co-operation between different Indonesian authorities. "I think not working together as different departments in a government shows a lack of any sort of system," She said from Jakarta, to which she had travelled for the release of the final report.

"If they can't work together in different departments, I don't know how they are going to run a country and make any difference investigating this sort of accident and ensuring the recommendations do get carried forward to ensure that no more accident happen."

However, she did have some sympathy to spare for the pilot who was in control of the plane that day when the possibility of his prosecution was raised: "I think having 21 deaths on your conscience is probably enough. I don't think prosecuting the man is going to make any difference."

National Transport Safety Committee chairman Tatang Kurniadi said that no information from the report would be used in any criminal or civil liability investigations. "I would like to go back to the objective of this, the report was made by NTSC for

safety purposes only, not for blaming, he said.

"If any institution wants to ... follow up that accident, that's their own decision.

"The report contained the results from the cockpit voice recorder and flight data recorder, but according to international regulations on aviation these black boxes are not allowed to be used for... liability purposes.

"We will not give police or any institution (information) other than for safety purposes only - it's in international regulations and we want to follow those regulations.

MOEA Taiwan signs MOUs with 5 global WiMAX companies to connect with networking industry world-wide

At the 1st day of WiMAX Forum Taipei Showcase & Conference, Ministry of Economic Affairs of R.O.C. Taiwan (MOEA Taiwan) not only set M-Taiwan Pavilion supervised by Industrial Development Bureau of MOEA Taiwan, but also signed MOUs with 5 world-class WiMAX companies to enhance the advance of networking industry in Taiwan especially in WiMAX environment.

In the contract-signing ceremony, MOEA Taiwan chose Alcatel-Lucent, Motorola Inc., Nokia-Siemens, Starent Networks, and Sprint-Nextel to sign MOUs with different technologies such as interoperability testing (IOT) to help companies in Taiwan with testing and purchasing WiMAX networking devices and develop solutions with high prime costs to expand the opportunity in global marketing.

"Governments and networking industry in Taiwan is still

promoting on M-Taiwan project, the investment with WiMAX infrastructure in Taiwan is the 2nd highest in the world, we estimate that by 2012, the production value of WiMAX will break NT\$140 billion. With the MOUs signing, the industry development of WiMAX infrastructure in Taiwan will be improved rapidly with product testing and lots ways of applications to ensure the prime position in the global WiMAX chain." Steve Ruey-long Chen (Minister of Economic Affairs of Taiwan) remarked at the Ceremony.

According to MOEA Taiwan, this MOUs signing is the 2nd time after signing with world-class companies like Intel, NEC, Nortel, and Rohde & Schwarz Technology. With this MOUs signing, it will improve the networking industry and WiMAX infrastructure in Taiwan.

Second grader suspended from school after drawing disturbing picture

Kyle McDevitt, a seven-year-old, second grade boy at Dennis Township Primary School in New Jersey, was suspended for one day after drawing an image of one stick figure person shooting another.

The drawing depicted two stick figures, one labeled as 'me' by McDevitt and the other was labeled with the name of another student, with McDevitt smiling while shooting the other student. While on a school bus, the child gave the drawing to another student who took it home and showed it to his parents. The parents then filed a complaint with the school's district.

According to the boy's mother, Shirley McDevitt, the gun was a squirt gun filled with water. She

also said that the boys are friends with each other. She has asked school officials to "expunge" her son's permanent school record of the incident.

"When a child draws at that age, they're not drawing with thought," stated McDevitt.

She also stated that officials for the school district said that the boy was suspended because of the schools policy on "zero-tolerance" for guns.

Other sketches are reported to have been drawn such as a skateboarder, a cyclops and a ghost.

Australia Votes 2007: Treasurer says Labor tax plan contains error

Australian Treasurer, Peter Costello has attacked the opposition Labor party's tax cuts saying they contain a "basic error". The error Mr Costello claims could cost 45 percent of Australians an additional \$600 a year in tax.

Speaking at a joint press conference with the Prime Minister, Mr Costello accused Labor of failing to increase tax thresholds. "In order to meet the goal of having 45 per cent of taxpayers on a 15 cent threshold or less you have to keep lifting those thresholds ... and they made a basic error," said the Treasurer.

"They understood you had to keep lifting the low income tax offset because they adopted that but they made a fundamental and basic error in not lifting those other thresholds."

Mr Costello said Mr Rudd has ignored the problem by admitting the error and adjusting his tax thresholds.

"He refused to admit the error and as a consequence 45 per cent of Australians will be worse off," he said.

Mr Costello accused Mr Rudd of using his announcement of an increased childcare rebate to distract voters from errors in his tax policy.

"He went on to announce changes to the childcare rebate to draw attention away from his blunder.", the treasurer said.

Mr Costello accused Labor of copying it's policy and says that the parts the government didn't release are those on which Labor made errors.

Labor has dismissed the claims, saying that voters only needed to look at Mr Costello's history on tax.

He says Mr Costello is desperately trying to kick the tax debate along, but should have a good look at his own record.

"It's time Mr Costello got real about tax reform," said Mr Rudd.

"If he was a reforming Treasurer after 11 years he would have taken a meat axe to rates, what has he always done? Fiddle faddled, and fiddle faddled around on the whole question of thresholds, that's all he's ever done."

Two US soldiers killed, one wounded in Bahrain

In Bahrain, two unnamed United States Navy soldiers were killed and one other was seriously injured when they were shot inside their barracks at around 5:00 a.m. (UTC+3) at a naval base located in Bahrain. The Navy has stated that

the incident is isolated and is not considered an act of terrorism.

The Navy says that the injured soldier was taken to a hospital to receive medical attention, while the two dead soldiers were pronounced dead at the scene of the crime.

So far reports say that all involved parties are American and that the incident was a "domestic" dispute between at least two female U.S. Navy soldiers.

Bahrain is home to the Fifth Fleet which is part of the U.S. Naval Forces Central Command. At least 3,000 soldiers are stationed there, but that number does not include the troops on ships currently docked at the base's port.

Sydney FC sack manager Branko Culina

Australian A-League club Sydney FC has sacked manager Branko Čulina, nine rounds into the 2007-08 season.

Čulina was appointed following Terry Butcher's sacking at the end of the 2006-07 season, after Sydney played unattractive football and only managed to finish fourth in the eight-team competition.

Čulina began his management career at the St Albans Saints in 1989, following a successful career as a player which concluded at the same club. He has since managed seven other major teams, including the very successful Sydney United, before his appointment to Sydney FC.

According to reports, he was summoned to Sydney FC headquarters on the afternoon of October 22 (AEST), before being told his services were no longer

required. Čulina, having been appointed prior to Sydney's first incursion into Asian club football as part of the 2007 AFC Champions League, only served six months of his two year contract.

His former team sit in sixth place, having won just two of a total of nine A-League games this season. They currently sit four points from the top four, which grants entry into the final series, after nine of twenty-one rounds.

Boston Red Sox win American League Championship

In what appears to be a case of history repeating itself, the Boston Red Sox are once again headed to the World Series after being down three games to one just as they were three years ago in the 2004 ALCS against their hated rival, the New York Yankees.

Last night's game ended with the Red Sox winning 11-2 over the Cleveland Indians. The \$103 million dollar rookie import from Japan, Daisuke Matsuzaka, pitched five innings for Boston, allowing two runs on six hits. Cleveland's Jake Westbrook started and took the loss. This proved to be a much better showing for Boston's "Dice-K" than his previous outing, which Boston lost.

The Sox jumped out to a quick lead, scoring a run in each of the first three innings on a single by Manny Ramirez, a sacrifice ground-out by Julio Lugo, and a sacrifice fly by Mike Lowell. The Indians scored their first run on a Ryan Garko double in the fourth inning, and a Grady Sizemore sacrifice fly in the fifth made the score 3-2 in favor of the Sox.

In the sixth inning, Hideki Okajima came in to relieve Dice-K and pitched two scoreless innings

before Jonathan Papelbon came in to close in the eighth. He entered the game with runners on first and second and no outs, but quickly retired the side and in the ninth managed to maintain the nine run lead, once again giving fans a performance of his Riverdance style victory dance.

In the seventh inning, Red Sox rookie second baseman Dustin Pedroia hit a two-run home run off of Rafael Betancourt that drove Boston's Fenway Park wild. Boston scored a total of 6 runs in a crazy eighth inning, on a single by J.D. Drew, a three-run double by Pedroia, and a two-run Kevin Youkilishome run which bounced off Fenway's legendary Coke bottle advertisement. Betancourt gave up the first four runs, with the home run allowed by Jenson Lewis. Youkilis was the first batter he faced in relief of Betancourt.

The Sox will go on to face the Colorado Rockies, the surging National League Champions. The games will begin October 24th, with the first game at Fenway Park.

Australia Votes 2007: Analysts say Rudd wins TV debate

With Australian Prime Minister, John Howard and Labor leader Kevin Rudd facing off in a leader's debate on Sunday night, political analysts and body language experts declared Mr Rudd the clear victor. Experts said that Mr Rudd came across as believable and enthusiastic while Mr Howard appeared too negative.

The focus of the debate was on the economy, Iraq war, leadership and climate change.

On the economy, the Labor leader said that the cost of living had increased in Australia and that

increasing the childcare rebate to 50 percent would help struggling families.

"That's putting several thousand dollars extra into the family budget," he said.

The Prime Minister tried to reassure voters on industrial relations, one of the key topics of the election saying that despite his Workchoices legislation being controversial it has largely achieved what the government aimed it to do. "Our whole design with WorkChoices was to underpin further growth in the Australian economy. It wasn't easy. It was heavily criticised, but the general evidence is WorkChoices has been good for the Australian economy," said the Prime Minister.

Mr Howard also ruled out making further changes to Australia's industrial relations system saying that the government had "gone far enough".

Mr Howard also dismissed claims that his planned \$34 billion of tax cuts would cause inflation and a rise in interest rates.

"They will dampen wage demands that might otherwise be much stronger because of those cost of living pressures," he said.

The leaders debated over who the genuine economic conservative. Mr Howard said that Mr Rudd's voting record in parliament seemed to contradict his claim. The Prime Minister warned that a Labor government would run budget deficits. "Being an economic conservative is more than a slogan in a TV advertisement, it is believing in things," he said.

"Everyone knows Labor governments equal budget deficits

and Liberal governments mean budget surpluses."

Mr Rudd said there was now consensus between both sides of politics on economic issues and took the opportunity to remind voters of Mr Howard's performance as treasurer in the Fraser government of the late 1970s to early 1980s. Mr Rudd said that the prime minister was a treasurer at a time of high interest rates and ran four out of five budgets with deficits. "Let's have some honesty on the table here. Let's get the record straight," said Rudd.

Mr Howard dismissed his record attacking Labor's record of interest rates in the 1980s under Bob Hawke "There is one interest rate figure that is seared in the memory of most Australian families the level of 17 per cent," he said.

The Prime Minister attacked the opposition's front bench saying that there were far too many former union members. Mr Rudd hit back by saying that Mr Howard's frontbench was disproportionate in its make up. "If something's out of whack in terms of an unrepresentative group in the community, a cocktail of lawyers and former Liberal Party staffers would have to be high up the list," he said.

The Prime Minister also used the forum to announce new climate change initiatives and an update of the role Australia is playing in Iraq. Mr Howard promised that low-income earners would be compensated for the "inevitable" rise in costs for electricity that moving to cleaner production would bring. By comparison the Labor leader reiterated his support for the Kyoto protocol and promised to ratify it if elected.

Mr Howard said that Australian commanders in Iraq would this week start discussing taking on a broader training role in Iraq to help train Iraqi soldiers.

Rudd questioned Howard on the shift of policies in Iraq and asked the Prime Minister why Australians should believe him after ruling out an increase in troop numbers before the last election, only to double them when elected. The comments sparked an argument between the two leaders with Mr Howard accusing Mr Rudd of involving the military in politics.

"You chose to use it in a very political fashion. I was providing some information to the Australian people and I was pointing out the evolving nature of the commitment of our ground forces in Iraq," said Howard.

Cheney warns of 'serious consequences' of Iran's nuclear ambitions

In a speech on Sunday, U.S. Vice President Dick Cheney warned that Iran will face "serious consequences" if it refuses to stop enriching uranium. In his speech, Cheney also accused Iran of being "the world's most active sponsor of state terrorism," and called Iran's government "a growing obstacle to peace in the Middle East."

"The Iranian regime needs to know that if it stays on its present course, the international community is prepared to impose serious consequences," Cheney said in a speech to the Washington Institute for Near East Studies, without specifying whether those consequences would include military action. "The United States joins other nations in sending a clear message: We will not allow Iran to have a nuclear weapon,"

he said.

Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Mohammad Ali Hosseini said today that Iran's nuclear policies are "unalterable" and that terminating Iran's nuclear program "isn't on the agenda and won't be." Iran maintains that it is developing nuclear energy for peaceful purposes, a position that has been backed by Russian President Vladimir Putin.

In an interview with CNN, U.S. Representative Jane Harman (D-Calif.) said the language being used by the Bush administration is "very dangerous" and recommended stronger U.N. sanctions as an alternative to "war-mongering threats." "We heard about mushroom clouds and other images before the military action in Iraq. I wish the president would avoid that," she said.

Teacher sexual misconduct rampant in American schools, says AP

An Associated Press investigation published Sunday revealed findings of more than 2,500 cases of sexual misconduct by educators in the American educational system over a five year period.

The cases reported in the investigation ranged from the merely strange, with cases involving verbal abuse, to the barbarous, with cases involving molestation and rape.

Investigations suggest that many cases of sexual abuse are never reported, and those that are reported often do not lead to punishment for the offender. The cases do not always include enough evidence, and for this as well as other reasons the schools, courts, state governments, and federal governments cannot be

sure that they are keeping sexual deviants out of teaching.

Certain academic studies estimate that only about 10 percent of victimized children report sexual abuse of any kind to a person who can take action to help them.

When sexual misconduct is reported, teachers, administrators and some parents frequently cannot, either subconsciously or consciously, recognize the warning signs of a crime.

After examining records in all 50 states and the District of Columbia, the AP found that 2,570 educators had their teaching licenses taken away, denied, surrendered voluntarily or restricted from the period of 2001 through 2005, all as a result of sexual misconduct allegations.

Minors were the victims in at least 1,801 of the cases, and more than 80 percent of those minors were students of the accused criminals. More than half of the educators who were disciplined by their state governments were consequently convicted of crimes related to the allegations of misconduct.

The cases that the AP found were those of all types of educators -- teachers, school psychologists, and even principals and superintendents. The accused are often popular with students and parents, and are widely perceived as good teachers. In nearly 90 percent of the cases, the offenders are male. While certain educators were accused of sexual misconduct in school, others were cited for abuse that occurred after hours and did not always involve one of their own students. At least 446 of the cases uncovered by the AP involved educators with multiple victims.

A preponderance of cases involved teachers in public schools since many private schools do not require their teachers to be licensed and most private schools do not allow their disciplinary records to be publicly viewed.

The American Federation of Teachers (AFT) and the National Education Association (NEA), two large teaching unions, each decried sexual abuse while pinpointing the importance of considering educators' rights.

"If there's one incident of sexual misconduct between a teacher and a student that's one too many," Kathy Buzad of the AFT told the Associated Press.

"Students must be protected from sexual predators and abuse, and teachers must be protected from false accusations," said NEA President Reg Weaver in a press release.

However, while the AP found attempts to stop particular offenders, it also discovered a firm resistance towards identifying and preventing abuse. In schools, fellow teachers often ignore the abuse or feel they cannot help. School administrators cut backdoor deals to sidestep lawsuits or bad press. And in state governments and Congress, lawmakers are weary to impose harsher punishments or any national policy in fear of harming an important profession.

For example, in the state of California some of the most sadistic sex abuse is flagged, but state law allows a multitude of offenses to remain confidential in disciplinary records, even when teachers are sentenced to imprisonment and become registered sex offenders.

The dearth of information is evidence of a system of disciplining teachers that, nationwide, is often cloaked in secrecy. It is difficult for states to share necessary information about those accused of misconduct and allows some to find classroom jobs in other states.

An additional problem is that while the National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification maintains a listing of educators who've been disciplined for any reason, it only shares this information with other state agencies. Also, many teachers do not appear on the list because they resign before losing their licenses.

"(Schools) might deal with it internally, suspending the person or having the person move on. So their license is never investigated," says Charol Shakeshaft, an expert in educational sexual abuse who leads Virginia Commonwealth University's educational leadership department.

"There is the possibility that one of these people could move to another jurisdiction, most likely another state, and you wouldn't be able to find out their history," says Todd Spitzer, a Californian assemblyman, former prosecutor, and former high school English teacher.

Another disturbing trend is that cases of misconduct seem to be on the rise in many places. According to a New York State Education Department report, the number of "moral misconduct" accusations against educators in New York has doubled in five years. In 2005, 134 cases of "moral misconduct" were reported involving teachers and other school employees, as compared to just 70 cases in

2001. According to an overview of the cases, almost 75 percent of the "moral conduct" cases involved sexual acts or an improper relationship. In all, 485 misconduct cases occurred over the five year period in New York state.

The AP's national analysis shows Texas and California with the most sexual misconduct cases, each with two to three times as many cases as New York. Florida proved about the same as New York.

Mary Green, a parent in Washington County who rallied against a teacher she suspected of misconduct, says the key to stopping the abuse is listening.

"If a child says such-and-such a person, teacher, coach or neighbor is 'weird,' the parent should not simply dismiss this comment, but have the child explain why the person is weird," she said. "Often we simply shush them without finding out why the child feels that way. People tend to think it won't happen to them."

Today in History

425 – Valentinian III became Emperor of the Western Roman Empire at the age of six.

1642 – The Battle of Edgehill, the first pitched battle of the First English Civil War between the Royalists and the Parliamentarians, was fought to an inconclusive result near Edge Hill and Kineton in southern Warwickshire.

1906 – Early flight: Alberto Santos-Dumont flew the 14-bis aircraft for 60 metres (200 ft) at a height of two to three metres (10 ft).

1956 – The Hungarian Revolution began as a peaceful student demonstration which attracted thousands as it marched through

central Budapest to the Parliament building.

1983 – Lebanese Civil War: Suicide bombers destroyed two barracks in Beirut, Lebanon, killing 241 U.S. Marines and 58 French paratroopers of the international peacekeeping force.

October 23 is National Day in Hungary (1956); Chulalongkorn Memorial Day in Thailand.

Quote of the Day

Think for yourself and question authority. ~ Timothy Leary

Word of the Day

mudra; n

- (dance, art) Any of several formal symbolic hand postures used in classical dance of India and in Hindu and Buddhist iconography.
- (Hinduism) Formal body positions and postures used in yoga and meditation.

About Wikinews

We are a group of volunteer journalists whose mission is to create a diverse community where citizens from around the globe (including **you**) can collaborate to report the news on a wide variety of current events. By making our content perpetually available for free redistribution and use, we hope to contribute to a global digital commons.

Got news and no computer? Call the Wikinews Hotline

+1-866-653-4265
(toll-free in the U.S.)
+1-202-742-5918
(outside the U.S.)
+44-871-218-6397
(U.K. / Europe)

License

This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution License. Articles published in this Print edition were created by Wikinewsies. Other content released under the GNU Free Documentation License.

About Wikinews

To view a copy of the CC-BY license, visit:

<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.5/>

or send a letter to

Creative Commons

543 Howard Street, 5th Floor

San Francisco, California, 94105, USA

To view a copy of the GFDL, visit:

<http://www.gnu.org/copyleft/fdl.html>

Wikipedia Current Events

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Portal:Current_events

Today in History

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Main_Page

Quote of the Day

http://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Main_Page

Word of the Day

http://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Main_Page

About Wikinews Print Edition

For more information about Wikinews

Print Edition visit:

<http://en.wikinews.org/wiki/Wikinews:Print>