



Top Stories

School children and teachers taken hostage in Philippines

The head of a day care centre in Manilla, Philippines, has boarded a bus containing 32 children and 2 teachers from the centre and is currently holding them hostage, demanding better education rights and better housing for them.

UK freezes business arrangements with Iran; detained sailors and marines shown on TV

The United Kingdom has frozen all bilateral business deals with Iran until all 15 British sailors and marines, which were detained by Iranian forces on March 23, 2007, be released and the sailors and marines recently appeared on Iranian TV.

Featured story

Mass wedding held against racism in Belgium

In February, three couples refused to pledge their wedding vows in front of the black alderman of the city of Sint-Niklaas, because of the colour of his skin. So he decided to organise a mass wedding, to send a positive signal against racial discrimination in Belgium.

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- President of Chile Michelle Bachelet sacks several ministers including the Minister for National Defence Vivianne Blanlot Soza and the Minister for Justice Isidro Solís Palma for perceived poor

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performance as well as her Chief of Staff. The Minister for Transport Sergio Espejo Yaksic is sacked for problems with Santiago's new transport system Transantiago.

- A Guatemalan prison riot results in the death of three prisoners. Carlos Vielman, the Interior Minister, resigns over police involvement in the killing of three politicians from El Salvador last month.

- Quebec general election: The governing Quebec Liberal Party wins a minority government, with the conservative Action démocratique du Québec a strong second and the the separatist Parti Québécois third.

- Nine United States Army officers including four generals could face disciplinary proceedings as a result of mistakes made in the aftermath of the friendly-fire death of Pat Tillman.

- India's DRDO successfully test fires a new version of the Astra air-to-air missile.

- Scientists discover how fossilized dung-eating mites can provide vital information on the rise and fall of the Inca civilization in South America.

- Alan Johnston, a BBC News journalist, begins his third week in captivity, making him the longest-held foreign hostage since kidnappings began in Gaza. Reporters Without Borders urges the Arab League to make an appeal for his release at an

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upcoming summit.

NFL: Eagles trade for Spikes, Holcomb

Takeo Spikes is no longer a member of the Buffalo Bills. Spikes was involved in a trade Monday that sent the 2-time Pro-Bowl linebacker, as well as backup quarterback Kelly Holcomb to the Philadelphia Eagles for defensive tackle Darwin Walker and an undisclosed draft pick, probably in a later round of the draft. Of Spikes, Eagles general manager Tom Heckert said: "Takeo Spikes is a proven playmaker in the National Football League." Heckert added, "He has the ability to play all three linebacking positions and were happy to add him to our defense."

Spikes has dealt with injuries throughout his career, missing 13 games in 2005 with an Achillies tendon injury. He also missed four games this past season with problems in his hamstring. Despite his injuries, Spikes has been a playmaker for Buffalo, and previously for Cincinatti, rolling up 878 tackles, 21.5 sacks, 12 interceptions, 12 forced fumbles, and 14 fumble recoveries.

Kelly Holcomb, also involved in the deal, is 33 years old, with 11 years experience as the backup quarterback in Indianapolis, Cleveland, and most recently Buffalo. Holcomb spent the 2006 season behind J.P. Losman.

Darwin Walker is a 7-year veteran

of the league. In that time span, Walker has accumulated 170 tackles, 27.5 sacks, and 5 forced fumbles, as well as 5 recoveries.

US charges Australian David Hicks

David Hicks of Australia became the first to be charged under the new Military Commissions Act as he appeared before a military judge at Guantanamo Bay to face charges of providing material support to a terrorist organization. The 31-year-old Australian's lawyers have been considering a plea bargain, in hopes he can be handed to Australian custody. It is alleged that Hicks, a Muslim convert, attended al-Qaeda training camps and fought with the Taliban. He was captured in 2001 in Afghanistan where, according to his father, he was on a religious pilgrimage.

Hicks sought to expand his defense team, but two of his lawyers were disqualified by the military judge. One of them, Joshua Dratel, refused to sign a document setting out the rules for the tribunal. Hicks said he was "shocked" to lose another lawyer.

UN sanctions prompt Iran to limit cooperation with IAEA

The government of Iran will be limiting its cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) a government spokesperson said, just a day after the United Nations voted to impose sanctions on Iran.

"It is not a new issue for the Iranian nation. Enemies of the Iranian nation have made a mistake this time too. [Sanctions] will not halt Iran's peaceful nuclear program even for a second. The Iranian nation will not forget those who backed and those who rejected (the resolution), while adjusting its international relations," said the

president of Iran, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

Gholam Hossein Elham, a spokesman for the Iranian government said that the country would be halting all "code 1-3 of minor arrangements of the safeguards" with the IAEA and will "continue until Iran's nuclear case is referred back to the IAEA from the U.N Security Council."

Elham also said that the sanctions imposed on the country are "illegal" and also said that the U.N. is "bullying" the nation.

Alejandro Wolff, the acting United States Permanent Representative to the United Nations, said that the sanctions "sent a clear and unambiguous message to Iran" that continuing to build a nuclear program "will only further isolate Iran and make it less, not more, secure."

Rain in Greater Vancouver area, increased turbidity in drinking water

The rain has stopped in the Lower Mainland in British Columbia, but the Greater Vancouver Regional District (GVRD) says the region's water worries are not over.

Some residents in the area had to leave their homes after a mud slide came down Friday evening. About 21 consecutive days were without sunshine but rain in the Greater Vancouver Regional District.

The heavy rainfall above the steep hills above the region's water supply lakes mean that there may be increased turbidity in the drinking water, officials warn.

Officials say that this should not be a problem for most people, but people with bad immune systems should take extra precautions, like

boiling their water. However, this is not a boil-water advisory. One was issued last November after a big storm in the Greater Vancouver area, affecting about a million people.

LTTE carry out airstrike on air force base in Sri Lanka

Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) rebels bombed an Sri Lankan air force base in Katunayake in their first ever aerial attack on government forces.

At least two aircraft attacked the base on Monday at 00:45 hours local time. As many as 3 members of the air force were killed, and 17 injured during the attack when at least 2 bombs were dropped on the base. There are no reports of any air force jets being damaged or destroyed.

"It is a measure to protect Tamil civilians from the genocidal aerial bombardments by Sri Lankan armed forces." —Rasiah Ilanthiraiyan, LTTE spokesperson

"The situation was brought under total control. The government vehemently condemns the cowardly attempt to attack the Katunayake air force camp in the aftermath of the major defeats suffered by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam in the north and east," said a statement by the Media Center for National Security.

No casualties or damage have been reported from the neighbouring Bandaranaike International Airport, which is Sri Lanka's only international airport.

"No security threat prevailed to the commercial flights and passengers," added the statement.

Rebels released a statement following the attack warning of

more bombings.

"It is a measure to protect Tamil civilians from the genocidal aerial bombardments by Sri Lankan armed forces. More attacks of the same nature will follow," said Rasiyah Ilanthiraiyan, a spokesman for the rebel group.

In 2001, a ground attack by the LTTE on Bandaranaike International Airport left nearly half of national carrier SriLankan Airlines' fleet destroyed.

Power sharing to return to Northern Ireland

Following an historic meeting between Ian Paisley and Gerry Adams, the leaders of the DUP and Sinn Fein respectively, devolved government is to return to Northern Ireland. A delay has been agreed by those involved and a new target date of the 8th of May has been set for the restoration of power sharing in Northern Ireland.

The governments of Britain and Ireland had warned that the Stormont assembly would be shut down if an executive had not been agreed by today.

Newfoundland government launches seal hunt website

The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador announced, March 23, 2007, the launch of a new website to counter "misinformation about the sealing industry that is put in the public domain by international animal rights organizations."

Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture Tom Rideout, stated, "The sealing industry Web site is a key part of government's plan to correct the misinformation on this all important industry. It will provide easy access to factual information on the Newfoundland

and Labrador sealing industry to Internet users all over the world."

The annual seal hunt in Canada is a source of controversy and ignites protest worldwide. Opponents of the harvest attempt to observe the hunt each year and stage protests in cities throughout the world. Boycotts of Canadian seal products and seafood have been called for.

"It is critical the public has easy access to factual information on the sealing industry," said Rideout. "There is a lot of misinformation in the public domain and the groups that are spreading the misinformation have a strong Web presence. In order to effectively counter this information, it is important that government has a strong presence as well."

The website contains information on the history of the sealing industry, its economic importance, and utilization of the animal, once harvested.

In addition to the website, the government will send a delegation of individuals to Europe on March 25 to meet with European parliamentarians and media regarding the seal hunt. The delegation will travel to Brussels, London, Berlin and The Hague.

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Prime Minister of Japan Shinzo Abe apologizes for Japan's use of women as sex slaves in frontline brothels during World War II. •French presidential election: Nicolas Sarkozy resigns as Interior Minister to concentrate on his presidential candidacy. •Egyptians go to the polls to vote on 34 amendments to the constitution of Egypt which the government claims will help

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<p>combat terrorism. Opposition groups are boycotting the referendum claiming that they will erode civil liberties. The amendments achieved approval with 76% of the vote but with only a 27% turnout.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Health officials meet in Jakarta to resolve a dispute between Indonesia and the World Health Organisation about access to H5N1 vaccines. •President of the People's Republic of China Hu Jintao begins a three-day tour of Russia to promote trade and energy ties. •The military commission process begins for detainees accused by the United States of war crimes, with the first person to face trial being Australian David Hicks. Hicks pleads guilty to providing material support for terrorists. •A 5.3 magnitude aftershock hits the Noto Peninsula of Honshu, 300 km northwest of Tokyo, a day after a 6.9 magnitude earthquake hits the same area. •Sri Lankan Civil War: The Sri Lanka Army claims that an airbase adjacent to Bandaranaike International Airport was subjected to air attack by the Tamil Tigers, making it the first air attack launched by the Tigers. •Northern Ireland Peace Process: Members of the DUP, led by Ian Paisley, and Sinn Féin, led by Gerry Adams, meet face-to face for the first time, and agree a timetable for implementing the St. Andrews Agreement. •The Supreme Council of Kyrgyzstan votes against allowing polygamy, maintaining the two-year imprisonment punishment for offenders.

Today in History

1513 - Spanish conquistador Juan Ponce de León first sighted Florida, purportedly while searching for the Fountain of Youth in the New World.
 1794 - The United States Navy was established.
 1958 - Nikita Khrushchev became Premier of the Soviet Union.
 1964 - The Good Friday Earthquake and subsequent tsunamis devastated Anchorage, Alaska.
 1977 - Two Boeing 747 airliners collided in the Tenerife disaster on Tenerife of the Canary Islands, killing 583 people and resulting in the worst aircraft accident in aviation history.
 March 27 is Feast day of Rupert of Salzburg in the Roman Catholic Church.

Quote of the Day

You cannot force ideas. Successful ideas are the result of slow growth. Ideas do not reach perfection in a day, no matter how much study is put upon them.

~ Alexander Graham Bell

Word of the Day

spirit away; v

1. To remove something without anyone noticing.

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http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Main_Page

Quote of the Day

http://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Main_Page

Word of the Day

http://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Main_Page

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