



Top Stories

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Featured story

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Wikipedia Current Events

- Israel claims that Hezbollah fires 10 Katyusha rockets into Southern Lebanon with none reaching Israel.

British soldier released after serving 12 years of life sentence for Cyprus killing

Last week, Cypriot authorities released British soldier Allan Ford from a prison in Cyprus despite protests from Danish authorities. Allan Ford was one of three British soldiers serving life sentences for the brutal murder of 23-year-old Dane Louise Jensen, a tourist guide. Still serving, are fellow

soldiers Justin Fowler and Geoff Pernel. Jensen's family and Danish authorities appealed Cyprus to reconsider the decision but it was in vain.

In 1994, after a drinking binge, the three soldiers came upon Louise Jensen and her boyfriend, who were on motorcycle. With their jeep, the soldiers struck the pair and abducted Jensen. They then allegedly sexually abused her and killed her with strikes to the head from a spade.

Allan Ford, Justin Fowler and Geoff Pernel were subsequently convicted to life in prison and discharged from the military. In 1998, the sentence was reduced to 25 years after an appeal case. Now, after serving 12 years the Cypriot authorities have decided to release them for with time off for good behavior and remission. To avoid a public outrage similar to that of 1994, the three will be released seperately. Allan Ford was released last week and quietly spirited away to the United Kingdom. Justin Fowler and Geoff Pernel are scheduled to be released later this month.

PepsiCo names Nooyi CEO as Reinemund retires

Steven S. Reinemund, director and CEO of PepsiCo Inc. announced his retirement effective in May, 2007. Reinemund, 58, said today he's leaving to spend more time with his family.

PepsiCo announced that Indra Nooyi, currently president and

CFO, will take over for Reinemund. Nooyi's current position will be split in two and filled by Richard Goodman, 57, currently CFO of PepsiCo International, who will become CFO; and Hugh Johnston, 44, currently senior vice president of transformation, who was promoted to the newly created post of executive vice president of operations, procurement and information technology.

Nooyi, 50, is a Yale-educated daughter of a middle-class Indian family. She will succeed Steven S. Reinemund, in October, the company said. Reinemund will stay with PepsiCo until May, 2007. Together, Nooyi and Reinemund have guided PepsiCo through several large take-overs and has seen the company overtake The Coca-Cola Company both in terms of sales and market value. Coca-Cola is still the no. 1 soft-drink maker as a significant portion of PepsiCo's sales come via brands Frito-Lay and Quaker Oats.

Some on Wall Street were suprised by Reinemund's retirement announcement. On the NYSE the stock (ticker:PEP) closed at \$63.95 up \$0.62 per share on the dayof the annoucement.

Wellington, New Zealand university student missing

Police are concerned over the disappearance of a 19-year-old student. Daniel Antonious Hansman has not been seen since 11.30 p.m. last Thursday. He was last seen outside Coyote Bar on Courtney Place after he and his

friend were refused entry because they were intoxicated. After several other unsuccessful attempts to get into other bars, his friend left for the toilet, but when he returned, Hansman was missing.

Hansman is from New Plymouth and is a student at Victoria University of Wellington. He has not attended his lectures, contacted his friends or family or gone to his flat since his disappearance.

Shane Cotter, Wellington Detective Senior Sergeant, said: "It's out of character for Daniel to disappear without any explanation. Mr Hansman had been out with two female friends and a male friend in the Courtenay Place area on Thursday night. The women were allowed into a bar."

Hansman was probably carrying his cellphone with him, but it is not being answered. He may also have his driver's licence, but police are not sure if he had any other property or ID.

Hansman is a 177-centimetre European of medium build. He has blue eyes, brown-black medium length hair, a goatee and is unshaven. He was last seen wearing dark jeans, a dark blue-black shirt with white and grey stripes and black dress shoes.

Australian government announces measures to reduce fuel costs

The Prime Minister of Australia, John Howard, has announced new measures to alleviate the impact of rising global oil prices on Australians. They include grants of up to \$2,000 to switch to LPG, and \$17.2 million over three years to improve E10 blend ethanol fuel infrastructure.

Speaking in Parliament House, the Prime Minister outlined the cause of higher petrol and diesel prices as a consequence of increasing global demand for oil occurring at a time when additional supply is tight. He singled out the re-emergence of China as a major factor in the increase in demand, and underinvestment as the main reason that supply cannot be increased rapidly.

The Prime Minister once again said he would not lower fuel excises, saying that any benefit that might bring would be quickly devoured by further rises in global oil prices, and would leave a large hole in the Federal budget.

He announced that the \$1,000 grant to purchases of new vehicles equipped to run on LPG would be brought forward from 2011 to be effective immediately. In addition, he announced that conversions of private vehicles to LPG would be eligible for a \$2,000 grant, also effective immediately.

LPG is much cheaper than petrol in Australia, partly due to concessional tax treatment[1]. The Prime Minister said that a six cylinder vehicle that travels 15,000 kilometres in a year would save \$27 per week at current prices if converted from petrol to LPG. With the \$2,000 grant, the conversion would pay for itself in four months.

The cost of the eight-year program to convert vehicles from petrol to LPG, including lost excise revenue, is estimated to be \$1.3 billion.

On the ethanol front, the Prime Minister announced a further \$17.2 million dollars over three years to help petrol retailers install or convert pumps for E10 blends.

Eligible petrol stations will receive up to \$10,000 towards the cost of conversion or installation, once complete, and an additional \$10,000 when sales targets are met.

The Prime Minister also made mention of remote communities that rely on diesel for their electricity supply. He said that the existing Renewable Remote Power Generation Programme[2] has helped remote communities reduce their reliance on diesel, through the use of renewable energy services like wind turbines. He announced that the Government will extend this programme with an additional \$123.5 million over four years, and will now include energy efficiency projects.

The Prime Minister also committed an additional \$135.4 million over the next five years for exploration services, searching for new oil, natural gas and geothermal reserves.

Saudi oil production to continue unabated - The Economist

In a move reminiscent of its bold US\$5 / barrel forecast, The Economist magazine has asserted that Saudi Arabia can continue producing oil at its current production levels for 70 years, without having to look for another drop. Further, the magazine claims that the nation could find "plenty more if they look", calling for privatisation of national oil companies to help increase oil production.

However, petroleum geologists and energy investment specialists maintain a different view of oil reserves. Amongst those who deal with the physical realities of oil fields, production forecasts vary

between peaking in 30 years and peaking now, followed by decline. Certainly, there is no suggestion of sustaining the current level of oil production for 70 years.

Erroneous newspaper report garners publicity for Moon landing tapes

On August 5, Wikinews published an article, Apollo Moon landings tapes reported missing, based on a report in The Sydney Morning Herald. As highlighted in the prominent correction notice at the top of that article, several issues were present with the article.

Citing a letter to the Herald, a member of the team involved in the search for the missing tapes, Bill Wood, described their article as "great disservice to a group of Australian and US Apollo tracking station veterans involved in a new search for better Apollo 11 EVA images."

Mr. Wood pointed out that one of the tracking stations that these tapes had been recorded at was hosting a detailed description of the process Earth-side. Written by John Sarkissian of the CSIRO Parkes Observatory it gave a fascinating glimpse into what was done to show the world Neil Armstrong stepping onto the Moon's surface.

What Bill Wood, John Sarkissian, and their other former Apollo 11 colleagues are trying to track down are the recording of what was broadcast from the Moon, referred to as Slow-Scan TV (SSTV). This raw data was recorded onto 1" wide magnetic tapes at the same time as it was converted for terrestrial TV broadcast. As far as the paper trail goes, there are about 700 boxes that might contain the these coveted tapes. They are mixed in

with recordings from the entire Apollo era, meaning there is a lot of footage that, with modern techniques, could offer far clearer pictures of man's first visits to another celestial body.

Of course, proving that any publicity is good publicity, Mr. Wood didn't restrict himself to contacting Wikinews. Getting the right story out is important for these folks, and Leonard David, a Senior space writer with MSNBC helped give some impetus to the search with an article; help because the search is focussing not on the tapes, but on the people who might know where they, or the paperwork leading to them, might be.

Two Fox News journalists allegedly kidnapped in Gaza

Palestinian gunmen have reportedly kidnapped two foreign journalists working for Fox News, a news company owned by parent-company News Corp.

A Palestinian witness who worked with the journalists, said that American producer Steve Centanni, and Olaf Wiig, a cameraman from New Zealand were taken against their will.

New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade spokeswoman Helen Tunnah said that the ministry had not received any information on the kidnapping.

Fox News said that they did not know who captured the journalists but said that "We can confirm that two of our people were taken against their will in Gaza," and that "negotiations were under way to secure their release."

The incident began when two vehicles allegedly blocked the transmission truck, and their

bodyguard was reportedly forced to the ground at gunpoint by a masked man.

The alleged kidnappers then drove away with the journalists.

Palestinian police stopped and searched cars. Hamas, the Islamic militant group that heads Gaza's government, did not claim responsibility, and condemned the kidnapping. There are no claims for responsibility at this time.

Virginia incumbent, Senator George Allen, accused of racism by Democratic hopeful

On Monday, August 14th, 2006, tensions boiled over between the two party candidates in Virginia's 2006 US Senate election.

Democratic challenger James Webb accused Republican incumbent George Allen of making derogatory comments to a Webb volunteer, an Indian American who was videotaping the Allen campaign. On Friday, August 11th, 20-yr-old S.R. Sidarth, currently attending the University of Virginia, was documenting a campaign stop in Breaks, Virginia. In the midst of a campaign speech, Allen paused and singled out the college student.

"This fellow here over here with the yellow shirt, Macaca, or whatever his name is. He's with my opponent. He's following us around everywhere. And it's just great. We're going to places all over Virginia, and he's having it on film and it's great to have you here and you show it to your opponent because he's never been there and probably will never come," Allen said.

He continued, "Lets give a welcome to Macaca, here. Welcome to America and the real

world of Virginia."

There is some uncertainty as to whether the comments were intended to be racist or not.

The term 'macaca,' if spelled as such, refers to a type of monkey, which could be termed very offensive, but Allen's campaign maintains that the word was used in reference to Sidarth's apparent mohawk.

Additionally, the Webb campaign was offended that Allen would presume that the color of their volunteer's skin implied he was an immigrant, as Sidarth was born and raised in Fairfax County. Conversely, Allen insists that the comment was not meant to imply immigrant status, and was simply an address to the Webb campaign at large.

Political analysts fear that this mistake may jeopardize the senate race, as well as an Allen presidential bid.

Nigeria hands over disputed area to Cameroon

Nigerian and Cameroonian officials held a joint ceremony to mark the formal handover of the Bakassi peninsula from Nigeria to Cameroon. Nigeria agreed to secede the resource-rich area after a long drawn dispute with Cameroon. The ceremony comes after Nigeria completed the withdrawal of its troop stationed there. Many Bakassi residents are reported to be opposed to living under Cameroon's authority.

Map showing the Bakassi Peninsula on the Nigeria-Cameroon border

Long-drawn dispute

The resource-rich Bakassi peninsula was claimed by both

Nigeria and Cameroon, leading to military clashes between the two back in 1981. In 1994, Cameroon approached the International Court of Justice(ICJ) to rule on the claims, and the ICJ ruled in 2002 that the area belonged to Cameroon as per a 1913 treaty signed between then colonial powers Britain and Germany. Nigeria finally agreed to the handover in the UN brokered Greentree Agreement signed in New York on June 12th, which gave Nigeria 60 days to withdraw its military forces from the area. The agreement signed by Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo and Cameroon's President Paul Biya, was the outcome of the Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission, set up by Secretary-General Kofi Annan to address the issue.

Handover ceremony

The ceremony was held in the capital of northern Bakassi, the fishing town of Archibong, and was witnessed by African Union, British, French, German UN and US officials, as well as the Nigeria's chief of defence staff, General Martin-Luther Agwai, and the heads of the army, navy, airforce and the police. The Nigerian flag was lowered Cameroon flag was then raised. The Nigerian Justice Minister Bayo Ojo and his Cameroonian counterpart, Maurice Kamto signed the documents Monday transferring authority at exactly 12:30 pm (1130GMT).

Speaking at the event, Mr. Ojo said "We yield ground in order to give way to peace.", adding, "We have reason to celebrate the peaceful resolution of the Bakassi peninsula dispute". He tried to reassure Nigerians living in the peninsula, saying the transfer "does not not mean an end in

itself. You still have the opportunity of living here if you choose to do so".

Mr. Kamto told the gathering ""We have the conviction that things will not be different in Bakassi, whose inhabitants have always co-existed in peace as they do in other locations and regions of Cameroon."

Kieran Prendergast, representative of the UN secretary general at the event called the handover "a good example of taking initiative in conflict prevention and solution".

Local opposition

The population of Bakassi, mainly Nigerian are reported to be deeply unhappy over the transfer. After Nigeria began its troop withdrawal last week, a group called the Bakassi Self Determination Movement declared Bakassi's independence from both Nigeria and Cameroon. The group hoisted blue and white flags and declared the creation of the "Democratic Republic of Bakassi".

Speaking to the IRIN news agency on monday, the leader of the group, Tony Ene insisted on the "natural right" of Bakassi residents to "determine our future,", adding that "If Nigeria does not want us, we choose to go it alone and not with Cameroon."

Some residents have said that they will fight Cameroonian authority and called for help from militants in the Niger delta region. Complaints by Bakassi Nigerians of harassment by Cameroonian police years ago had led to the deployment of Nigerian troops in the region. Many residents have said that they wish to evacuate the area rather than live under cameroon.

Cameroon welcomes transfer

The Cameroon state broadcaster, Cameroon Radio and Television said "Today is a beautiful day for Cameroon... (and) Nigeria," adding that the handover "demonstrated the good faith of Cameroonian and Nigerian authorities to do everything to ensure that their two peoples can continue to live in peace and harmony in Bakassi,".

Reuters also reports Cameroonians in Yaounde as welcoming the transfer.

Violation of terms by Cameroon alleged

The Nigerian Newspaper, The Daily Champion reports that several villages in the peninsula were "taken over" by Cameroonian security agents prior to today's formal handover, violating the terms of the handover agreement. The Lagos-based daily reported Brigadier General Felix Chukwuma, a spokesman for the Nigerian Army saying that higher authorities in Nigeria have been notified of this "violation of the UN-brokered agreement on the demilitarisation of the peninsula". "I am very positive that Nigeria would take this up at the appropriate level," he said.

Transition arrangement

Nigeria has given Bakassi residents the option of either staying on in Bakassi under Cameroonian authority or getting resettled elsewhere in Nigeria. Under the handover agreement, Nigeria retains civilian authority over the southern section of the peninsula, known as West Atabong and Akwabana for two more years, during which the resettlement can proceed. Cameroon is to take full administrative control after a five year transitional period, during which neither country is expected

to allow military presence in the region.

The UN Secretary-General's Special Representative for West Africa, Ahmedou Ould-Abdallah has said that about a dozen UN civilian observers will monitor the situation following the troop withdrawal to "reassure" the locals of thier safety under Cameroonian authority.

The UN Office for West Africa has said in a statement that the next meeting of the Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission will discuss how to delineate the maritime boundary between the two countries.

Resource-rich region

The 700 sq km Bakassi peninsula lies in the gulf of Guinea, which is estimated to contain upto 10% of the world's oil and gas reserves as well as being a rich fishing ground. The peninsula is estimated to be home to between 150,000 and 300,000 people.

Fire interrupts TNA wrestling PPV; one worker hurt

A small fire broke out in the iMPACT! Zone during the first PPV professional wrestling match (and third overall, including preshow) of TNA Hard Justice 2006 on August 13, causing the evacuation of Stage 21 (the official name for the "iMPACT! Zone") at Universal Orlando Resort for about 30 minutes. Although a Universal worker was taken to the hospital for treatment for smoke inhalation, no fans or wrestlers were hurt.

The source of the fire was a burlap sandbag in the rafters. Conflicting reports stated that either pyrotechnics or a stage light caused the fire. It was put out with fire extinguishers from the

rafters, and fans in general did not know what was going on until they saw and heard the fire extinguishers go off above them. Fans were heard at first chanting "The roof, the roof, the roof is on fire!" like the 1985 song by Rock Master Scott.

As the fire occured, Johnny Devine and Eric Young were wrestling. The match continued, and Eric Young won the match. After the match, the iMPACT! Zone was evacuated. Due to the delay caused by the evacuation, a match to determine the number one contenders to the NWA World Tag Team Championship was cancelled.

The Orlando Fire Department was called to the scene, and assessed that the building was safe to re-enter. As a safety precuation, TNA decided to not use any more pyro for the rest of the show.

Speculation grows in race to succeed Kofi Annan

South Korean foreign minister Ban Ki Moon and UN undersecretary Shashi Tharoor of India are the early leaders in the race to succeed United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan who retires at the end of this year.

In late July the 15 members of the Security Council conducted a secret straw poll on who should succeed Annan. Monday's edition of the the Guardian newspaper reports the leaked results which have Ban leading with 12 "encourages", 1 "discourage" and 2 "no opinions" ahead of Tharoor's 10 "encourages", 2 "discourages" and 3 "no opinions". The other two official candidates thus far are Thailand's Deputy Prime Minister Surakiart Sathirathai and former U.N. disarmament chief Jayantha Dhanapala from Sri Lanka. Prime

Minister Goh Chok Tong of Singapore is also a possible contender, according to the Guardian but has not officially declared his interest.

Prime Minister Helen Clark of New Zealand dismissed a report, Monday, that she was lobbying for the position calling it "a piece of fiction". The New Zealand Herald reported in its weekend edition that Clark had sought support for her possible candidacy from British Prime Minister Tony Blair during a recent visit to London.

Coincidentally, Ban was in Auckland Monday seeking New Zealand's support for his bid. New Zealand Foreign Minister Winston Peters met with Ban but made no public comment on his country's position on the contest.

Traditionally, the position of Secretary-General rotates among the continents suggesting that Annan's successor will likely be an Asian, the first since U Thant filled the post from 1961 to 1971.

Tamil Tigers say Sri Lanka's government bombed orphanage

The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam accused the air force of Sri Lanka of deliberately bombing an orphanage, killing 50-60 children and injuring 150 more. The Tigers said that the victims were between the ages of 15 and 18 and were attending a first aid seminar. The air strike in took place in the rebel-controlled northern district of Mullaitivu in the Northern Province of Sri Lanka.

The military denied the charges that they bombed an orphanage. They say that they can prove that it was training camp for the Tamil Tigers. The air raid was in support of government ground troops that

are fighting rebels who are advancing on the Jaffna peninsula.

"It is a lie to say that schoolchildren were targeted," government spokesperson Chandrapala Liyanage told the AFP news agency. "The air force had bombed a LTTE training centre. We don't know if they had moved child soldiers there."

Since the early 1980s, there has been an ongoing ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka between the Sri Lankan government and members of the Tamil ethnic group in the northeast of the island. A ceasefire was declared in 2002, but violence has continued despite this.

Ariel Sharon's condition worsens

Ariel Sharon's condition has worsened according to officials at the Chaim Sheba Medical Center where the former Israeli prime minister is being treated.

A new brain scan shows a deterioration in function according to hospital spokesperson Anat Dolev. His urine output has fallen and a chest scan indicates a new infection.

Ms. Dolev would not say whether Sharon's life was in danger.

Sharon, 78, has been in a coma since his stroke on Jan. 4 and his doctors have said his chances of recovery are very slim.

AIDS conference opens without PM

Prime Minister Stephen Harper did not attend the 16th International AIDS Conference in Toronto. This is now drawing criticism from event organizers.

"We are dismayed that the prime minister of Canada, Mr. Stephen

Harper, is not here this evening," Dr. Mark Wainberg said at the Rogers Centre on yesterday. "Mr. Harper, the role of prime minister includes the responsibility to show leadership on the world stage. Your absence sends a message that you do not regard HIV/AIDS as a critical priority and clearly all of us here tonight disagree with you," Wainberg said.

Wainberg was one of the first to speak and criticized the prime minister for missing the event.

Canada's health minister Tony Clement defended the prime minister's absence, saying it doesn't mean a lack of commitment in the fight against AIDS. A group near the stage stood up and chanted "Where is Harper?"

Tony Clement said the federal government has adequate representation at the international conference and it is committed to helping people around the world through an access-to-medicine program.

Suspected low pathogenic H5N1 Bird Flu virus found in the United States

Scientists have discovered the possible presence of the H5N1 Bird Flu virus in wild mute swans in Michigan on the coast of Lake Erie near the Mouillee state game area in Monroe County. The swans were sampled on August 8, 2006 and the initial testing was done at Michigan State University's Diagnostic Center for Population and Animal Health and at the National Veterinary Services laboratories in Ames, Iowa.

White House Press Secretary Tony Snow says that "They (the scientists) believe it is a strain of low pathogenicity, similar to

strains that have been seen before in North America."

Snow also added that "this [case] is not what we're accustomed to hearing about from Asia."

"Test results thus far indicate this is low pathogenicity avian influenza, which poses no threat to human health. Routine surveillance has indicated the presence of H5 and N1 avian influenza subtypes in samples from two wild mute swans in Michigan," said a statement on the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) website.

The statement also went on to say that the swans "did not show signs of sickness" and that the swans were infected with "two separate" strains of Avian Flu.

"It is possible that these birds were not infected with an H5N1 strain, but instead with two separate avian influenza viruses, one containing H5 and the other containing N1," said the statement.

"This is not the highly pathogenic avian influenza virus that has spread through much of other parts of the world. We do not believe this virus represents a risk to human health," said USDA's Animal and Plant Health inspector, Ron DeHaven.

Health officials are remaining "remaining vigilant and prepared," said Department of Health and Human Services science advisor, Dr. William Raub.

Further tests will be done to confirm that there is in fact a virus there and what type and are expected sometime today.

"The confirmatory testing

underway at NVSL will clarify whether one or more strains of the virus are present, the specific subtype, as well as pathogenicity," said that statement but also said that it could take "up to two weeks and will be made public when completed." The statement also said that the "testing suggests" the strain is of low pathogenicity, but that these tests do "not confirm" the findings.

The virus turned up two times in the U.S. The first case was in 1971 and the second in 1986. In both cases, the virus turned up in wild ducks.

Court date "as needed" for lawsuit against Buffalo, N.Y. hotel proposal

Buffalo, New York – The preliminary hearing for a lawsuit filed against the Elmwood Village Hotel proposal in Buffalo, New York as well as the City of Buffalo has been postponed indefinitely and will take place "as needed" pending the resubmission of the proposal by Savarino Construction also of Buffalo. A request was made to New York State Supreme court Judge Justice Rose Sconiers, the judge to preside over the case, to discuss a "timetable" for resubmission, but the court "decided not to," said attorney Arthur Giacalone who represents the plaintiffs in the lawsuit.

The hotel would require the demolition of at least five properties, 1109-1121 Elmwood and would cause the closure of several businesses. Already, two businesses, Skunk Tail Glass and Six Nations Native American Gift Shop have relocated, outside the Elmwood Strip. Don apparel, H.O.D. Tattoo and Mondo Video still remain on Elmwood; however, Mondo Video is planning on moving to a new location. The

hotel will be 72 rooms and will cost at least 7 million dollars to build. Wyndham Hotels is expected to be the owner/operator of the hotel. The properties are currently owned by Hans Mobius. Two other properties, 605 and 607 Forest might also be part of the proposal. 605 Forest is owned by Pano Georgiadis, owner of Pano's Restaurant on Elmwood Avenue in Buffalo. 607 Forest is owned by Mobius.

"There's no new [court] date. The next appearance will be as needed," said Giacalone.

The proposal was withdrawn by Savarino on July 13, 2006 to undergo "a do-over" and according to the Buffalo News, "shed the lawsuits" against the proposal; however, so far the proposal has "not yet" been resubmitted, but could be in about a "week."

"With Council being out of session we have a bit of time [before resubmitting]. [We will] Probably resubmit] in a week or so," said Sam Savarino, CEO of Savarino Construction.

"We welcome some discourse on this project and while we realize that, in all likelihood, we will not make everybody happy, we hope we can develop a consensus that what we provide on that corner will be something that is an enhancement to the neighborhood and the community. Better to have that decided (again?) in a public forum and through the approval process than through a debate over points of law in a courtroom," added Savarino.

Despite the withdraw of the proposal, Giacalone states that the lawsuit his clients filed is still in effect due to the re-zoning of the properties, which he says are still

in place and that he is "frustrated" that his client's "day in court" has been delayed continuously by Savarino and the city.

Savarino believes that the rezoning of the properties are "not in effect" because the proposal was withdrawn. He also stated that he is "unsure" on a decision to request the rezoning again because the "city suggested" the rezoning "last time."

"We have pulled the request [proposal] so I would suppose it [the rezoning] is not in effect. We are as of yet unsure of whether or not to request rezoning of all the parcels. We are communicating with the City on this. You may recall that the City suggested this to us last time. We want to make sure we are doing the correct thing – and the proper thing. I am not sure whether I have a clear indication of that at this juncture," said Savarino.

Savarino was asked if the proposal was going to be resubmitted or not, but did not answer the question.

Giacalone states that there may be several reasons as to why "a new application has not been filed. Is Savarino having a hard time coming to an agreement with Mobius? Has Wyndham Hotels backed out? Is Savarino negotiating with Pano to buy the [605] Forest Avenue property?"

Buffalo's Common Council is scheduled to meet on September 9, 2006 after Summer recess.

Colombo land mine explosion kills seven

Hours after the Tamil Tigers threatened to bomb civilians in Colombo, Sri Lanka, a powerful bomb went off. The device is

thought to be a fragmentation mine. Seven people were killed and seventeen injured in the explosion, and it came hours after Sri Lanka's military carried out an air-raid that killed dozens.

The blast occurred within a mile of the official home of President Mahinda Rajapakse. A convoy with the Pakistani ambassador was travelling on the road as explosion occurred, but he was unhurt.

"Definitely it's an LTTE [Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam] attack to the Pakistan ambassador's car but they missed and the backup vehicle got caught," a Sri lankan military spokesman said. The Pakistani ambassador may be a target of the Tigers as Pakistan has backed the government of Sri Lanka diplomatically.

In the past few days, there have been fierce hostilities between government forces and Tamil Tigers in the north and the east of the country.

The Tamil Tigers are a military and political group that has waged a violent secessionist campaign against Sri Lanka's government since the 1970s. Their aim is to secure self-government for the traditional Tamil regions in the north and east of Sri Lanka.

Fresh pictures of Castro and Chavez shown in Cuban media

An additional round of new photos of a recuperating Fidel Castro have been published in the Cuban media. There has been international speculation on the state of the Cuban leader's health since he temporarily relinquished power two weeks ago prior to undergoing intestinal surgery. Castro had not been seen in those two weeks, and there were rumours that he was dead or

nearing death.

The official Communist Party daily Granma today published pictures of Castro meeting Venezuelan president Hugo Chavez on the Cuban leader's 80th birthday, yesterday. The paper referred to the meeting as "three hours of emotional exchange" quoting Chavez as saying "This is the best visit I've ever had in my life." Earlier, acting Cuban leader Raul Castro made his first public appearance since taking power when he welcomed Chavez to Cuba at the airport. The brothers also appear together in one of the new photos.

The earlier round of pictures released Sunday by the Juventud Rebelde (Rebel Youth) newspaper show Castro speaking on the phone and holding Saturday's edition of the Communist Party newspaper Granma.

Castro also released a statement yesterday saying that his health had improved but that his recovery would take more time.

"To say that objective stability has improved considerably is not to invent a lie. To affirm that the period of recovery will last a short time and that there is no longer any risk would be absolutely incorrect."

"I ask you all to be optimistic and at the same time to be ready to face any adverse news," said Castro, who also thanked the Cuban people for their love and support during his health crisis. The statement was the first from the Cuban leader since undergoing surgery.

Granma reported Saturday that Castro is now "up" and "working". The official newspaper reported

that according to an unnamed friend of Castro "the leader of the revolution, after receiving some physiotherapy, took his first steps in the room, then, sitting on a coach, talked vividly".

Though most official celebrations of Castro's birthday have been postponed (possibly until December), three thousand well-wishers have gathered for a five-hour birthday concert on Havana's Malecon seafront boulevard.

UN sponsored ceasefire in Israel-Lebanon begins

At 5:00 a.m. GMT, a UN sponsored ceasefire between the IDF and Hezbollah took effect. Outside of isolated small arms fire, both sides seem to be abiding by it. Although fighting took place until just minutes before the ceasefire, no air strikes or rocket attacks have been reported since.

Israel has said that it will maintain ground forces in southern Lebanon until they are relieved by the peace-keeping force. Israel also said it will maintain the blockade so that Hezbollah cannot rearm. Hezbollah on the other hand insisted on its right to fight Israeli soldiers on Lebanese soil.

The international peace-keeping force may take 10 days to assemble, says the UN. It is expected to be headed up by French troops, complemented primarily by troops from Italy, which has volunteered up to 3,000 soldiers. Portugal, Finland and Spain will also consider deployments. Australia, Canada, Malaysia and Indonesia have been mentioned by the UN as sources of non-EU forces.

Within an hour of the ceasefire cars started heading south in Lebanon. Within hours thousands

of Lebanese sought to return to their homes crowding roads, even as bulldozers were still trying to fill bomb craters. The Lebanese army was working hard to coordinate traffic and make-shift road repair.

"I'm so excited to see my home. I'd heard news it was completely destroyed, but even if there's one room intact, I will stay there with my children," said Sanaa Ayyad, who had with her a baby and two young boys.

The conflict has been going on for 39 days and has cost over 1,200 people their lives. In Lebanon, around 1,100 people have been killed, mostly civilians. 154 Israelis, including 114 soldiers, have been killed in the conflict.

UK terror alert downgraded to "Severe"

The British terror alert has been downgraded from "Critical" to "Severe" MI5 is reporting. The "Severe"-level became active at midnight BST. The terror alert was raised to "Critical" after an alleged terror plot was foiled which involved blowing up at least a dozen planes from the United Kingdom to the United States in flight. The plot could have resulted in around 5000 deaths.

Today in History

778 - A Frankish army led by Roland was defeated in the Battle of Roncevaux Pass, a tale retold in the Old French epic poem The Song of Roland.

1534 - Ignatius of Loyola and six others at Montmartre near Paris took the vows that led to the establishment of the Society of Jesus.

1914 - The Panama Canal opened to traffic, providing a short-cut from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean.

1945 - World War II: The

Gyokuon-hōsō was broadcast in Japan, announcing the unconditional surrender of the Japanese military.
1969 - The Woodstock Music and Art Festival in Bethel, New York began.

August 15 is Victory over Japan Day (1945); Independence Day in North Korea & South Korea (1945), India (1947), and Congo (1960); Flooding of the Nile in Egypt.

Quote of the Day

"Call for the grandest of all earthly spectacles, what is that? It is the sun going to his rest. Call for the grandest of all human sentiments, what is that? It is that man should forget his anger before he lies down to sleep."

~ Thomas De Quincey

Word of the Day

defatigable; adj
Easily tired or wearied.

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