



### Top Stories

#### 18 killed in U.S. air strike on village in Pakistan

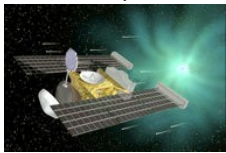


A U.S. air strike on a Pakistani village on Friday killed at least 18 people, including

several children. U.S. media reports are claiming that leading al-Qaeda member Ayman al-Zawahiri was a target, when remote controlled Predator drones fired at least 4 missiles at the village of Damadola in the Bajaur tribal area of northwestern Pakistan.

#### Comet Wild samples near home

Stardust, which is on her way home, is releasing her capsule to begin re-entering Earth's Atmosphere. The capsule is scheduled to land this morning at 10am (GMT) in the Utah desert.



#### Saddam's judge submits Resignation



*Saddam at his trial in 2004.*

The chief judge in Saddam Hussein's trial has called it quits and submitted his resignation yesterday.

The reasons for his resignation are still unknown and it's not known at this time whether his resignation will be accepted.

Rizgar Mohammed Amin, one of a 5 judge tribunal overseeing the Saddam's case, has offered to resign, a court official has told the press.

Prosecutor Jaafar al-Mousawi, has told the media that Amin's resignation, if accepted, would not affect the proceedings because he can be quickly and easily replaced.

Since the trial opened on Oct. 19, two defense lawyers have been assassinated and a third fled the country. Police also uncovered a plot to fire rockets at the courtroom in late November.

Another court official, who wished for his name not to be released due to the sensitivity of the case, said Amin had offered to resign but efforts were under way to get

him to reverse the decision.

At least 2 judges on the case earlier in the week had said that the remarks that Amin was going to resign were "untrue."

#### 18 killed in U.S. air strike on village in Pakistan

A United States air strike on a Pakistani village on Friday killed at least 17 people, including six women and six children. U.S. media reports are claiming that leading al-Qaeda member Ayman al-Zawahiri was a target, when remote controlled Predator drones fired at least 4 missiles at the village of Damadola in the Bajaur tribal area of northwestern Pakistan.

The Pentagon has denied any involvement, leading to speculations that have been confirmed by an unnamed American intelligence official, that the CIA was responsible for the strike.

Pakistani intelligence officials have contradicted U.S. claims that Ayman al-Zawahiri was in the area at the time of the strike and suggested that the U.S. intelligence information placing him there was incorrect. According to Pakistani army representatives, Ayman al-Zawahiri was not among the dead. Al Arabiya satellite television network has reported that "a source with contacts with al Qaeda reiterated to Arabiya that Zawahri is alive."

Pakistan condemned the U.S. air

### Featured story

#### Chinese block of Wikimedia enters tenth week

China's block of the Wikimedia project, which includes Wikipedia, has entered into its tenth week.



Beginning October 19, this is the third such block, upsetting students and researchers

who state that it is having a significant impact on their ability to conduct research, and even pass civil service exams.

strike, summoned the United States ambassador, and said that the country "does not allow U.S. forces to cross the border in pursuit of Taliban and al-Qaeda fighters." Pakistan's information minister Sheik Rashid Ahmed said that Pakistan wants "to assure the people we will not allow such incidents to reoccur."

In a statement that was supported by two senior military intelligence officials, the senior minister of the North-West Frontier province, Sirajul Haq, said that "We can say with full authority that those who were killed were all innocent permanent residents of the village Damadola," and denied the presence of foreigners in the vicinity of the air strike.

This was contradicted by the Foreign Office spokeswoman Tasnim Aslam, who said that "according to preliminary investigations there was foreign presence in the area and that in all probability was targeted from across the border in Afghanistan."

The Foreign Office issued a statement Saturday saying it lodged a formal complaint with the United States embassy in Islamabad, where it will be hand delivered by Foreign Secretary Riaz Khan.

This complaint is the second lodged by Pakistan against the U.S. in less than a week. The earlier protest was prompted by U.S. missile attack that killed eight people from a village in the North Waziristan tribal region. According to local officials, none of the victims were terrorist suspects.

### **Augustine volcano erupts**

Augustine Volcano in Alaska erupted five times on January 13. Friday's activity follows two

eruptions on January 11. The Alaska Volcano Observatory predicts the increased activity at Augustine Volcano will continue for several days, possibly for two to three weeks. The volcano last erupted in 1986 and 1976. The AVO expects the current activity to be similar to those two eruptions.



The eruptions have prompted Alaska Airlines to cancel 28 flights into and out of the Alaskan cities of Anchorage, Juneau, Kodiak, and Fairbanks. Ash from the eruptions is likely to spread throughout the Cook Inlet and surrounding areas.



Augustine Volcano has recently seen an increased rate of seismic activity, beginning in May, 2005. Earthquakes on the island increased from a "normal" rate of 1-2 a day to about 15 a day in mid-December. The volcano also experienced up to two inches of uplift prior to the eruptions.

### **Israeli tourism ministry reconsidering Pat Robertson deal on Christian Heritage Center**

The Israeli ministry of tourism is reconsidering cutting ties with Christian televangelist Pat Robertson over the construction of a Christian heritage, pilgrimage and tourism site near the Sea of

Galilee. The Christian Heritage Center which would stretch over 125 acres is placed where, according to tradition, Jesus taught and lived in the Galilee region. Robertson was one of the people at the heart of project which was supported by many other evangelicals who worked to raise \$50 million (USD).

Israeli tourism minister, Avraham Hirschson, and Robertson were just about to sign an agreement that the Israeli government would set aside land and infrastructure for the site, when Robertson made comments on his daily show, The 700 Club claiming that Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's stroke was "Divine retribution" for withdrawing from the Gaza Strip. Robertson said, "'This is my land,' and for any prime minister of Israel who decides he is going to carve it up and give it away, God says, 'No, this is mine.'" Many evangelicals considered the withdrawal as retreating from biblical prophecy of Jewish sovereignty over the Holy Land.

Robertson's comments earned him harsh backlash from many different groups, including the White House and former Presidential candidate, Senator John Kerry of Massachusetts. A spokesperson for Robertson said the comments were taken out of context.

On Wednesday, Robertson sent a letter addressed to Sharon's son Omri apologizing for his comments. In the letter, Robertson said Sharon is "kind, gracious, and gentle man" who was "carrying an almost insurmountable burden of making decisions for his nation." The letter further added, "My concern for the future safety of your nation led me to make remarks which I can now view in retrospect as inappropriate and

insensitive in light of a national grief." Robertson wrote, "I ask your forgiveness and the forgiveness of the people of Israel." According to the Israeli Ambassador to the United States, Israel accepts the apology.

However, despite the apology by Robertson, it was doubtful that he would be brought back into the plan. Hirschson said on Wednesday that "that Robertson's help was no longer welcome."

Ironically, Robertson helped to make television ministries what they are today, and the Heritage Center would contain studios and satellite uplinks for live broadcasts. The groundbreaking for the project is slated to begin later in the year.

### **Liberal Democrat leadership contenders address party members**

Four declared contenders in the Liberal Democrat leadership contest today addressed party members at the London School of Economics. The contest was initiated after Charles Kennedy admitted in a press conference that he had previously sought professional help for an alcohol problem. Initially, Mr Kennedy had stated that he intended to run for re-election in a leadership contest. However, after 25 MPs said they would refuse to serve on the front bench under Charles Kennedy, he resigned immediately and said he would play no part in the leadership contest.

At the meeting today, which had been organised before Kennedy's resignation, the four candidates - Sir Menzies Campbell, Mark Oaten, Simon Hughes and Chris Huhne - were permitted to make 12 minute speeches outlining their vision for the party. The speeches were

broadcast live and unedited on BBC News 24, with clips from them appearing in news bulletins later that evening.

The current acting party leader, Menzies Cambell, the first to declare his intention to stand, said that he wanted new thinking to tackle poverty and social injustice, new thinking to underpin a modern constitution, and a radical democratic revolution. He suggested that international cooperation was the way to make poverty history, and spoke against the decision to invade Iraq. He stressed his "experience" as being a key quality needed for a Liberal Democrat leader.

The MP for the Winchester constituency, Mark Oaten, praised the success of previous leader Charles Kennedy. He pledged to do all he could to defeat attacks on civil liberties in coming months, and stressed that it was important to try and defeat the identity card bill due to be voted on next month. He suggested that the party "needed to be more progressive, ambitious, and optimistic" and should avoid talking about politics in terms of 'left' or 'right'. Speaking about the environment, he said that the solution was not to "dictate how people should lead their lives" but offer positive measures enabling people to take their environmental responsibilities seriously.

The current party president, Simon Hughes, who unsuccessfully ran for the London mayoral position in 2004, promised a consultative leadership and said he wanted the Liberal Democrats to be the "party of fairness". He attacked Prime Minister Tony Blair as having 'failed', with the poorest paying a bigger proportion of their income in taxes than the richest.

He said that there was a need to tackle inequality, and promised to stick with the policy of taxes to tackle inequality. He also supported greater decentralisation of power, and stressed the continued importance of environmental policies.

Former MEP Chris Huhne focused on environmental issues, questioning the government's lack of conviction to the Kyoto targets and the panicked response to the fuel protests. He spoke against David Cameron's lack of environmental conviction and suggested that only realistic means of tackling carbon emissions was through taxation, which could help change behaviour. Higher eco-taxes should be combined with lower personal taxes for those at the bottom of the economic scale, he argued. He also promoted greater powers and accountability for local authorities.

The nominations for leadership candidates close on 25th January, with candidates needing the declared support of at least 7 MPs and 200 party members from at least 20 different constituencies. No other candidates other than the four above are expected to stand. The vote closes on the 1st March, with the result due to be announced on the 2nd March.

### **Brazil, Bolivia Promise Cooperation**

Meeting yesterday at Itamaraty, Brazil's Foreign Ministry, Bolivian President-elect Evo Morales and Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva outlined plans for broad cooperation between the two countries during Morales' upcoming term in office, which begins on the 22nd of this month. Lula's special assistant for International Issues, Marco Aurélio

Garcia, mentioned in particular that Bolivia might be interested in development of its petroleum resources with the help of Brazil's Petrobras, as well as in increasing social programs and seeking to deepen its relationship with other governments.

According to Garcia, there are plans to form a bilateral commission to guide cooperation between the two nations in the coming years.

Public statements from the two leaders have characterized the meeting in glowing terms. After the talks, Morales described a "relationship of brotherhood," saying that he looks forward to the help of Brazil, whom Morales says, "leads the region." Asked about whether the close bonds between the growing number of leftist governments in Latin America constituted the development of an anti-United States counterweight in the region, Morales responded, "We are for a culture of dialogue...We are not going to create a bloc against the U.S."

### **Gordon Brown calls for national day to celebrate 'Britishness'**

British Chancellor Gordon Brown today used a speech addressed to a conference of the Fabian Society to outline his plans for a possible national day for Britain. With the focus of the speech on promoting 'Britishness', Mr Brown asked whether there could be a celebratory day to help develop 'the ties that bind [British] people more closely together'.

"What is the British equivalent of the US 4th of July, or even the French 14th of July for that matter? What is our equivalent for a national celebration of who we are and what we stand for?"

Perhaps Armistice Day and Remembrance Sunday are the nearest we have come to a British day that is – in every corner of our country – commemorative, unifying, and an expression of British ideas of standing firm in the world in the name of liberty responsibility and fairness?"

Former Prime Minister John Major spoke to the BBC Today programme and agreed that the chancellor was "absolutely right" to promote the concept of Britishness, but added "he seems not to mention that many of the actions of the present Government have ruptured Britishness by their own legislation."

A spokesperson for the Commission for Racial equality welcomed the speech, saying "it is important to talk about and identify our shared common values and discuss ideas and find ways to celebrate being British".

Gordon Brown also argued that the British Union Jack flag should be reclaimed from far-right groups such as the BNP, saying "the flag should be a symbol of unity, part of a modern expression of patriotism".

The speech was released in advance to the media on the Labour Party website.

### **Sondhi continues using Thailand Weekly show to attack PM**

In his weekly open-air version of the popular Thailand Weekly show, outspoken Government critic and founder of Manager Media, Sondhi Limthongkul launched another series of stinging attacks against the country's Prime Minister.

Thai PM Thaksin Shinawatra was accused of planning a cabinet

reshuffle in an effort to deflect public attention away from allegations of wrongdoing and corruption. Sondhi alleged that politicians with poor public images would be recruited into the cabinet, and that such was a scheme to overshadow accusations of corruption that have been levelled at the Prime Minister – mainly by Sondhi himself.

Sondhi vowed to continue pursuing Thaksin for answers to questions raised on the Thailand Weekly show about government corruption.

Sondhi went on to make further allegations against the Prime Minister, claiming that free trade agreements made with China and Australia were aimed at benefitting Thaksin's family business interests. Sondhi claims the agreement with Australia would hit local dairy farmer and liquor producers as imports from Australia would be allowed without tariffs. Garlic and onion farmers were claimed to be impacted by the agreement with China whilst the Thaksin family telecom businesses could tap into the Chinese market.

Sondhi's show finished off with a protest march to Government House. The media tycoon led a 3,000 strong crowd with former senator Pratin Santiprapop. By 11pm the number of demonstrators outside Government house was said to be 11,000. Pratin addressed the crowd calling for the resignation of the Prime Minister over a comment he claimed was disrespectful to the King.

### **Actress Shelley Winters dies of heart failure**

Actress Shelly Winters died of

heart failure today at The Rehabilitation Centre of Beverly Hills, her publicist, Dale Olson said. She was 85.

Winters was hospitalized in October after suffering a heart attack.

Winters was the daughter of a tailor's cutter and her mother was a former opera singer.

She made her impromptu singing appearance at a St. Louis amateur night when she was only 4 years old.

She started her career as a nightclub chorus girl, and advanced to supporting roles in New York plays, then became famous as a Hollywood sexpot.

Winters is probably best known for her appearance in the movie *The Posiden Adeventure*.

### **Ariel Sharon's brain shows activity.**

Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon still remains in a coma after 10 days.

On Wednesday, doctors began reducing the level of sedatives with the intent of drawing Sharon out of an induced coma.

Medical experts on the outside say that Sharon's failure to regain consciousness, does not look well for his recovery.

Hospital officials say that Sharon remains "lightly sedated", but are not sure when he will wake up once they stop giving him the sedatives.

New reports say that an EKG has shown that Sharon has activity on both sides of his brain and doctors say that's the most "promising"

signs they have had since they started to bring him out of the coma. Doctors also say that activity in both lobes doesn't indicate anything about the extent of the brain damage. "It is another piece of information that on its own means nothing," said Dr. Gal Ifergan, a neurologist at Soroka Medical Center in Beer Sheva, who is not treating Sharon.

Although he has activity on both sides of his brain, Sharon could still have extensive brain damage, Ifergan said. He also said that it's "very worrisome that he hasn't woken from his coma", yet.

There are 2 major types of stroke, and Sharon has had both. The first was a mild stroke Dec. 18 caused by a blood clot that lodged in an artery in the brain, cutting off blood flow and causing minor damage. The second occurred just one day before he was scheduled to undergo surgery to repair a hole in his heart. This one was a severe cerebral hemorrhage

"After nine days he has had very slow progress and that indicates more permanent injury to a level where his quality of life is affected," Dr. Demetrius Lopes, a Rush University Medical Center neurosurgeon said. "And then decisions will have to be made," he added.

Sharon's condition is still critical but stable

### **Venezuela issues response after attempt to buy Spanish planes fails**

In a communicate issued by the Embassy of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela in Madrid as response to the barring of Spain's sale of military planes to Venezuela, and then made public by the chancellor's office,

Venezuela has claimed that the reason why the United States government vetoes the selling of Spanish planes to Venezuela is because Washington wants to continue imposing the flight of American anti-drug patrols over Venezuela's territory .

In May 1999, President Hugo Chavez announced that United States military jets could no longer enter his country's airspace as it still does in the other Andean nations. If the US did so it would violate Venezuela's sovereignty he said.

Venezuela wants to buy planes to carry out its own anti-drug surveillance and interception flights. The republic of Venezuela is the country where most of the drug seizing occurs as its geographic position makes it the natural route of illegal drug trade from the South America to the US.

The communicate casts doubts about the real intentions of the US ban on the military planes sale and accuses the US of undermining Venezuela's response capacity to deal with this treat. The announcement states that the ban is an evidence of the double speech of George W. Bush and formulates the question: Do they want to combat or to control the illegal drug trade?.

Venezuela is also attempting to buy planes from Brazil, but this move has also been vetoed by the US government under the grounds that Brazilian planes use American technology.

### **Huge star cluster discovered in neighbourhood of Milky Way**

Astronomers at Sloan Digital Sky Survey have announced the discovery of a huge star cluster, the Virgo super star cluster 10

kiloparsecs (30,000 light years) away from the solar system (roughly the same distance as the galactic centre), in the constellation of Virgo. Many of the stars have been known to astronomers for centuries, but only now have they realized the existence of the cluster.

In a presentation to the American Astronomical Society, Princeton University graduate student Mario Juric, the principal author of the findings, explained: "Some of the stars in this Milky Way companion have been seen with telescopes for centuries, but because the galaxy is so close, its stars are spread over a huge swath of the sky, and they always used to be lost in the sea of more numerous Milky Way stars. This galaxy is so big, we couldn't see it before."

The large overpopulation of stars was discovered by researchers analyzing SDSS-I and SDSS-II data. SDSS has, to date, imaged roughly one-quarter of the northern sky. The method used was the photometric parallax method. "We used the SDSS data to measure distances to 48 million stars and build a 3-d map of the Milky Way," explained Zeljko Ivezic of the University of Washington, a co-author of the study.

This discovery is one in a series of such discoveries made within the last decade by a new generation of sky surveys. The Sagittarius dwarf galaxy was discovered in 1994 using photographic sky images. Since then, analysis of photographs by large digital cameras has identified several streams and clumps of stars, some of which (astronomers believe) are Milky Way companions and others of which are shreds of the Sagittarius dwarf or other dwarf galaxies that are also dissolving

into the Milky Way. An earlier SDSS discovery was the Canis Major Dwarf Galaxy. "With so much irregular structure in the outer Galaxy, it looks as though the Milky Way is still growing, by cannibalizing smaller galaxies that fall into it," said Juric.

The first indication that the Virgo super star cluster existed was in 2001, when the Quasar Equatorial Survey Team (QUEST) survey, using a 1-metre telescope in Llano del Hato National Astronomical Observatory in Venezuela, found a clump of five RR Lyrae variable stars, which astronomers speculated might belong to a small galaxy being cannibalized by the Milky Way. Kathy Vivas of the Centro de Investigaciones de Astronomia in Venezuela, the author of the QUEST paper on the discovery, commented that "In light of the new SDSS results, it appears that the stellar stream we detected is itself part of the larger structure identified by Juric and collaborators."

In a letter to the *Astrophysical Journal* the QUEST has presented further evidence for Vivas' interpretation, by measuring the motions and chemical compositions of stars in the region.

### Iran to end nuclear cooperation



*Map highlighting Iran*

Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad spoke out in a rare news conference on Saturday

against statements made by Europe and the United States, saying that if any country refers it to the U.N. Security Council over its nuclear program, that it will end their voluntary compliance with surprise inspections and other nuclear cooperation with the U.N. nuclear watchdog, the IAEA. He also warned that Europe will lose the chance of reconciliation if it pursues sanctions.

President Ahmadinejad said that even if Iran is referred to the Security Council for possible sanctions, the action would still not stop its nuclear program. "They keep on threatening us that we have to either accept what they say or they will send us to the Security Council," President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad said during a news conference in the Iranian capitol of Tehran.

Iran's statements came as Europe and the U.S. began to build support for reporting Iran to the U.N. Security Council. However, China has been cautious and has warned the move could only escalate the confrontation.

Meanwhile, President George W. Bush, and Chancellor Angela Merkel, urged U.N. intervention. "The world needs to send a common message to Iran that their behavior...is unacceptable," Bush said.

The U.S. and Europe continue to have growing concerns that Iran is trying to produce nuclear weapons.

On Tuesday, Britain, France and Germany issued a statement declaring that 2 1/2 years of tense negotiations with Tehran were a "dead end" and urged the U.N. Security Council to intervene.



*The U.N. Security Council*

Iranian Foreign Minister, Manoucher Mouttaki, said to the press yesterday that "the West will bear the consequences if Iran is sent to the Council. Iran does not need to have permission from any country. It is our legal right to have nuclear energy."

In response the Bush administration, along with Chancellor Angela Merkel, said that they "cannot allow countries such as Iran to blackmail peace-loving countries like themselves."

Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad said that his "country does not need nuclear weapons. They are needed only by people who want to solve everything through the use of force." He then went on to say, "Leaders who believe they can create peace for themselves by creating war for others are mistaken."

Tehran has always said it has the right under Article VI of the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty — which the nation has signed but not ratified — to research nuclear energy for peaceful purposes.

### Today in History

- 1759 - The British Museum opened.
  - 1919 - Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht, two of the most prominent socialists in Germany, were tortured and murdered by the Freikorps.
  - 1943 - Construction of the world's largest office building, The Pentagon, was completed.
  - 1967 - The Green Bay Packers defeated the Kansas City Chiefs in the American football championship game now known as Super Bowl I.
  - 2001 - The English Wikipedia, a Wiki free content encyclopedia, was officially launched.
- January 15 is Jallikattu (Tamil Nadu)

### Quote of the Day

"Imagine a world in which every single person on the planet is given free access to the sum of all human knowledge. That's what we're doing." ~ Jimmy Wales

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