

Top Stories

American soldiers accused of desecrating enemy bodies

The Afghanistan government and U.S. military have begun investigations into a video purportedly showing U.S. soldiers burning the bodies of suspected Taliban fighters outside the southern village of Gonbaz shown on Australia's SBS television network.

Hurricane Wilma becomes stronger on its path toward Florida



Evacuation of the Florida Keys has begun as Hurricane Wilma intensifies.

Featured story

UN appeals for more aid for Pakistan, or thousands could die



Kofi Annan has plead to the world for more aid. He fears if targets are not met quickly thousands more will die. Also: An up-date on the desperate situation in Pakistan.

Wikipedia Current Events

- In the United Kingdom, David Cameron and David Davis go through to a runoff vote of Conservative Party members after a second round of voting amongst Tory MPs in the party's leadership election. Liam Fox is eliminated.
- One of Saddam Hussein's defense lawyer is kidnapped.

Wikipedia Current Events

- Conflict in Afghanistan: Several US Soldiers are caught setting fire to dead Taliban fighters, deliberately in defiance of Muslim beliefs and practices, in scenes broadcast on Afghan TV. The U.S. Military say they will investigate the incident.
- Guinea's government announces that municipal elections will be held on 18 December.
- One ticket sold in Oregon matched all the numbers in the United States Powerball Lottery which was worth USD 340 million. The winning numbers were 7, 21, 43, 44, 49 and the Powerball was 29.
- Four U.S. Soldiers are killed in two insurgent attacks north of Baghdad, Iraq.

UN appeals for more aid for devastated Pakistan region

Kofi Annan, Secretary General of the United Nations, has sent out a plea for more aid to Pakistan. He fears thousands could die if more aid doesn't arrive soon.

The death toll of the October 8th earthquake is already feared at 79,000.

"And unlike some natural disasters, in which victims die immediately, the death toll in Pakistan is not over yet," Annan says. "An estimated three million men, women and children are homeless. Many of them have no blankets or tents to protect them against the merciless Himalayan

winter. That means a second, massive wave of death will happen if we do not step up our efforts now.

Helicopters and trucks are of the greatest need.

"The money to pay for those things has been lacking", said Annan. "So far, we have received firm commitments for only 12 per cent of our appeal. That is \$37 million US out of the \$312 million that we need."

During the massive relief effort for the Dec. 26 tsunami 80 percent of the appeal was filled in 10 days.

A major donor conference has been called for next week by Annan. He hopes it will help speed up aid.

"There are no excuses," Annan also said "If we are to show ourselves worthy of calling ourselves members of humankind, we must rise to this challenge."

Emergency relief co-ordinator Jan Egeland said today that NATO needs to organize a massive air-lift if it wants to save lives. The evacuation needs to take place before winter sets in. The main target would be small isolated villages.

NATO has been air-lifting in aid every day from it's base in Germany. Another "air brigade" was added recently from Turkey.

The major airlift is needed "to get supplies in and people out," Egeland told CBC News on

Thursday. In order to shelter everyone who is homeless they need, "350,000 tents, which is a mind-boggling number, more than we know exist in the world, are needed..." "We have emptied all of our warehouses."

Feeling the need to prevent the feared second wave of death mans rescuers need to make some had decisions. This weekend the focus will switch from treating 67,000 injured to getting aid to the homeless.

"It's a tough call but we have to face the fact that we're going to save more lives by getting tents, shelter, food, these supplies up to the people who have nothing [rather] than continuing to bring the injured down," said Capt. Edward Parsons, with the UN's Humanitarian Relief Operation in Pakistan

Helicopter are "double tasking" in their trips to small villages. They drop off supplies then pick up injured. However, the method is proving time-consuming, the need to speed up inward air-lifts is growing.

Iran bans Hollywood movies

The President of Iran Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and the Supreme Cultural Revolutionary Council, which he heads, has banned movies from Western nations which are seen to promote immorality, violence, drug usage, alcohol consumption, secularism, liberalism, anarchy and feminism.

Western films are widely shown in the Islamic Republic, though they are highly censored so as to remove any scenes of drug taking (including alcohol) or women dressed in clothing deemed too revealing. Also, despite a State

ban on satellite TV many Iranians watch foreign movie channels.

Many believe this new ban is a gesture to the hardline conservatives who backed Ahmadinejad in the recent Iranian presidential election, and some fear for how it will be enforced. In theory home-made films will not be affected, for the law only refers to foreign movies, but some analysts say it could cause nervousness and might tempt some Iranian directors to apply self-censorship, and Al Jazeera points out that these films already undergo a censorship process.

Journalist shot dead in Iraq

The International Federation of Journalists today reported that an Iraqi journalist has been shot dead in Baghdad by unknown assailants. Mohammad Harun Hassan was editor of the Nabdh Al Shabeb Newspaper, and Executive Secretary of an Iraqi trade union, the Iraqi Journalists Syndicate.

According to the IFJ, Harun Hassan is the 100th media worker to be killed since March 2003.

Moaid Al Lamy, a board member of the union, told the IFJ that Harun Hassan had been critical of a number of political parties and some other editors.

"We believe this is a despicable attempt to weaken the syndicate and to try to kill off hopes for strong and independent professional journalism in Iraq", Al Lamy said.

The news comes a day after the kidnapping of Irish journalist Rory Carroll, who had been working as the Baghdad correspondent of the London-based Guardian newspaper.

Irish Government sends team of officials in hunt for Journalist

The Irish Minister for Foreign Affairs Mr. Dermot Ahern has announced that he is to send a team of five officials to Iraq to try and secure the release of kidnapped journalist Mr Rory Carroll.

The team will be lead by Antoin Mac Unfraidh, the former Ambassador to Iraq and will liase with the contacts in Iraq that the irish Government has already been dealing with.

Officials from the Department of Foreign Affairs say they have been working through the night to try to gather information about Mr Carroll's whereabouts.

Brian Cowen, the minister for Finance, acting on behalf of the Taoiseach said "I call on anybody who has any influence in that area to assist. We are trying to do all we can through our contacts".

The Taoiseach Bertie Ahern himself told BBC News that he hoped the kidnapers would bear in mind he was "an Irish person not involved in any way" with the Iraqi conflict. We in fact granted him a passport in Irish, in our own language, in order to ensure that he would use this in such a way that to emphasise his Irishness in cases of difficulty."

Chairman of the Irish Anti-War coaliton said that he was "entirely innocent of any crime against the Iraqi people", adding: "No cause will be served by keeping him in captivity or harming him in any way."

Carrolls editor at the Guardian Alan Rusbridger issued a

statement saying that "He is in Iraq as a professional journalist - and he's a very good, straight journalist whose only concern is to report fairly and truthfully about the country. We urge those holding him to release him swiftly - for the sake of his family and for the sake of anyone who believes the world needs to be kept fully informed about events in Iraq today."

All sides of Political debate in Ireland expressed condemnation of the abduction and support for the Governments efforts to secure the release of the 33 year old Journalist from The Guardian.

OpenOffice.org Office Suite Version 2.0 Released

OpenOffice.org today released version 2.0 of their free office suite. This release marks over three years of continuous development and boasts many features over version 1.0 which was released in May 2002. The latest release may be downloaded from the OpenOffice.org web site free of charge.

OpenOffice.org Writer editing a document

The suite is intended to be an alternative to Microsoft's popular office suite, containing near-identical functionality without the price tag. The suite has been downloaded an average of over 400,000 times per week from the official site alone. When taking into account that the suite is freely redistributable (and is included with many versions of Linux), the total number of copies in distribution is larger still.

One of the reasons for its significant popularity is the inclusion of several features not found in competing office suites,

including in-built export to the PDF format and compatibility with Windows, Linux and Mac OS X operating systems.

Premiers take on Australian PM on Shoot To Kill Laws

Several of Australian State premiers and more civil libertarians have added to the growing chorus of concern over the proposed Australian Anti-Terrorism Bill, which was proposed by the Australian Prime Minister, and the State and Territory governments following the London transport bombings of July 7, which killed 56 people

The Prime Minister John Howard has been accused of adding a provision to new laws giving federal police the power to shoot to kill. The case of a Brazilian man mistakenly shot dead in London this year is cited by Western Australia's Premier Geoff Gallop as a reason for caution. He went on to say the Prime Minister misled the the premiers on what laws he actually intended to introduce.

Gallop told SBS "When we went to Canberra, we agreed with the Prime Minister that changes were necessary, particularly in respect of control orders and preventative detention. But the shoot to kill policy wasn't part of the agreement and we certainly won't be supporting it in any legislation in Western Australia. To have a provision like that, I think exposes us to the sorts of risks that we saw in the UK and I don't think this is a good signal to be sending out".

The Queensland Premier Peter Beattie and Victorian Premier Steve Bracks also raised concerns about the shoot to kill provision, saying it was not in the original

document agreed to by the federal and state governments.

The New South Wales (NSW) Premier Morris Iemma, went further today saying he would not put into law the proposed laws by the Federal Government.

While confirming the state's proposed anti-terrorism laws are supposed to mirror the Federal laws, NSW would not contain a shoot-to-kill provision. Iemma told the The Sydney Morning Herald "We will bring forward legislation consistent with what was agreed to".

The Federal Government needs the co-operation of the states, as it is constrained in its policing powers by the Constitution.

The NSW Premier warns that if the Federal Government does not water down its proposed laws, NSW may decided to write different rules which raises the prospect that federal and state police will be operating under different rules in joint anti-terrorist operations and have different legal protections for their actions.

South Australian Premier Mike Rann is still committed to the proposals he agreed to at last month's COAG meeting in Canberra, but said they made no reference to powers to shoot-to-kill.

"I will commit right now to everything that I committed to at COAG but I won't commit to things that I haven't seen and I won't commit to things that have been put in that I didn't agree to," Mr Rann said.

Federal Opposition Leader Kim Beazley, at a press conference in Melbourne said that the states

already gave police powers to use deadly force, and he wants the shoot-to-kill provisions to pass through a proper parliamentary inquiry process.

"There does not need to be any additional legislation related to that ... What exists now is perfectly sufficient and it seems to me that's what Bracks and Beattie were saying," Mr Beazley told the *The Age*

Beazley called for a proper inquiry process in the Federal Parliament, by the parliamentary intelligence committee or its senate equivalent.

"Either way that's fine, but there needs to be an appropriate examination of these laws by that process before parliament finally deliberates on it."

Jon McIntyre the president of the NSW Law Society, said the provision, would take away an individual's "fundamental freedoms".

Mr McIntyre told ABC radio that police would be able to get an order "without a person being reasonably suspected of committing of an offence".

McIntyre said that International examples proved arbitrary powers such as these would likely be abused.

Prime Ministers Defends the Shoot to Kill Provisions

The Prime Minister says the proposal is nothing more than formalising powers that already exist under common laws introduced by the states.

Speaking on ABC Radio's PM "I don't think there's a real conflict,

because what we're proposing is not something that's new, there's always been a common law right for police officers in certain circumstances to use deadly force. Been there for centuries. And it's been codified into the law recently because there was some doubt about the exact limits of it."

He went on to say "What we are proposing in relation to preventive detention is similar to what now exists in relation to other terrorism offences, and very similar to what is in the Victorian law"

The Prime Minister is confident that he will work out the differences. Saying "I'll talk to them. I'm appreciative of the cooperation that I have received from the state premiers on this issue"

"We all know that the sad circumstances that now require unusual laws. I'm quite sure that they're in the national interest, and I am confident they will be approved by the Federal Parliament and by the state parliaments."

Other Concerns with the Bill
The inclusion and definition of sedition, which in the bill may include "to bring the sovereign [i.e. the Queen] into hatred or contempt", or to "urge disaffection" with the Australian Government. Australian law does not protect freedom of speech, so this proposed law may effectively outlaw criticizing the Australian Government. It may also effectively outlaw some protests. The ability of judges to make decisions outside of the court system.

'Recklessly' providing funds to anyone who *might* be a terrorist is an offence, punishable by life imprisonment, even if they are not

a terrorist

American soldiers accused of desecrating enemy bodies

The Afghanistan government and the U.S. Army have begun investigations into whether American soldiers burned the bodies of two suspected Taliban fighters and used the burned bodies to taunt enemy forces.

Video purportedly showing U.S. soldiers burning the bodies of suspected Taliban fighters outside the southern village of Gonbaz was shown on Australia's SBS television network. The video was taken by Stephen Dupont, who said the burnings happened on October 1 while he was embedded with the Army's 173rd Airborne Brigade.

Dupont said the incendiary messages later broadcast by the U.S. Army psychological operations unit showed they were aware that the cremation would be seen as desecration.

In a televised interview, Dupont told the Australian news agency that: "They [soldiers] used that as a psychological warfare, I guess you'd call it. They used the fact that the Taliban were burned facing west [toward Mecca]. They deliberately wanted to incite that much anger from the Taliban so the Taliban could attack them. ... That's the only way they can find them."

The SBS report suggested the actions could violate the Geneva Conventions governing the treatment of enemy remains during wartime which state; "dead are honorably interred, if possible according to the rites of the religion to which they belonged." The Taliban government, that

ruled Afghanistan from 1996 until 2001, when U.S. led force invaded the country and ended their regime, did not recognize the Geneva Convention in their term of rule.

"We strongly condemn any disrespect to human bodies regardless of whether they are those of enemies or friends," said a Afghanistan spokesman Karim Rahimi.

"This alleged action is repugnant to our common values," U.S. Maj. Gen. Jason Kamiya said, "This command takes all allegations of misconduct or inappropriate behavior seriously and has directed an investigation into circumstances surrounding this allegation."

Australian opposition minister gives speech on poverty

Australian shadow minister for work, family, youth, and community, Tanya Plibersek, gave a speech today on poverty as part of Anti-Poverty Week 2005. During the speech she criticised the government in a number of areas, including not committing to the UN Millennium Development Goals, the proposed industrial relations legislation, and the governments funding of services for the homeless.

Anti-Poverty Week runs from Monday 17th to Friday 21st October, and is derived from the United Nations International Day for the Eradication of Poverty on October 17th. Shaun Mortimer, the coordinator of Anti-Poverty Week at UNSW, said that the week was about "creating awareness and finding solutions to the plight of those living in poverty all around the world."

UN foreign aid target

Ms Plibersek said that Australia is not doing enough to help those in poverty overseas. She said that Australia currently gives 0.28% of its Gross National Income in foreign aid, however this is far short of the United Nations target of 0.7%.

"The Australian government is refusing to commit to the 0.7% target," she said.

The UN development goal states that governments should reach the target by 2015. Labor has committed to meet the target, but the government has not.

"Labor is committed to the 0.7% target. In the interim, the government should be spending 0.5% of GNI," Ms Plibersek said.

Shadow Minister Plibersek accused the government of weakening Australias committment to the Millennium Development Goals. The goals were agreed to in 2000 by all 191 member states of the United Nations. There are 8 goals, which signatory states have committed to work towards. The eight goals are:

- Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
- Achieve universal primary education
- Promote gender equality and empower women
- Reduce child mortality
- Improve maternal health
- Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases
- Ensure environmental sustainability
- Develop a global partnership for development

Ms Plibersek said that Australia

signed on to the goals, but is now not honouring that committment, and is attempting to reduce the impact of the goals in an attempt to win the favour of the United States.

"We signed on to the millenium goals," she said.

"In it's rush to be popular with the US the government went along with watering down the millenium goals"

Shadow Minister Plibersek strongly criticised the governments proposed industrial relations legislation. She argued that the proposed changes will disproportionately affect already vulnerable people such as single mothers, and push working people into poverty.

"Industrial relations changes will see poverty worsen. It will increase the number of working poor," she said.

Speaking about the governments hypthetical worker, "Billy", used in promotional material, Ms Plibersek said individual workplace agreements will result in lowered working conditions for all workers. She also claimed that if a working person is paid a wage that does not provide them with enough resources to live, they will need to depend on government services such as income support, and therefore taxpayers will be subsidising the low wages.

"If Billy can not earn enough to live, then taxpayers are effectively subsidising business," she said.

"If the system has no minimum standards it will drag everyone down. Unions have fought against this for over a century"

Ms Plibersek spoke about the problem of poverty in Australia. She said that 2.4 million people in Australia are living below the poverty line, and 1 million of them have jobs. She also argued that wealth inequality is getting worse.

"We have a nation now more divided than ever. The rich are getting richer and the poor are getting poorer," she said.

Ms Plibersek felt that this situation was unacceptable, and that the solution was only a matter of will.

"I don't think we have to accept that people will always be poor. It is a situation we allow," she said.

She also criticised the government for inadequately funding services for the homeless, and said that many homeless people who wanted help were unable to find any. Ms Plibersek argued that women escaping domestic violence were especially affected by this situation.

"We turn away 1 in 2 people who approach homeless services for help," she said.

Ms Plibersek also condemned what the government describes as the "skills shortage", saying that there are lots of Australians willing to gain skills, but are unable to get places in training institutions.

"We turn 20,000 people away from TAFE and University each year," she said.

Houston Astros win 2005 National League baseball pennant

Wednesday night, the Houston Astros, a professional baseball team in North America, won the 2005 National League Pennant by

defeating the St. Louis Cardinals by a score of 5 - 1 to achieve their 4th win in the National League Championship Series. In this series, the Astros won 4 games and the Cardinals won 2 games.

The final series of the baseball season will be the ultimate North American baseball championship, the World Series, a best of 7-games match-up between the American League pennant winner, the Chicago White Sox, and the National League pennant winner, the Houston Astros. Game 1 of the World Series will start Saturday evening.

Arrest warrant issued for Tom DeLay

An arrest warrant was issued on Wednesday for former U.S. House Majority Leader Tom DeLay. Bail was set at US\$10,000 ahead of his scheduled court appearance in Austin, Texas for two separate charges of money laundering and conspiracy.

The warrant is being treated as a procedural formality of law, and court officials said DeLay was expected to go to Fort Bend County Jail in his district near Houston for booking, but this has not yet been confirmed. The warrant lists two felony charges, conspiracy and money laundering in a campaign finance scheme tied to his political action committee, Texans for a Republican Majority. Texas law forbids the use of corporate money in political campaigns. He is scheduled to make his first court appearance on Friday before state District Judge Bob Perkins.

DeLay has denied any wrongdoing. He is accused of laundering \$190,000 in corporate campaign contributions through the

Republican National Committee for distribution to Republican candidates for the Texas Legislature in 2002. The money helped the Republicans to take control of the Texas Legislature, which then redistricted congressional voting boundaries. As a result this led to an expanded majority of the house Republicans.

In response to questions DeLay's lawyer Dick DeGuerin characterized the warrant as "a matter of routine" and assured that "bond will be posted". The warrant followed a series of grand jury indictments handed down in late September and early October and prompted DeLay to step down temporarily as house majority leader.

Today in History

1805 - Napoleonic Wars: Lord Nelson (pictured) led the British fleet to victory in the Battle of Trafalgar, defeating Pierre-Charles Villeneuve and his combined French and Spanish navy.

1824 - Joseph Aspdin patented Portland cement.

1854 - Florence Nightingale and a staff of 38 nurses were sent to the Crimean War.

1944 - World War II: HMAS Australia was hit in the first kamikaze attack.

1945 - Argentine military officer and politician Juan Domingo Perón married popular actress Evita.

October 21 is Trafalgar Day in the United Kingdom, Overseas Chinese Day in the Republic of China.

Quote of the Day

"Genius is one per cent inspiration, ninety-nine per cent perspiration."
~ Thomas Alva Edison

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