



Top Stories

ETA declares permanent cease-fire

The armed Basque separatist organisation "ETA" (Euskadi Ta Askatasuna) has announced a permanent cease-fire as of Friday 24th March 2006.

Protesters mark 3rd anniversary of Iraq invasion

1000s of people took to the streets in a "Global Day of Action" to mark the third anniversary of the US-led invasion of Iraq. The weekend rallies and demonstrations drew smaller crowds than earlier million-strong anti-war demonstrations. US President Bush, despite dwindling public approval, marked the occasion with a speech, outlining his commitment to democracy in the region.

Featured story

Buffalo, N.Y. hotel proposal approved by Common Council

With no comments from the public, Buffalo's Common Council approved the Elmwood Village Hotel proposal. However; the Planning Board, which meets this Tuesday, must also approve the proposal.

Wikipedia Current Events

- The MV Queen of the North, a 125m ferry operated by BC Ferries, strikes a rock in British Columbia's Inside Passage shortly after midnight, and sinks. All passengers safely abandon ship.

Wikipedia Current Events

- Tracy Williams from Oldham, Greater Manchester, England, is ordered to pay £10,000 damages, plus £7,200 legal costs for libelling former parliamentary candidate Michael Keith-Smith in a Yahoo chat room and in her blog. She had accused him of being a sex offender and a racist bigot. Williams did not file a defence to the libel writ.

BC Queen of the North Ferry sinks

At approximately 12:43 a.m. on Wednesday, March 22, the ferry Queen of the North hit a rock off Gill Island in Wright Sound. It took about an hour for the ferry to sink, giving passengers time to get out. The vessel was carrying 101 passengers and crew, who are all safe. Thanks to quick-responding fishing vessels and a helicopter, they were taken to nearby Hartley Bay.

The Queen of the North, which is not normally used on this route, is larger than the vessel normally used, the Queen of Prince Rupert.

Controversy over Bush reasons for Iraq war

During a press conference on Tuesday, President George W. Bush called on White House reporter Helen Thomas for the first time in three years. She said, "... your decision to invade Iraq has caused the deaths of thousands of Americans and Iraqis, wounds of Americans and Iraqis for a lifetime. Every reason given, publicly at

least, has turned out not to be true. My question is, why did you really want to go to war?"

Mr. Bush replied, "And when [Saddam Hussein] chose to deny inspectors, when he chose not to disclose, then I had the difficult decision to make to remove him. And we did, and the world is safer for it."

The exchange has provoked extreme responses in the blogosphere, with conservative commentators like Fred Barnes of Fox News portraying Helen Thomas as being "unprofessional" and "improper" in "accusing the President."

Barnes argued, "Reporters aren't supposed to fire accusations at the President or anybody else they're interrogating, and that was wrong." He pointed out that Helen Thomas is an outspoken critic of the war in Iraq and the Presidency of George W. Bush. Fox New's Brit Hume said about Thomas, "She has an agenda, period, and always has had an agenda of sorts." Conservative commentators mostly agreed that President Push "got the better of the exchange".

Liberal commentators like Josh Marshall from Talking Points Memo focused on the President's response, saying, "His lies are so blatant that I must constantly check myself so as not to assume that he is simply delusional or has blocked out whole chains of events from the past."

On March 7, 2003, United Nations chief weapons inspector Hans Blix asked for more time to continue with inspections. He characterized Iraqi cooperation with inspections at the time as "active, or even proactive." The inspectors withdrew from Iraq, just prior to the U.S.-led invasion, on the request of the United States and Britain.

The Duelfer Report on WMD in Iraq confirmed that Iraq's WMD program was essentially destroyed in 1991, as disclosed by Hussein.

ETA declares permanent cease-fire

The armed Basque separatist organisation "ETA" (Euskadi Ta Askatasuna) has announced a permanent cease-fire as of Friday 24th March 2006. A video release by the organization shows three people seated at a table in front the ETA emblem, faces covered with masks and wearing Basque berets. The video was broadcast on Spanish national television and distributed to local Basque media outlets.

ETA, Western Europe's most active separatist group, seek to create an independent state covering Spain's northern Basque Country and parts of south-western France. The group broke two ceasefires in the 1990s.

For over three decades the armed organisation has waged a violent campaign for independence for the seven regions in northern Spain and south-west France that Basque separatists claim as their own. ETA, whose name stands for Basque Homeland and Freedom, originated in the 1960s as a student resistance movement bitterly opposed to General Franco's repressive military dictatorship.

A permanent end to hostilities by ETA was a condition set by the Socialist Government of Prime Minister Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero for beginning negotiations with the organisation.

Windows Vista delayed until January 2007

Microsoft plans to delay its next operating system, Windows Vista. Originally due out by the end of 2006, Windows Vista now has a release target of January, 2007. One of the main factors behind the delay was security issues. Analysts have said this could put some computer manufacturers into turmoil. A new Windows version will be available in November, 2006 to corporate customers. Currently, Windows XP has been the longest-current operating system from Microsoft, debuting in 2001.

Canada bans "Where the Bloody Hell are you?" ad

Less than a week after it was first banned and then cleared for screening in the U.K., an Australian tourism ad featuring a bikini-clad girl asking prospective tourists "Where the Bloody Hell are you?" has been banned in Canada. Ironically, it wasn't the controversial question — a line described as "warm, friendly and inviting" — that got the ad banned, but its opening: "We've poured you a beer." This line was ruled unacceptable by the Canadian regulator, as it refers to an unbranded beer.

Australian Tourism Minister Fran Bailey was "quite astonished" by the move but has thanked the Canadian government for providing free publicity for the ad, saying, "As far as this particular Canadian regulator is concerned, I'd love him to come out here and I'll buy him a beer and say thank-

you."

Time: 15 Iraqi civilians dead; U.S. Marines under investigation

killed when a roadside improvised explosive device exploded near his convoy. His fellow Marines are alleged to have entered homes in a western Iraqi town and shot and killed 15 members of two families in retaliation, including a 3-year-old girl.

Time claims to have a videotape showing the results of the Marines' assault, describing it as "graphic documentation," but has stated that the evidence is inconclusive; it does not prove the guilt of the Marines involved. The military's own reconstruction of events, as well as the eyewitness accounts of residents whom Time interviewed, portrays a violent response by a group of U.S. Marines who believed they were under fire and had lost one of their own.

Last week the U.S. military announced that Naval Criminal Investigative Service (NCIS) has been handed the matter to determine whether the troops deliberately targeted civilians and broke the laws of war. Military Officials initially indicated that 15 Iraqi civilians had died when gunmen attacked a convoy with small arms fire, prompting the Marines to return fire. U.S. Marines have also claimed that the civilians were used as shields by insurgents and that the fault lies with the insurgents.

Relatives of the victims have been paid USD \$2,500 for each of the 15 dead civilians by the United States.

Buffalo, N.Y. hotel proposal approved by Common Council
Buffalo, New York – The city's

Common Council met in Council Chambers today with a full agenda. Among the items in the agenda was the Elmwood Village Hotel proposal.

The Elmwood Village Hotel is a proposed hotel by Savarino Construction Services Corporation and is designed by architect Karl Frizlen of the Frizlen Group. It is to be placed on the corner of Elmwood and Forest Avenues in Buffalo and will require the demolition of at least five properties (1109-1121 Elmwood).

During the hour-and-a-half meeting, the Common Council approved the hotel proposal. The entire voting process for the proposal took less than two minutes, and the public was not allowed to speak. The Council voted unanimously in support of the proposal; however, the city's Planning Board must also approve the proposal. The Board will meet on Tuesday, March 28, 2006 at 8:00 a.m. on the 9th floor of City Hall, room 902.

The approval allows for the rezoning of all five properties, including 605 Forest, to a "special development plan," or a C-2 zone.

"There is a 'special development plan' in front of the council, which changes only one thing about the zoning. It allows one permitted use — for just a hotel. The rest of the zoning remains as it is under the current Elmwood Business District zoning. 605 and 607 Forest are not required for the project. They are not part of the footprint for the project. Let me answer this question again. This is on the record, in council: 605 needs to be rezoned in order to facilitate the project because of the sideyard requirement. Anything in C-2 is excluded

besides the hotel. So we've taken the C-2 and included the hotel as a permitted use, and excluded everything else, and everything else remains the same," Eva Hassett, Vice President of Savarino Construction, said to Wikinews during a public meeting on March 16, 2006.

However, during the same meeting, Pano Georgiadis, owner of 605 Forest and owner of Pano's Restaurant on Elmwood, threatened to "sue" Savarino Construction saying, "If you try to get a variance to change the code, I will sue you. This is my home, number one."

Savarino Construction hopes to break ground this Summer.

Despite the Council's approval, organizers have scheduled another protest that will be held this Saturday, March 25, 2006 at 2:00 p.m. on Forest and Elmwood.

Some citizens are even considering legal action and are considering an "injunction in State Supreme Court," going "pro se, meaning I am going to present the case myself," said Clarence Carnahan, a concerned citizen and local business owner who is opposed to the hotel, to Wikinews.

Carnahan wrote a "notice of cease and desist" which was also presented to the Council at today's meeting.

Patty Morris, co-owner of Don Apparel with Nancy Pollina, said, "We are going to fight the good fight to the bitter end, but we cannot afford it [legal action]. Now it's a legal matter, and it's in the hands of the law, and I know there are some people very interested in hiring a lawyer."

Nancy Pollina says that she is "looking into a defense fund" and is currently talking to lawyers.

Today in History

1775 - American Revolution: Patrick Henry made his "Give me liberty or give me death" speech to the Virginia House of Burgesses.

1801 - Tsar Alexander I acceded to the Russian throne after his father Paul I was brutally murdered.

1940 - Pakistan Movement: The All India Muslim League adopted the Lahore Resolution.

1978 - The first UNIFIL troops arrived in Lebanon for a peacekeeping mission along the Blue Line.

1996 - Lee Teng-hui was elected President of the Republic of China in the first direct presidential election in Taiwan.

March 23 is Republic Day in Pakistan (1956)

Quote of the Day

"Is life so dear or peace so sweet as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery? Forbid it, Almighty God! I know not what course others may take; but as for me, give me liberty or give me death!" ~ Patrick Henry

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