

Top Stories

Children massacred in Kenyan school



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children. Up to 400 members of the Borana tribe living across the border in Ethiopia attacked the nomadic Gabra people aiming to steal their livestock. The societies are not monetarized - cattle is the main form of wealth.

Suicide bomber kills 24 children in Iraq



A suicide bomber has killed as many as 24 children in Iraq when he attacked US troops handing out sweets to a group of children.

Shuttle launch called off due to faulty fuel tank sensor



The launch of the Space Shuttle Discovery was cancelled today due to a damaged or malfunctioning low-level fuel sensor. The cause of the malfunction is unknown and it is unclear if the problem can be resolved on the launch-pad or if the shuttle will return to the VAB. Discovery's crew will remain at Kennedy Space Center for the near future.

Wikipedia Current Events

- In China, the death toll in the Xinjiang mine explosion rises to 81, with two missing.
- In Indonesia, geologists increase the alert status of Mount Merapi volcano in Java. The volcano has shown increased activity since last Friday.
- In Pakistan, a collision of three express trains near Ghotki leaves at least 120 dead after 13 carriages derail, according to Pakistan Railways and local police.

Wikipedia Current Events

- Former Worldcom CEO Bernard Ebbers is sentenced to 25 years imprisonment for conspiracy, securities fraud and seven counts of making false filings to the SEC
- U.S. Supreme Court Chief Justice William Rehnquist is hospitalized with a fever. There have been no indications when Rehnquist, who is fighting thyroid cancer, will be released.
- NASA's planned launch of STS-114, Space Shuttle Discovery from pad 39B at the Kennedy Space Center at 3:51pm EDT (1951 UTC) is delayed due to a problem with the fuel level sensors. This would have been the first manned space launch by NASA since the loss of Columbia over 2 years ago.
- The Australian Government announces it will send back 150 elite Special Air Service troops to Afghanistan, to take part in covert operations and to help thwart a resurgent Taliban. A further 200 troops may also be dispatched to aid reconstruction efforts.
- The American Family Association, a right-wing Christian activist group, announces an international boycott of Nike. In adding Nike to its ongoing boycotts of Kmart and the book One of the Guys by Robert Clark Young, the AFA argues that Nike promotes "a back door move to legalise homosexual marriage."
- In Malaysia, ex-minister Osu Sukam, member of a ruling United Malays National Organization party, resigns due to gambling debts totalling at least US\$1.8 million.
- In the Philippines, thousands of protesters gather in Manila to demand the resignation of president Gloria Arroyo, who has reshuffled her cabinet. The military is on alert in case of violence.

Socialized Canadian surgery half the U.S. cost with same results-Study

Americans pay twice as much for heart-bypass surgery as the socialized Canadian system, with no difference in outcome, according to today's issue of the Archives of Internal Medicine in a study funded by American drug company, Pfizer Inc.. The research found that heart bypass surgery costs an average of \$10,373 in Canada, compared with \$20,673 in the United States. Even though the costs were double in the United States, the rate of complications and death following bypass surgery was similar.

High administrative costs and overtreatment are usually blamed for the higher cost in the profit-driven U.S. system. Americans spent \$5,635 per capita on health care in 2003, while only \$3,003 was spent by Canadians. Health spending accounts for almost 15 per cent of gross domestic product in the U.S. and just under 10 per cent in Canada; while at the same time, all Canadian residents are full covered. In addition, the average Canadian lives 2 years longer than the average American.

This is one of the first studies directly comparing the costs of surgery in Canada and the United States and it reinforces the view of Dr. Mark Eisenberg, head of cardiovascular epidemiology at Jewish General Hospital in Montreal; "The conventional wisdom is that health care is much more expensive in the U.S. and the conventional wisdom is right." by finding that Canada's socialized system is far more cost efficient than the U.S. model.

The cost of medications used to treat bypass patients were as much as 68 percent greater in the U.S. than in Canada and the cost of a surgical bed was 36 percent greater in the U.S.. In Canada, nursing accounted for 44 percent of the treatment costs, compared with 21 percent in the U.S. and patients stayed longer in hospital following surgery in Canada.

Italian police launch nationwide anti-terror sweep

Italian police have launched a swoop on suspected Islamic extremists across Italy.

About 200 search warrants were issued, with about 175 being detained. It comes a day after the Minister of the Interior Giuseppe Pisanu warned of the potential threat posed by extremists, saying that "terrorism is knocking on Italy's door".

After the 7 July London bombings, a statement was made by an Al Qaida affiliated group claiming responsibility for the London attacks. In it, Denmark and Italy were specifically warned of attacks "in the same way if they do not withdraw their troops from Iraq and Afghanistan."

In other news, a Brescia court jailed two North Africans accused of being part of a terror cell planning attacks in Italy. The court jailed another man on lesser charges. Six other North Africans, suspected of being in the same cell, are being tried in Cremona.

Of the two convicted, Iman Mohamed Rafik of Morocco was jailed for four years and eight months, while Kamel Hamroui received a sentence of three years and four months. They had been arrested in connection with the 16 May 2003 Al Qaida attacks on Casablanca, Morocco which killed 45 people, including 12 suicide bombers.

Suicide bomber kills 24 children in Iraq

A suicide bomber has killed as many as 24 children in Iraq.

According to an Iraqi eyewitness, US troops were handing out sweets to children gathered around their Humvee military vehicle in eastern Baghdad when a bomber drove a car carrying explosives up to the group and detonated his weapon. One US soldier was killed and three more injured.

The local hospital's morgue has received 24 dead children, mostly aged between 10 and 13.

Army spokesman Major Russ Goemaere said "The car bomber made a deliberate decision to attack one of our vehicles as the

soldiers were engaged in a peaceful operation with Iraqi citizens."

A Reuters camera man saw the car explode between houses, reducing three to rubble. The area is very poor and the residents are a mixed community of Sunnis, Shia and Christians.

Women were wailing in the street alongside a crumpled child's bicycle and pools of blood after the attack.

Hundreds of distraught parents gathered at the local hospital desperately searching for their children.

One father who lost a son said "Why do they attack our children? They just destroyed one US Humvee, but they killed dozens of our children."

A joint US-Iraq offensive launched in Baghdad in May has considerably reduced the number of suicide bombings, but authorities admit such attacks are hard to eliminate.

A similar car bomb attack in September last year killed at least 34 children in Baghdad. That attack also saw the victims gathering round US troops who were handing out sweets, to mark the opening of a water treatment plant.

Iraqi Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari said on Tuesday that declining levels of violence in his country were allowing Iraqi security forces to begin taking over duties from US troops in many cities, in a move that may pave the way for withdrawal of Western forces.

Shuttle launch called off due to faulty fuel tank sensor



NASA control room

The U.S. space agency NASA called off the launch of Space shuttle Discovery today after a problem with a fuel sensor in the external tank used to detect fuel exhaustion. According to the agency-run NASA TV, the

low-fuel sensor was either malfunctioning or damaged. The launch was already facing the threat of a scrub due to thunderstorms in the area.

The sensor is one of four used to trigger the engine cutout after launch. Although only two are required for normal operation, and the Shuttle can be flown with one, NASA elected to maintain full redundancy. Should more of the sensors fail, the engine might burn out due to lack of fuel, a situation that has not been tested.

The problem was detected during a simulation of an empty tank. When placed in a mode simulating an empty tank, three of the sensors correctly registered that the tank was empty, while the faulty sensor stayed in the "full" state. NASA is currently unsure whether the problem relates to the sensor, the instrumentation circuits reporting the sensor's state, or the simulation circuits.

The problem comes after a separate incident yesterday when a cockpit window cover fell from the Orbiter, damaging thermal protection tiles. A similar problem caused the replacement of the fuel tank in June. NASA described the problem as an "intermittent fault".

The launch, which was scheduled for 3:51 ET (20:51 UTC), would have been the first launch of a shuttle since Columbia's February 2003 crash which killed all crew members aboard.

It is still unknown to NASA officials what caused the sensor to become defective. It is also unknown at the moment whether the issue will be fixed on the launch pad, or in the Vehicle Assembly Building - in which it takes close to a full days' time to transport a shuttle between the two areas.

In the interim, the crew of the shuttle will stay at KSC unless there are further delays, in which case the crew might be transported back to JSC in Houston for refresher training.



Shuttle launch on schedule despite launch pad accident



Discovery being rolled out

The 'Return to Flight' mission for the Space Shuttle Discovery is to go ahead later today despite an accident on the launch pad yesterday.

At about 5pm EDT Tuesday one of Discovery's cockpit window covers became detached and fell sixty feet. The falling cover struck the left Orbital Maneuvering System pod (situated to one side of the tail fin), damaging several thermal protection tiles. The tiles provide vital protection to the Orbiter as it makes its fiery re-entry to Earth's atmosphere.

A replacement panel was fitted in less than an hour, with the only effect being a delay in rolling back the pad's Rotating Service Structure.

This has been the only issue in the build up to today's launch, the first Shuttle flight since the Columbia Orbiter broke up during re-entry in February 2003. All crew were lost in that incident, which has been blamed on damage to a wing thermal protection system panel, caused by a block of fuel tank insulation that became detached and hit the Orbiter during the first moments of flight.

Discovery is due to take off at 3.51pm EDT today. The chance of a weather-related delay to the launch has increased to 40% - due to the possibility of thunderstorms in the area.

Nurse glues boyfriend's eyes shut

A nurse from Sunderland in the United Kingdom superglued her (now former) boyfriend's eyes shut when he would not stop paying attention to swimsuit clad women while the two were on holiday in Malta.

After an argument, the boyfriend, Disc

Jockey Lee Scullion (31), went for an afternoon nap in their hotel room. When he woke up, he discovered that he could not open his eyes and that his watch was glued to his wrist. Glue was also smothered over his lips and nose as well as on his eyelids. In addition, his girlfriend Laura Dunn (26) is reported to have smashed Lee's £650 (\$1,128.47) digital camera, while he is said to have burned her passport.

Laura Dunn, who is currently working in a care home, said "he wouldn't give me the attention I deserved" and that she "decided to teach him a lesson to remind him not to look at other women." She also said she hoped her career would not be affected by the fight.

Former WorldCom CEO Ebbers given 25 years



Bernard Ebbers

Bernard Ebbers, founder and former CEO of WorldCom, now MCI, was sentenced to 25 years in prison for his role in the largest corporate accounting fraud in history. The fraud, totaling US\$11 billion, plunged the once-powerful company into bankruptcy.

The sentence was handed down by Manhattan federal court Judge Barbara S. Jones. Jones believed Ebbers deserved a harsh sentence. Ebbers, who is 63, asked for a lenient sentence due to his failing health and a heart condition and because of his philanthropy. Prosecutors pushed for a life sentence. Ebbers's first day of prison will be October 12.

Ebbers appeared to be tense when arriving at the court and even shoved a photographer out of his way. After the sentence was given, Ebbers was seen weeping.

In March, Ebbers was found guilty of fraud, conspiracy, and seven counts of filing false documents.

WorldCom emerged from bankruptcy last year under the name MCI, which was one of the many companies WorldCom had acquired. In May, Verizon agreed to acquire the company.

Baghdad barbers threatened with death for cutting beards

A series of threats have been made to Baghdad barbers who have been cashing in on the upsurge in popularity of 'Marine' and french hairstyles amongst Baghdad youths. Over the past few weeks barbers were warned not to cut beards and not to offer the western hairstyles, unless they wanted 'swords over their necks'. Many barbers have put up signs saying that taboo haircuts are not available in their shops. Those who flout these threats have been killed.

According to Maj. Col. Abbas Dilemi of the Baghdad Police, some of the extremists have been caught, but they have turned out to be criminals paid by third parties to make the threats and carry out the murders of those who ignore them.

Mr. Mohamed Sa'eed, an leading figure in the Iraqi Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution, has castigated those responsible for the threats saying: 'and now groups from abroad come carrying temporary ideology that did not exist even in the middle ages,' then stated that there 'should be no compulsion in religion' whilst calling for juristic and intellectual work to defeat extremism.

Children massacred in Kenyan school



Somali refugee children waiting to be registered at Dadaab, Kenya on May 26, 2005.

During a raid by cattle rustlers in northern Kenya, as many as 55 Kenyans were killed, twenty of them children.

Up to 400 members of the Borana tribe

living across the border in Ethiopia attacked the nomadic Gabra people aiming to steal their livestock. The societies are not monetarized - cattle is the main form of wealth.

The two groups have been fighting over water and pastures for years in the semi-arid land. Cross-border raids for livestock are very common in the area, but it is said that this is one of the most deadly and severe attacks in Kenya's history. The attack may be in retaliation for an earlier raid on the Borana, in which six people were killed.

Whole families were killed in this most recent attack. Okille Hukha survived when he ran into a bush, but his wife and four children were murdered. Darare Bathachas' son, wife and grandson were also killed, but she survived by going under a bed.

A woman watched as her four children were killed, and her husband beheaded. A grandmother spoke of how she hid under a table while her forty year old son, his wife and their nursery school age son were killed.

Ten Borana were later killed in a revenge attack.

Kenyan police are pursuing the attackers, moving on foot in the rugged terrain but supported by three helicopters. Thousands of sheep and goats as well as cattle, camels and donkeys have been recovered.

The Kenyan Red Cross Society have sent a helicopter carrying medics and supplies to aid the injured in the local hospital.

Israeli army reoccupies Tulkarem in West Bank

Reacting on the suicide bombing yesterday in a Netanya mall, the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) entered the city of Tulkarem. The city has been governed by the Palestinian Authority (PA), since March 22nd this year.

In addition, a general closure was ordered on the occupied territories of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. The closure will hold until the assessment of the situation changes, according to the IDF.

The IDF ordered a curfew on the Tulkarem upon the beginning of the operation, at 2:30 a.m. (+3 UTC), the Palestinians reported.

Soldiers announced in loudspeakers that the city is under curfew and that all local residents must remain inside their homes.

One Palestinian policeman was killed and one was injured, as well as two Israeli soldiers, when the Israeli forces came under fire while entering the city, according to the IDF spokesperson.

The IDF arrested five wanted Islamic Jihad members in the city. According to IDF officers, the operation is aimed at the Islamic Jihad organization, which staged the suicide attack in Netanya yesterday, as well as another suicide bombing attempt in a Jewish settlement in Samaria.

The Israeli government asked the PA to arrest the wanted terrorists numerous times, according to high-ranking officers in the IDF.

"The main objective is to locate Islamic Jihad members that operate under the shelter of the PA military responsibility", said Colonel Erez Weiner of the IDF. "We arrested five wanted members, some of whom were involved in the bombing of the Stage nightclub in Tel-Aviv. The forces are also trying to locate the explosives lab that is behind yesterday's car-bomb in Shavey Shomron. Apart from a few minor incidents we did not meet any opposition from the Palestinian side", Colonel Weiner said.

The suicide bombings in Netanya and Shavey Shomron and the reoccupation of Tulkarem follow five months of relative calm in the Israel-PA relations.

Train crash in southern Pakistan kills more than a hundred



Location of Ghotki in the Sindh province

At least 127 died early this morning when three trains crashed in a chain reaction in a station near Ghotki in the Sindh Province of Pakistan. It is feared the fatality count may rise as high as 200-300 people. Around 800

others were injured, many of them seriously. Officials for Pakistan Railways told AP that the accident happened at about 4am local time (2300 UTC Tuesday) when an express train from Lahore bound for Karachi crashed into another train which had broke down earlier and was sitting at the station. Almost immediately after, a third train slammed into carriages derailed from the first crash. In total some 13 cars derailed. The incident is blamed on the driver of the Karachi train who reportedly misread a signal.

The line between Lahore and Karachi, the nation's biggest cities, is among the busiest in the country.

It is Pakistan's worst train accident since December 1989 when a crash near Sangi, about 35 miles (56 kilometres) from today's crash site, killed over 400 people.

Australian telecomms firm Telstra offers rebates to those affected by bombings

Australian telecommunications giant Telstra has announced that it will be offering a rebate to those customers who placed calls to the United Kingdom to check on relatives in the wake of the recent bombings. Of the approximately 700 people wounded in the attacks, only 7 were Australians, however there are many more Aussies spread throughout England and Europe at any time.

To be eligible for the rebate, the calls must have been made between 6pm AEST Thursday the 7th through to 6am Saturday the 8th, according to Telstra chief Sol Trujillo. As well as this, Telstra customers who have a relative who has been hospitalized as a result of the event will be eligible for a rebate for a period of one month from July 7.

Applying for the rebate involves Telstra customers calling a special number which will appear on their next bill. Telstra has been working with the Australian Federal Government to provide further assistance to customers.

Fire in Hospital in Costa Rica kills 18 persons

Early this morning a fire erupted in the Rafael Angel Calderón Guardia hospital in downtown San Jose, Costa Rica, killing 18

people according to official reports. Most of the deaths occurred on the 5th floor, where patients were resting following surgical procedures.

A nurse died trying to save patients.

TD Financial to acquire Hudson United Bancorp

TD Banknorth, which is 51% owned by the TD Financial Group, has come to a deal with the Hudson United Bancorp. TD Financial group will be acquiring the community bank for \$1.9 billion U.S. The new addition to the financial group will give them 204 new branches across New Jersey, New York, Connecticut and Pennsylvania. In total this will give TD 590 branches, 751 banking machines and more than \$26-billion U.S. in deposits across eight northeastern states.

Hudson specialises in commercial real estate, consumer and credit card loans to individuals and businesses. The bank also had \$8.85 billion US in assets at the end of it's first quarter, on March 31. The company's shares had been dropping in the course of the past year because of allegations of money-laundering violations and after an earnings warning, making it a good steal for TD. The acquisition will greatly increased TD's influence in America.

"This transaction delivers on our shared vision for growth and marks a significant milestone in TD Banknorth's expansion strategy," TD Bank CEO and president Ed Clark said in a statement.

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Today in History

- 1789 – French Revolution: Parisians stormed the Bastille.
- 1798 – The Sedition Act became United States law, making it a federal crime to write, publish, or utter false or malicious statements about the U.S. government.
- 1933 – In Germany, all political parties were outlawed except the Nazi Party.
- 1958 – Iraqi revolution: King Faisal II was overthrown by Arab nationalists and Abdul Karim Kassem became the nation's new leader.

1965 – Mariner 4 flew past Mars, collecting the first close-up pictures of another planet.

Quote of the Day

"We walk in circles, so limited by our own anxieties that we can no longer distinguish between true and false, between the gangster's whim and the purest ideal." ~ Ingmar Bergman

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