



### *Top Stories*

#### **NYC Transit on strike**

Transit Workers Union Local 100 (TWU) President Roger Toussaint officially declared that its union members are now on strike, bringing the subways and buses of New York City to a halt...

#### **Greenpeace activists clash with Japanese whaling fleet in Southern Ocean**

Environmental activist group Greenpeace have attempted to disrupt Japan's Southern Ocean scientific whaling fleet.

### *Featured story*

#### **Truth comes out about Suprnova closure**

Exactly one year to the day since the popular Suprnova BitTorrent link site went offline, Andrej Preston (Sloncek to the internet community) speaks out about what happened on his website.

### *Wikipedia Current Events*

- A mugger who attempted to escape pursuit on Sunday by entering Bloemfontein Zoo, South Africa was killed after jumping into the Bengal tigers area. He was found with bite marks all over his body, and all his clothes removed, but the tigers had not attempted to eat him, having been fed the previous afternoon.
- A bomb explodes near a nightclub in Spain, but no one is hurt. The Basque separatist movement ETA claims responsibility.

### *Wikipedia Current Events*

- The U.S. Senate blocks oil drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.
- Israel bans Palestinians from East Jerusalem from voting in the next Palestinian legislative election throwing the entire election in doubt.
- Musician Elton John and Canadian filmmaker David Furnish were joined in a civil partnership ceremony at Windsor Town Hall. The couple were among hundreds of same-sex couples entering civil partnerships in England and Wales on the first day that such ceremonies become possible.
- The December solstice, occurring at 18:35 UTC, is observed around the world in both astronomical and spiritual terms; this day has the least hours of sunlight and the longest night of the year in the Northern hemisphere, and vice versa in the Southern hemisphere
- 20,000 people apply for lottery tickets for the 20 places available to view the winter solstice sunrise from inside the Newgrange stone age burial mound in County Meath, Ireland, although cloud cover prevented the sun from shining into the passage grave this morning.
- The United States Senate passed a six-month extension of the USA PATRIOT Act late Wednesday night by a voice vote. That vote cleared the way for the House for a final vote.

### **San Jose, CA, USA, city manager resigns amid Norcal investigation**

Del Borgsdorf, the city manager of San Jose, California announced his resignation on Tuesday, citing "personal reasons" and the "political environment" for his decision. While he denies it is was a factor in his decision, the resignation comes one day after Santa Clara County District Attorney George Kennedy announced his office will investigate the city's contract with Norcal Waste Systems for possible criminal prosecution. Borgsdorf has been criticized by the city council for not informing the council of the \$11 million rate hike promised to the company by mayor Ron Gonzales.

Borgsdorf's resignation follows the resignation of other city officials; Stephen Haase, the city's planning director, and John Bjurman, the city's director of information technology, resigned earlier in the week. In addition, the city council formally censured mayor Gonzales last week, and asked for formal apologies from Borgsdorf and city attorney Richard Doyle over the Norcal contract. In addition to the waste removal scandal, the city government has been criticized for a no-bid contract with Cisco Systems to provide IT equipment in the new City Hall; the Cisco deal cost city taxpayers over \$3 million in equipment costs and construction delays.

## Representative Conyers raises censure issue

US Representative John Conyers (D-MI) has brought three resolutions to the House which could begin a censure process of President Bush and Vice President Cheney, and begin an investigation.

The first of the three resolutions, H.RES.635, would create a select committee to investigate the Administration's intent to go to war before congressional authorization, manipulation of pre-war intelligence, encouraging and countenancing torture, retaliating against critics, and to make recommendations regarding grounds for possible impeachment.

The second, H.RES.636, calls for Censuring President George W. Bush for failing to respond to requests for information concerning allegations that he and others in his Administration misled Congress and the American people regarding the decision to go to war in Iraq, misstated and manipulated intelligence information regarding the justification for the war, countenanced torture and cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment of persons in Iraq, and permitted inappropriate retaliation against critics of his Administration, for failing to adequately account for specific misstatements he made regarding the war, and for failing to comply with Executive Order 12958.

The third, H.RES.637, calls for censuring Vice President Richard B. Cheney for reasons similar to those outlined in H.RES.636.

Rep. Conyers is the sole sponsor of all three resolutions, but Rep. John

Lewis (D-GA) has joined Conyers in calling for an investigation of President Bush's handling of pre-war intelligence. Lewis released a statement Monday 12/19/05 using strong language to condemn the president. "In my opinion, the President has violated the law, and the House and Senate must pursue their inquiries into this illegal program."

## Cuban talk show accuses U.S. diplomat of helping anti-government groups

On a state run talk show in Cuba, they dedicated 90 minutes to an attack on U.S. diplomat Michael Parmly. They accused him, among other things, of "having frequent contacts with his mercenaries, guiding them, supplying them and exhibiting them to the press," according to host Randy Alonso.

This is sparked by Parmly, according to the associated press, "after he met with dissidents and charged that some communist supporters acted like Nazi "brown shirts" or Ku Klux Klan members." Parmly is accused of being part of a plan in the United States to spark a rebellion with dissidents and/or to find justification to invade the nation. At a December 10 gathering to celebrate Human Rights Day Parmly gave a speech saying, "the Cuban regime does not represent the people, nor does it have any interest in bettering their lives," and "rather, the regime is obsessed with self-preservation."

Parmly replaced James Cason whose position is blamed by Cuban officials for the imprisonment of 75 dissidents with whom Cason had contact. The talk show features journalists and government officials who took turns discussing Parmly's actions

in Cuba calling the diplomats, according to one journalist Arlene Rodriguez, "They are the same pig with different suits," and "The pig is Bush's policy and they are the suits."

## NRMA stands by "unsafe" smash repair system

NRMA, one of Australia's largest insurers, has come under scrutiny following the release of a scathing report into its online smash repairs system.

The report by the New South Wales Government's Staysafe committee found that NRMA's online repair tendering system was "unsafe". NRMA has said it has no intention of suspending the system despite the findings.

The report, which was released yesterday found that "[The] system of allocating damaged motor vehicles to smash repairers without the repairers physically inspecting the damaged vehicle before quoting for work ... is an unsafe system in its current form". According to committee member and Port Stephens MP John Bartlett the vehicles were "being repaired to the standard of a brick and the crumple zones at the front and rear no longer worked and all the impact was being felt in the cabin".

According to the report "the system would lead to cost cutting and unsafe repair practices, with the quality of repairs lowered by encouraging smash repairers to take short cuts".

According to NRMA, only minor "cosmetic" repairs are put through the system - however often there can be further damage which is only evident after a complete inspection. The NRMA system

simply places photographs of the vehicles on its website where approved smash repairers bid to carry out repairs.

David Brown, head of claims and assessments at NRMA, said this of the report: "[W]e totally reject the findings of the report, in fact we find the report's fundamentally flawed with no evidence of safety issues, and [it] has been prepared without seeing the system first-hand". He further added that the system would not be scrapped.

### ***Today in History***

1864 - American Civil War: Union General William Tecumseh Sherman's March to the Sea ended with the capture of Savannah, Georgia.

1885 - Ito Hirobumi, a samurai from Choshu, became the first Prime Minister of Japan.

1989 - Romanian Revolution: After a week of bloody demonstrations, Ion Iliescu took over as President of Romania, ending the Communist dictatorship of Nicolae Ceaușescu .

2001 - Burhanuddin Rabbani of the Northern Alliance handed over power in Afghanistan to the interim government headed by Hamid Karzai.

2001 - CC the cat, the first cloned pet, was born.

### ***Quote of the Day***

"My own experience and development deepen every day my conviction that our moral progress may be measured by the degree in which we sympathize with individual suffering and individual joy." ~ George Eliot

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