



Top Stories

Kidnappers of American journalist Jill Carroll release videotape with demands

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Terrorism expert says Osama Bin Laden could be dead

Professor Clive Williams, an Australian terrorism expert says he has evidence, which could show Al Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden is either seriously ill or dead. He says he has evidence to support the theory that bin Laden died of massive organ failure in April last year.



Wikipedia Current Events

•Kidnappers of Jill Carroll demand that the United States release all female Iraqi prisoners within 72 hours.

•Two Jordanian peacekeepers, serving as part of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti, have been killed by gunfire in Port au Prince.

•In Côte d'Ivoire, supporters of President Laurent Gbagbo attack United Nations peacekeepers after the Ivorian Popular Front withdraws from the Ivorian Civil War peace process.

•South Korean scientist Hwang Woo-suk has been offered a job at Clonaid studying human embryonic stem cell lines. Clonaid is a subsidiary of the cult known as the Raelians, who believe that cloning is the first step toward immortality.

•An original manuscript of the Chán Buddhist Wu Men Guan dated to 1246 is exhibited online by the i4uuu museum.

•Taiwanese Premier Frank Hsieh announces his resignation following the defeat of the Democratic Progressive Party in recent elections.

Kidnappers of American journalist Jill Carroll release videotape with demands

The kidnappers of American journalist Jill Carroll today have released a silent 20-second video of the kidnapped journalist on Al-Jazeera television news channel. Along with the video came a

statement demanding the United States release all female prisoners in Iraq within 72 hours or they will kill Carroll. Al-Jazeera has not released where the video was sent from.

In the video, Carroll is seated in front of a white background, apparently speaking, however the tape contained no sound. She appears pale and tired with long brown hair parted in the middle and pulled back from her face.

Carroll is a 28-year old freelance reporter working for the Christian Science Monitor newspaper in Iraq since October 2003. She was kidnapped on January 7 in one of Baghdad's most dangerous neighborhoods. Just after leaving the office of a Sunni Arab politician, Adnan al-Dulaimi, Adnan was not there and after 25 minutes they left. Her car was ambushed by gunmen who killed her Iraqi translator. The driver got away unharmed as he was pulled from the car by the gunmen who then drove away with the vehicle.

Carroll's family have issued a statement pleading for mercy. Both Al-Jazeera and the editors of the Boston, Massachusetts-based paper have also called for her safe release.

According to Reporters Sans Frontieres, a Paris, France-based advocacy group, Carroll is the latest of 31 journalists to be kidnapped in Iraq since the war began. Six journalists have been killed according to The Committee

Featured story

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to Protect Journalists.

Clarence Ray Allen is executed

Clarence Ray Allen, convicted of ordering a hit in 1980 that resulted in the deaths of the target and two bystanders, was executed just after his 76th birthday, making him the second-oldest man in U.S. history to be executed. He had been in prison for ordering the murder of his son's girlfriend when he ordered the hit that resulted in the death penalty conviction. However, appeals caused him to remain on death row for 23 years.

His lawyers had attempted to make the case that it would be cruel and unusual to execute the man, attempting to save his life under the Eighth Amendment to the United States Constitution. However, the courts rejected the appeal, and the Supreme Court refused to hear the case, upholding the death penalty conviction.

Couple takes lawyer hostage and said to have explosives

A male and a female took 3 people hostage at a law firm in Statesboro, Georgia. Police blocked off a part of this rural town on Monday. Two suspects , a man and a woman, took a lawyer hostage and claimed that they had explosives.

The suspects, Robert Eugene Brower, 43, a former client of the lawyer, and the female whose name was not released, gave up after demands for cigarettes and food were met and they spoke with a family member.

The standoff lasted for 24 hours and ended, "peacefully," at around 10AM said Larry Schnall, a spokesman for the Georgia State Patrol.

The last of the 3 hostages to be released was identified as Michael Hostilo. He and the other two hostages were not injured. There is no word on the names of the other hostages.

Earlier reports stated that there had been a "loud boom" coming from the scene at about six o'clock this morning. Authorities have not stated what the booms were.

Police are now inside the building to locate and defuse the explosive device that the suspects claimed to have had.

Initially when police arrived, there were 3 hostages, but 2 had been recently released and were unharmed, said Maggie Fitzgerald, a city spokeswoman. "They are upset with some legal issues within the recent past and want to get those issues resolved. We are doing everything possible to end this situation without anyone being hurt."

In a news conference Monday night, Police Chief Stan York said Brower was angry about "having been convicted in a criminal case", in which the lawyer was his court-appointed attorney. York did not elaborate on the demands of the hostage-takers, other than saying, "they only wanted to call attention to the case."

Georgia State Trooper Larry Schnall, a spokesman for the Georgia State Patrol, said a SWAT team was sent to the scene.

This morning authorities convinced the two suspects to give-up, but "incidents leading to an escalation resulted in some gunfire," Stan York in a press conference just moments ago. No one was hurt in the brief eruption of gunfire.

Police later said when the suspects tried to surrender they became apprehensive and made a threatening gesture prompting authorities to draw their guns and open fire.

The standoff began at around 9AM on Monday.

Rooney and Ferguson face inquiry over unsightly language

Manchester United manager Alex Ferguson and striker Wayne Rooney will face an inquiry from the Football Association after they were witnessed by over 40 fans, including TV crews, swearing at referee Alan Bennett. After a string of decisions (which the red half of Manchester perceived to be unfair) being given in City's favour, and with the untimely booking of Ronaldo, both Ferguson and Rooney were pushed to their limits of patience, swearing out loud in disbelief.

Rooney was first to be heard mouthing off after the decision was taken to give Ronaldo his marching orders. He was observed swearing at the referee at half time, and then continuing the tirade throughout the game as a string of bad decisions were taken which stripped United of their fluidity in the game. Despite the language from Rooney being far from usual, a barrage of assaults were thrown to and from the referee and the striker right through the game.

After the decision was given to take off Cristiano Ronaldo, Ferguson's temper boiled and he was heard by many sitting around him to call the referee a "f*cking tw*t" as well as calling his decisions a "f*cking disgrace". This later led on to Ferguson

launching threats at the referee during half time, and accusing the referee of not being able to handle under the pressure of a premiership game as well as questioning his judgement of the offside rule.

Ferguson himself admitted that Ronaldo's tackle was rash, and also noted that the side seemed to get better after he had been sent off, saying that they were playing better with 10 men. He still maintained that the side defended well, despite the fact that new signing Patrice Evra and Mikael Silvestre afforded City easy opportunities to slip goals in.

The fine that both Ferguson and Rooney will receive is unknown, although it is thought to be similar to the the ban he received in 2003, in which he received a 3 match touchline-ban, and a £100,000 after swearing at Jeffery Winter.

Iran lifts ban of CNN

Yesterday the President of Iran, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, stated in a letter to the Cultural Ministry, the country was banning all work of CNN (Cable News Network), which is owned by Time Warner Inc., for making a translation error during a press conference on Saturday.

However, today Ahmadinejad announced that Iran was lifting that ban. Apparently late Monday, Ahmadinejad had asked the Cultural Ministry to lift the ban after CNN apologized for their error.

"I want the channel to be allowed to resume its work owing to the apology it made," Ahmadinejad said in a letter sent to the Culture Ministry.

"Following a request from President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, the ban on the activities of CNN's stringer in Iran was lifted," Mohammad Hossein Khoshvaght, director of foreign media at Iran's Culture Ministry, told the media.

Less than 24 hours ago Iran had banned CNN from the country for misquoting the president as speaking of "nuclear weapons" when he actually spoke of "nuclear technology" during Saturdays press conference.

Chelsea's Robben sent off after "over celebrating"

Today, a controversial decision was taken by referee Chris Foy in a recent match between Sunderland Association Football Club and Chelsea Football Club in the U.K. to send off Chelsea's Robben after "excessive celebrations". The decision was taken after Robben proceeded to embrace fans beyond the barriers of the club, which was seen by the referee to be a breach of safety regulations, as well as FIFA policy.

As consensus, ex-match officials watching the game agreed the decision was thought to lack common sense. However, the policy of restricting player celebrations was introduced into FIFA policy last year after safety concerns from various match officials. FIFA rules state several situations in which celebrations may lead to booking; If, In the opinion of the referee, a player makes gestures which are provocative, derisory or inflammatory. If the player climbs on to a perimeter fence to celebrate a goal being scored. If the player removes his shirt over his head or covers his head with his shirt.

However, the rule which BSkyB stated in the pre match commentary was more relevant, because the aforementioned rules were not in any way broken; referring to the fact that perimeter fences were only common in Spanish football. The guideline stated that "leaving the field to celebrate a goal is not a cautionable offence in itself but it is essential that players return to the field as soon as possible".

Despite the justification of the referee's call, both Robben himself, and commentator Andy Gray questioned the common sense nature of the decision, noting that quick thinking and spontaneous decision should be something a referee focuses on, rather than the implicit enforcement of minor rules.

In response to the decision, Andy Gray noted; "I can't believe it, celebration is a natural thing to do.. all he was doing was simply celebrating after a job well done with his fans. It wasn't like he was actually inciting fans because it was his own side. This really is the most silly call I have ever seen a referee make in my history of commentating."

Pakistanis condemn US airstrike

Pakistani tribesmen numbering in the thousands protested and some set fire to the office of a U.S. related agency as the people and government of Pakistan for the second consecutive day on Sunday expressed their anger over U.S. attacks on Pakistani civilians along the frontier.

Many major cities in Pakistan were affected by the protests. In the largest city of Karachi, the crowd was estimated at 10,000, with chants of "Death to America" and

"Stop bombing against innocent people." Riot police were deployed, but there were no reports of violence.

In a nationally broadcasted speech on Sunday by President Pervez Musharraf, he made no reference to the Friday air strike. "If we keep sheltering foreign terrorists here ... our future will not be good. Remember what I say," he said.

Pakistan's Information Minister, Sheikh Rashid Ahmed, said the attack was "highly condemnable" and that his government wanted "to assure the people we will not allow such incidents to reoccur."

Liaqat Baluch, a lawmaker from Mutahida Majlis-e-Amal, said "We demand that Pervez Musharraf resign and American troops vacate all parts of Pakistan and go out of Afghanistan and Iraq." Sahibzada Haroon ur Rashid, a lawmaker from a hardline Islamic party, called the attack "open terrorism."

Protests opposing the government's participation in the U.S.-led war on terror, and the recent series of U.S. attacks along the frontier that killed civilians were held nationwide. Shahid Shamsi, a spokesman for the anti-American religious coalition that organized the rallies announced more and bigger protests in the days to come. He said "Pakistani civilians, including children, were killed," and explained that "principles cannot be broken in the name of (fighting) terrorism."

Unnamed sources in the United States indicate that the missile strikes were intended to assassinate specific Al-Qaeda members.

The Pakistani Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz of the ruling Muslim

League (Q) party demanded an apology from the United States on Monday. He also said his scheduled trip to the United States will proceed as planned. He will leave Tuesday for talks there on security issues, and meet with business leaders to garner foreign investment.

Terrorism expert says Osama Bin Laden could be dead

An Australian terrorism expert says he has evidence, which could show Al Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden is either seriously ill or dead.

Professor Clive Williams, director of terrorism studies at the Australian National University, says he has been provided with evidence, by an Indian colleague, to support the theory that bin Laden died of massive organ failure in April last year.

Professor Williams says Ayman al Zawahiri, bin Laden's deputy, has been making all statements on behalf of Al Qaeda for around a year.

Al Zawahiri is believed to have been the target of a strike in Pakistan last week which killed at least 18 people in a remote Pakistani tribal village, the second such unexplained attack near the volatile Afghan border within a week.

However, Professor Williams says it may be impossible to ever prove if Osama bin Laden, accused of plotting the September 11, 2001 attacks on the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon building in the U.S., is alive or dead.

"It's hard to prove or disprove these things because there hasn't really been anything that allows you to make a judgement one way

or the other," he said. "But it does seem strange that Dr Zawahiri has been making all of the statements since then, and nothing's been heard from Bin Laden since I think the December of the year before."

He says even if bin Laden was dead, it would not make much difference - as people would continue to fight for the things they believe he stood for. He has also recommended against confirming his death or otherwise.

Professor Williams, the Visiting Fellow at the Australian National University's Strategic and Defence Studies Centre said the information, which came from a former Indian intelligence officer whom he would not identify, was credible but impossible to confirm.

"It does seem reasonably convincing based on the evidence that I've been provided with that he's certainly either severely incapacitated or dead at this stage," Dr Williams said.

But he said, "Even if he's dead, it will be almost impossible for Western authorities to prove it. It may simply be that we don't hear much about Bin Laden again ... [or] he may pop up again in six months' time and make a new statement, at which case, of course, we will go back to Square1."

Al-Qaeda in Iraq leader Abu Musab al-Zarqawi's actions in targeting Shi'ites in Iraq were another factor raising doubt that bin Laden was still leading al-Qaeda. Bin Laden had promoted a pan-Islamic vision and had tried, unsuccessfully, to attract Shi'a Muslims to al-Qaeda.

"From what I have read, Zarqawi had a great deal of respect for bin Laden, so it would seem unlikely

that he would be doing that if bin Laden was still around," said Williams. There was also the question of how long an ill man like bin Laden, who walked with a cane and suffered from a kidney disease, would survive in the tribal areas of Pakistan, where he was thought to be hiding.

However, the United States believes Bin Laden still alive. Osama Bin Laden and his deputy are thought to be living in the area of a missile strike apparently aimed at Ayman al-Zawahiri, said US counter-terrorism ambassador Henry Crumpton. He said the al-Qaeda leader and his number two were believed to be in the Pakistan-Afghanistan border region.

The US has not commented on the attack on a Pakistan village on Friday that killed 18 civilians. US media said the attack was carried out by the CIA. Thousands of Pakistanis later staged anti-American demonstrations.

Australia to explore a national identity card

The debate over whether Australians should be required to have a national identity card has been reignited following an announcement by Attorney-General Phillip Ruddock yesterday that a study will be conducted.

The concept is not new, being first floated by Bob Hawke in 1986. The idea was abandoned after being defeated in the Australian Senate and due to strong criticism.

The government cites terrorism and fraud protection as needs for a universal national identity system.

The opposition remains neutral on the proposal, saying only that cost

and privacy would be major issues.

Defence Minister Robert Hill is cautious of such a plan, saying "I don't believe governments are entitled to any more information about you than is absolutely necessary".

The Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, which represents big business in Australia has voiced its opposition to the plan claiming the system could cost \$750 per person to introduce, most of which would be borne by big business.

Norwegian scientist published fake findings in Lancet

According to Norwegian and British newspaper sources, Jon Sudbø, a cancer researcher at the Norwegian Radium Hospital, fabricated at least 900 patient records in his research on NSAID drugs published in October of 2005 (PMID 16226613). According to the now-discredited research, the class of drugs, commonly used for pain management, was found to decrease the risk of oral cancer but increase the risk of heart disease.

This field of research is important for the future use of Cox-2 drugs and was received with great interest by the United States Food and Drug Administration and other organizations involved in drug safety and efficacy.

Several other scientists put their name to the article in the Lancet but claim they were misled by Sudbø. The Lancet is publishing a retraction in its upcoming edition. Probes are underway both to investigate how this article passed peer review, and whether previous research by Sudbø was fraudulent.

Former US President Gerald Ford hospitalized with pneumonia

Former United States President Gerald Ford has been hospitalized with pneumonia, an official announced today. Ford was admitted to the Eisenhower Medical Center in Rancho Mirage, California, USA.

Ford's chief of staff, Penny Circle, said in a press release, "He is doing well and resting comfortably." She added that there would be no further announcements until 11 AM on Tuesday.

Ford visited the hospital last month for a routine test, which he goes for every December. Circle said he had "a horrible cold." Ford last visited the hospital in January 2005 for a follow-up on his annual December checkup.

Ford, 92, was the nation's 38th president. After the death of Ronald Regan in 2004, he became the oldest American president alive.

Free Software Foundation releases first draft of GPLv3

The Free Software Foundation released the first draft for the next version of the GNU General Public License at the International Public Conference for GPLv3 in Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA, today. The revisions mark the first changes to the GPL since the second version was released in 1991.

According to Richard M. Stallman, the president of the Free Software Foundation, the most significant change to the license are changes to allow GPLv3 to be compatible with other popular free software licenses, notably the Apache Software License 2.0 and the

Eclipse license. A second significant change, according to Stallman, is the addition of a clause prohibiting the use of GPL software for Digital rights management (DRM), "something for which there can never be toleration."

As of noon EST today, the license is available in draft form on the Free Software Foundation's website. The conference about the license, which continues now and into Tuesday, is being held in Building 10, Room 250, on the campus of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Approximately 200 people attended the morning session of the conference, during which Eben Moglen gave what he called a "quick" 90 minute overview of the license changes.

While Moglen's presentation covered a great deal of legal detail, it was not without levity. When the cell phone of Dave Turner, an FSF staff member sitting in the front row, rang during Moglen's speech, Stallman broke in, requesting of the audience, "If you have brought in a portable tracking and surveillance device, you should turn it off," before making other remarks about the police.

The crowd at the conference included a large number of free software celebrities, including Bruce Perens, Andrew Tridgell, and Chris diBona. According to Wikinews reporter Brandon Stafford, it seemed that IBM and Sun were the corporations with the most employees present. Representing the companies were Bob Sutor, Craig Cook, and Mark Brown from IBM and Simon Phipps and Doug Johnson from Sun. Also in attendance were representatives from Intel,

Redhat, MySQL AB, Hitachi, and Qualcomm, among others.

Today in History

1778 - Captain James Cook discovered the Sandwich Islands, now known as Hawaii.

1871 - King Wilhelm I of Prussia was proclaimed the first Kaiser of the German Empire (flag pictured), a newly unified nation state.

1958 - Willie O'Ree of the Boston Bruins played his first game in the National Hockey League, breaking the color barrier in professional ice hockey.

1977 - The mysterious Legionnaires' disease was found to be caused by a novel bacterium now known as Legionella.

2003 - The Canberra Firestorm: Bushfires burning out of control began blazing through residential areas of Canberra, Australia.

January 18 is Week of Prayer for Christian Unity (1st day)

Quote of the Day

"There is absolutely nothing that can be taken for granted in this world." ~ Robert Anton Wilson

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