

*Top Stories*

**Rocket attack on USS Ashland docked in Jordan; another rocket fired at Israeli town**



Two Katyusha rockets exploded this morning in Aqaba, Jordan, near the USS Ashland, which has been

docking at the Aqaba port for the last ten days; Another rocket exploded in Eilat, Israel.

**Former British Northern Ireland secretary, Mo Mowlam dies**

Mo Mowlam, the former Secretary for Northern Ireland, has died at 8.10am GMT in a hospice. She was 55.

*Featured story*

**Virginians melee at used Apple iBook sale**



Officials estimate nearly 5,000 people thronged a sale for \$50, four-year-old used Apple iBook laptop computers in Virginia.

Among them were 17 injured, four requiring hospitalization - one for a leg injury and four for heat-related illness

*Wikipedia Current Events*

- 3 members of the main Sunni Arab political party in Iraq are kidnapped and killed as they put up posters urging people to vote in the upcoming elections in Mosul.
- Two Iraqis have died following an IED explosion near Tikrit.
- Former Northern Ireland Secretary Mo Mowlam dies in a hospice at the age of 55.
- The Polisario Front independence movement in Western Sahara frees its last 404 Moroccan prisoners of war, many held for almost two decades, in a bid to end the armed conflict with Morocco.

*Wikipedia Current Events*

- Pierre Nkurunziza of the National Council for the Defense of Democracy-Forces for the Defense of Democracy, a former rebel leader of the Hutu majority in Burundi, has been elected unopposed as the new President of Burundi by the parliament, the first president chosen through democratic means since the start of the civil war in 1993. He will be sworn in on 27 August.
- A Jordanian soldier dies when three unexploded Katyusha rockets miss their targets and hit a warehouse and hospital in Aqaba, Jordan and hit a road by the airport in nearby Eilat, Israel. A group with alledged links to Al-Queda claims responsibility for the attacks, stating the targets were US ships docked at the Red Sea port in Aqaba, the USS Kearsarge and the USS Ashland.
- New York authorities reveal the existence of a letter from a deceased woman who claims her husband (according to the WINS 1010, New York Daily News cites a cab driver named Frank Burn) and two others killed Judge Joseph F. Crater and buried him under the boardwalk at Coney Island. Crater has been missing since 1930 and has since become one of the most famous "missing person" stories.
- Merck & Co. loses the first wrongful death lawsuit over its painkiller Vioxx, with a jury awarding \$253 Million in damages. There have been over 4000 cases filed against Merck over this drug.

**Explosion in San Francisco injures one, cause unknown**



*Scene of the explosion.  
Photo by Thomas Hawk.*

An explosion from an underground utility chamber in downtown San Francisco severely injured a woman and shattered a window at a Ralph Lauren clothing store shortly after 10:00 a.m. Pacific time Friday. According to a caller to KCBS radio, a woman was engulfed in flames after the explosion triggered a fire in the store. The fire was quickly put out.

A bomb squad is currently investigating the explosion, and the cause has yet to be determined. One official said the explosion may have been caused by an electrical transformer. A witness described a fireball coming out of the side of the building.

Pacific Gas & Electric Co. company spokesman Paul Moreno has stated that "there was no indication of a gas leak." Moreno also described the aftermath of the blast. "The explosion did displace manhole covers — two round steel ones — and it also displaced a concrete cover as well," Moreno said.

Construction worker Tom Demartini, who was sitting in his truck outside the Ralph Lauren store, stated he saw the sidewalk rise up six or seven inches. "It sounded like a big poof, then there was a lot of smoke," Demartini said. "One woman looked like she was badly burned."

The burned woman was taken to the emergency room at St. Francis Hospital. Hospital spokeswoman Linda Gillespie had no immediate comment on her condition. Her name was not released.

Workers in a nearby office building described how the blast shook their buildings and that they thought it was an earthquake. According to one woman, the elevator in her building stopped.

Scores of police have evacuated buildings several blocks around the explosion. Kearny street between Sutter and Market has been closed to both vehicles and pedestrians.

### Australian Air Force crews "at war" with Veterans' Affairs over compensation

The Australian Federal Government has revealed today that it is going to give A\$21 million as compensation to approximately 600 former RAAF maintenance workers, who were exposed to highly toxic chemicals while working on the fuel tanks of the nation's F-111 fleet.

Under the government's proposal, depending on the amount of exposure, a worker can expect to receive between A\$10,000 and A\$40,000 to help cope with the side effects. The aircraft maintenance program started in the 1970s and was suspended in the late 1990s when the former workers started to show signs of medical problems ranging from memory loss to neurological problems.

The F-111 Deseal/Reseal Support Group responded to the government's package with anger. The Group's president Ian Fraser said "A\$40,000 for a ruined life is simply not enough ... We've already got people who have died, who are dying, people who have lost their homes."

He went on to describe that his group, which supports the workers and contractors who were based at Amberley Air Base, was "at war" with Veterans' Affairs Minister De-Anne Kelly.

### Merck & Co. found liable for \$253.4 Million in Texas man's Vioxx-related death

Drug maker Merck & Co. was found liable for a person's death concerning the use of the pain medication Vioxx, according to a jury verdict in a Texas court.

The plaintiff's case, headed by the widow of Robert Ernst, who died in 2001 of an irregular heartbeat and of clogged arteries while on the drug Vioxx, was successfully awarded \$253.4 million dollars. Vioxx was pulled from the shelves in 2004 after a study discovered it could double the risk of a heart attack or stroke if taken for longer than 1.5 years. However, the US government agency, the FDA, decided in February of this year to allow the product back on the shelves.

Merck's stock price dropped 10% within minutes of the verdict being announced, and continued to fall hours after. There are in excess of 4,200 other Vioxx-related lawsuits pending across the USA.

The company plans to appeal the decision.

### Rocket attack on USS Ashland docked in Jordan; another rocket fired at Israeli town



Two Katyusha rockets exploded this morning (8:44 AM UTC+3) in Aqaba, Jordan, near the USS Ashland, which has been docking at the Aqaba port for the last ten days. One Jordanian soldier was killed. Another rocket exploded in Eilat, Israel.

One rocket narrowly missed the USS Ashland and struck a warehouse in the vicinity of the Ashland and the USS Kearsarge, killing a Jordanian soldier, Private Ahmad Alnajdawi, and injuring another. The two amphibious ships had been docking at the Aqaba port for the last ten days. The other missile fell near a Jordanian hospital but caused no injuries.

Commander Jeff Breslau of the U.S. Fifth Fleet told reporters "*I can confirm that a rocket flew over the bow of USS Ashland and the rocket impacted in the roof of a warehouse. No sailors or marines were injured. It's pretty safe to conclude that they were probably trying to hit one or both of the ships*".

The rocket that was aimed at Eilat exploded about 15 meters from the Eilat airport, near several hotels. An Israeli taxi driver, Meir Farhan (40), was lightly injured. Farhan told the press "*I heard a noise, the car shook, and I kept driving for two more meters. I didn't realize what it was; when I went out of the car I saw a hole in the ground on the asphalt*".

A branch of the Al-Qaeda linked terrorist organization Abdullah Azzam Brigades in

Egypt has claimed responsibility for the attack. They also claim responsibility for last month's terror attack in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt and for the 2004 attack on Egyptian tourist resorts.

Immediately after the attack, the two US Navy Ships left the Aqaba port. All flights in the Eilat airport were briefly delayed before the explosion site was cleared of debris.

Jordanian security forces have located the launch site on a nearby rooftop. They are searching for three people with connection to the attack, two Syrian nationals and one Iraqi.

Israeli Defense Minister, Shaul Mofaz said that Israeli and Jordanian security forces are cooperating. "We are certain the Jordanians are also acting to thwart such attacks" Mofaz said. "*There were no prior warnings regarding this specific case, but we're alert*".

Eilat and Aqaba are both considered international tourist destinations in their respective countries.

### China and Russia continue joint army exercise

Russian and Chinese armed forces began their first ever joint military exercises since the Korean War, when Russia was still part of the Soviet Union, on Thursday. The exercises are expected to last for eight days.

10,000 troops — about 1800 Russians, the rest Chinese — are participating in the war games. The exercises simulate United Nations-mandated police action to restore order in a fictitious country torn by ethnic unrest. They begin in the eastern Russian port-city of Vladivostok and are supposed to culminate in a mock invasion involving beach landings and paratrooper drops off the coast of the Jiaodong peninsula in eastern China.

Russian and Chinese officials have framed the exercises as promoting international cooperation, but some in the US and elsewhere see the exercises as preparation for a possible future invasion of Taiwan, and as a challenge to US dominance in Asia — particularly in Afghanistan. The exercises come amid increasing speculation

in the US that China may come to replace the US as the world's most powerful superpower.

Russia and China are working together to help form of a world order that will be based on multipolarity, respect for international law, and a leading role for the UN, Deputy Foreign Minister Alexander Alexeyev said on Monday, August 15, 2005.

“The exercise will be carried out in the framework of the fight against international terrorism and extremism, to respond to new threats and challenges,” said Liang Guanglie, chief of staff of China’s armed forces.

But others citing the use in the operation of advanced aircraft atypical of a peacekeeping operation, say the countries have ulterior motives. "The main target is the US. Both sides want to improve their position for bargaining in terms of security, politics and economics," said Jin Canrong, professor of international relations at the People's University of China.

A Taiwanese official quoted by Mosnews.com said, China's involvement in the operations represents “the biggest security threat in the Asiatic-Pacific region.”

However other analysts speculate that Russia's motivations for using the aircraft, including Tu-95 strategic bombers and Tu-22M long-range bombers, in the exercises may be to promote their sale to the Chinese.

"Military cooperation is linked with political and economic cooperation as part of a bigger package," said Robert Karniol, Asia-Pacific editor for Jane's Defence Weekly. "It's not an adversarial posture."

Many have noted that the joint exercises are an emblem of increasingly warm relations between China and Russia since the dissolution of the Soviet Union. But writing in an editorial for the International Herald Tribune, Phillip Bowring disagrees, saying that the primary purpose of the operations is as a warning to the US. "The current Russia-China joint military exercises are not so much a symbol of trust and friendship between the two as a symptom of American overstretch. The two are reminding the

United States of the limits of its unilateral global power."

Despite speculation into the motives of Russia and China, the US has given at least token support to the idea that the exercises could promote international interests. “We are following the exercises,” U.S. State Department spokesman Sean McCormack said this week. “We expect that they will be conducted in a manner that supports some mutual goal of regional stability shared by the United States, China and Russia.”

Others say the operations are mainly a response to separatism and Islamic extremism in Russian Chechnya and the Chinese Xinjiang.

“The exercises are the logical continuation of the first signs of cooperation between Russia and China in the struggle against ‘orange revolutions,’ separatism and the dominant influence of the U.S. in the Euroasiatic sphere,” the Gazeta.ru news website wrote Thursday. Orange is the color adopted by supporters of last year’s revolution in Ukraine, which along with mass demonstrations in Georgia and Kyrgyzstan, brought pro-Western administrations to power.

The war games have been called "Peace Mission 2005".

### **Moroccan gets seven years in German 9/11 retrial**

Mounir el-Motassadeq, a Moroccan who was a friend of several 9/11 hijackers, has been sentenced to seven years in prison for membership in a terrorist organisation by a court in Hamburg. The court however, said that there is no proof that Motassadeq knew about the the 9/11 plans or participated in them.

Presiding judge Ernst-Rainer Schudt said that Motassadeq has played an important role in running the financial affairs of other cell members and covered their absence while they were in Terror training camps. But he said that Motassadeq wasn't "the same caliber as [Mohammed] Atta", the leader of the 9/11 hijackers. Schudt also complained that the lack of cooperation by U.S. authorities in providing witnesses and delivering evidence left the court in "an unsatisfactory situation". U.S. authorities

denied the court access to key witnesses in their custody such as Ramzi Binalshibh and Khalid Shaikh Mohammed and out of security concerns only provided written testimonies, which have very limited legal standing under German law.

Relatives of 9/11 victims who attended the trial are reportedly satisfied with it's outcome. "This is a clear sign the rule of law can be an answer to terrorism" said Andreas Schulz, a lawyer representing relatives. Federal prosecutors are however unhappy with the ruling, since they also sought a conviction for accessory to murder. They, as well as Motassadeq who wanted acquittal, are going to appeal before Germany's Supreme Court.

Back in 2003, Motassadeq was sentenced to 15 years in jail for accessory to murder but that ruling was overturned by the Supreme Court, making this retrial necessary.

### **Former rebel becomes President of Burundi**



Pierre Nkurunziza, leader of the former rebel group CNDD-FDD, has been elected unopposed as President of Burundi by the country's Senate and National Assembly. The CNDD-FDD had won landslide victories in communal and national elections earlier this year, the first since the 1993 assassination of President Melchior Ndadaye plunged Burundi into more than a decade of ethnically-charged civil war. Nkurunziza replaces Domitien Ndayizeye, who had served as head of a transitional government since 2003.

One key challenge will be to resolve ongoing tension between the country's Hutu and Tutsi ethnic groups. More than 300,000 people, mostly civilians, have been killed since 1993. Burundi's Tutsi-dominated army is believed to have killed thousands of Hutu civilians during the ten-year civil war, while Nkurunziza's own group, CNDD-FDD, has been accused of deliberately killing Tutsis. The extremist group Palipehutu-FNL continues to stage attacks, with this week

seeing the first anniversary of the Gatumba massacre, in which more than 150 Congolese Tutsi refugees were killed.

### **Former British Northern Ireland secretary, Mo Mowlam dies**

Mo Mowlam, the former Secretary for Northern Ireland, has died at 8.10am BST (07:10 UTC) in a hospice after a fall two weeks ago. She was 55.

In a statement, prime minister Tony Blair called her "one of the shrewdest political minds I ever encountered. She was a natural politician, could read a situation and analyse and assess it as fast as anyone."

Mo Mowlam was central to the negotiations leading to the Good Friday Agreement and was popular in Britain for her straightforward approach, informality and honesty.

Another former cabinet minister, Claire Short, said: "She was a very beautiful young woman, she survived ill health and helped bring peace to Northern Ireland and now she's gone far too young."

### **Next Shuttle flight delayed to next year; ISS crew begin spacewalk**

Commander Sergei Krikalev and flight engineer John Phillips began a planned six-hour spacewalk earlier today, their first in the four months both men have been on the station. This week Krikalev exceeded Sergei Avdeyev's record of 748 (non-consecutive) days in space.

Their tasks include retrieval and replacement of several experiments, photographing a materials science experiment, retrieving radiation sensors, installation of a television camera for the first arrival of Europe's new cargo vessel and relocation of a grapple fixture for a crane. This will make room for the next shuttle crew to deliver radiation shields.

However, that delivery is going to have to wait.

NASA are delaying the next Shuttle flight until next year so their engineers have time to address the foam problem that occurred during the most recent flight. A rushed timetable for the previous launch has been

criticised as a major contributing factor to the "same behavioral problems that contributed to the Columbia tragedy," an AP story stated.

### **U.S. Army intelligence had detected 9/11 terrorists year before, says officer**

A year before the 9/11 attacks, through data mining a U.S. Army intelligence group had identified two terrorist cells, including Mohammed Atta and three other 9/11 hijackers. Lieutenant Colonel Anthony Shaffer, a liaison officer of a unit called Able Danger, has spoken on the topic. By analysis of non-military data, several of the terrorists with direct links to top Al-Qaeda leadership were identified.

Able Danger also used publicly available information from government immigration agencies.

Description on CNN of the technology involved:

SHAFFER: "...Land Information Warfare Activity, LIWA, at Fort Belvoir, Virginia, an Army unit ... this targeting exercise of al Qaeda. What the LIWA did -- and it was their ability to go through massive amounts of open-source data, 2.5 terabytes, and look for patterns that related to previously-known terrorists. It was that information then which popped up...

S. O'BRIEN: So, by trolling the Internet and LexisNexis, things like that, I think that's what you mean by open source data? Am I right about that?

SHAFFER: Open source -- anything that's not a classified database. We're talking about commercial databases, financial databases. Anything that's out there that relates to the real world."

On the Sean Hannity Show Wednesday, Shaffer said there were direct links to top Al-Qaeda leaders. He repeated that on Thursday.

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## Today in History

636 - Arab forces led by Khalid bin Walid took control of Syria and Palestine in the Battle of Yarmuk.

917 - Tsar Simeon I of Bulgaria invaded Thrace and drove the Byzantines out.

1882 - Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky's "1812 Overture" debuted in Moscow.

1968 - The "Prague Spring" abruptly ended when 200,000 Warsaw Pact troops and 5,000 tanks invaded Czechoslovakia.

1991 - Estonia regained its independence in the Singing Revolution as part of the collapse of the Soviet Union.

## Quote of the Day

"The Government of the State of Israel and the Palestinian team representing the Palestinian people agree that it is time to put an end to decades of confrontation and conflict, recognize their mutual legitimate and political rights, and strive to live in peaceful coexistence and mutual dignity and security to achieve a just, lasting and comprehensive peace settlement and historic reconciliation through the agreed political process." ~ The Oslo Accords

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