



Top Stories

Australian Guantanamo detainee David Hicks gets British citizenship

Australian Guantanamo Bay detainee David Hicks has won British citizenship, opening the door for a possible bid to have him freed from the US detention facility in Cuba. The British High Court overturned the Blair Government's refusal of citizenship to Hicks. Hicks' lawyer said the decision was a breakthrough.

US President Bush says 30,000 civilians killed in Iraq war

Despite a Lancet Survey, which estimates the Iraq War death toll to be around 100,000, US President Bush says "30,000 Iraqis, more or less" have died as a result of the US invasion of Iraq...

Featured story

Interview with Jimbo Wales

Wikinews contributors talk with Jimbo Wales, founder of the Wikimedia Foundation, in an exclusive interview.

Wikipedia Current Events

- Four American Soldiers are killed following an IED attack in the Iraqi Capital Baghdad.
- The U.S. ambassador issues a statement saying that the total number of abused prisoners found so far in jails run by the Shiite-led Interior Ministry came to about 120.

Wikipedia Current Events

- The Sixth Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization opened in Hong Kong. European Union Trade Commissioner Peter Mandelson said that he expected little progress on resolving disagreements between ministers. Meanwhile, some protesters from South Korea unsuccessfully attempted to bypass the cordon to reach the location of the conference by swimming across Victoria Harbour.
- The President of the United States, George W. Bush, acknowledges approx. 30,000 Iraqi deaths since the commencement of the Iraq War.
- Swiss Councillor Dick Marty, commissioned by the Council of Europe to investigate CIA black sites and prisoner abuse in Europe says that the CIA has "disregarded all standards of legality".
- A Palestinian stone thrower is shot in the head and killed by Israeli troops raiding the West Bank city of Nablus. At least ten other Palestinians were injured by the IDF troops while two Israeli soldiers were injured by a bomb during the raid.
- An earthquake of Richter scale magnitude 6.7 rocks South Asia. According to the US Geological Survey, the quake was centred in the Hindukush region of northeastern Afghanistan.

Fires out at the Hertfordshire Oil Storage Terminal

Finally, after two days The 2005 Hertfordshire Oil Storage Terminal fire, has finally been extinguished.

The fires began after a series of explosions early on the morning of 11 December 2005. The terminal, known locally as the Buncefield Depot, is an oil storage facility located near Hemel Hempstead in Hertfordshire in the United Kingdom. These were some of the largest explosions ever to occur in the country and the incident has been described as the biggest of its kind in peacetime Europe. The

Hertfordshire Fire Service chief Roy Wilsher said: "There are still some small bund (concrete container) fires, but the tanks are out."

Fire crews would remain at the scene over the next few days cooling the area to ensure fires did not break out again, he said.

A few residents are being allowed to return to their homes within an exclusion zone set up around the site.

Journalist Gebran Tueni murdered

In an incident that may have long-term repercussions for the relationship between Lebanon and Syria, the death of anti-Syrian MP and journalist Gebran Tueni's has been marked by protests.

Tueni's death was marked with the closure of shops, schools and

universities throughout Beirut.

Mass graves found in Lebanon

Two mass graves discovered in Lebanon near a former Syrian intelligence center in Anjar have reopened the investigations for persons missing from the Lebanese civil war (1975 – 1990).

Lebanese officials have announced DNA samples of the remains found will be tested.

Troops unearthed at least 30 bodies buried in the 1980s and 1990s.

Syrian troops withdrew from Lebanon last spring, ending a 30-year occupation. Prior to his assassination, Gebran Tueini commented that "the Syrian regime has been exposed with the discovery of the mass graves."

Amnesty International has been critical of the exhumation, calling for UN standards for investigation.

New Jersey apartment building collapses after explosion

An apartment building located in Bergenfield, New Jersey partially collapsed today around 9:30 a.m. EST. The collapse occurred after an explosion was heard and a cloud of smoke was said to be visible from nearby Manhattan.

"It was an apartment building, unknown origin for the explosion," stated a police spokesperson located in the city. However, preliminary reports suggest that a gas line may have contributed to the explosion.

"Thirty families are going to be homeless throughout the holiday period," said Sheriff Leo P. McGuire, referring to the number

of families that the building houses. The apartment building appears to be three stories high and firefighters are still trying to put out fires.

According to news reports, at least two people have been hospitalized. Eyewitness March Chance had the following to add: "The building is in flames... and there are a lot of ambulances."

Haitian provisional government dismisses Supreme Court justices

Provisional president Boniface Alexandre decided on Monday to dismisses 5 Haitian Supreme Court justices, saying that the move is in an effort to allow better working relationships between the executive and judicial branches.

The move comes just days after the court ruled that Dumarsais Siméus should be on the ballot for president in the upcoming elections in Haiti. Siméus is a U.S. citizen and is argued by members of the government and others that his candidacy would violate the Haitian constitution which doesn't allow presidents who have not resided in the country for a period of 5 years prior to the election. However the court ruled that Siméus did not renounce his citizenship in Haiti, and that dual-citizenship is not a violation of the constitution. Lawyers for Siméus see this dismissal as related to the ruling.

However the Chief of Cabinet of the Haitian provisional president says that the dismissal of these judges is unrelated to the case involving Siméus and will not have an effect on how that case is handled.

A recent Gallup poll showed that

Siméus is one of the most popular candidates in the race.

Council of Europe rapporteur says CIA abduction claim "credible"

Swiss member of parliament Dick Marty, the Council of Europe's rapporteur of the probe investigating whether secret CIA detention centers existed in Europe, has said that the information gathered so far "reinforced the credibility" of allegations that the United States secretly transferred detainees through Europe and held them there at such centers.

In a report presented to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe's Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights in Paris today Marty also stated that it is too early to tell whether there has been "any involvement or complicity of member states in illegal actions" but added that if any European country was involved it would "stand accused of having seriously breached their human rights obligations to the Council of Europe".

Marty urged the U.S. government to officially deny or confirm the allegations, which it has, according to him, thus far refused.

At a press conference later in the day Marty said that regardless of whether the U.S. operated secret detention centers in past he doesn't believe that it would be holding prisoners there today.

Poland and Romania, named by Human Rights Watch as countries hosting such centers, have denied any involvement.

US President Bush says 30,000 civilians killed in Iraq war

United States President George W. Bush put a number on the death toll of Iraqi civilians, saying "30,000 Iraqis, more or less, have died as a result of the initial incursion and the ongoing violence against Iraqis. We've lost about 2,140 of our troops in Iraq" since the U.S. invasion of the country in 2003.

Mr Bush said more casualties lie ahead. "As democracy takes hold in Iraq, the terrorists and Saddamists will continue to use violence," he said. The president mentioned the casualty count in response to a question from the audience during a rare question-and-answer session after a speech on Monday.

The White House later said the 30,000 figure was not an official government estimate. Aides said Bush was repeating the casualty count mentioned in the media and by independent groups. The Web site Iraqbodycount.org estimates, as a conservative lower estimate of those documented to have been killed, the number of Iraqi civilians killed at a low of 27,383 and a high of 30,892, based on online media and eyewitness accounts.

However the Lancet Survey, which is the only serious scientific attempt to estimate the total number of Iraqi civilian deaths, estimates the death toll to be around 100,000.

Another questioner challenged the administration's linkage of the Iraq war to the September 11, 2001 attack on New York. Bush said Saddam Hussein was a threat and was widely believed to have weapons of mass destruction — a belief that later proved false.

"I made a tough decision. And knowing what I know today, I'd make the decision again," The President said in response.

Jury convicts Murdoch of outback murder

A jury has delivered a unanimous guilty verdict in the Darwin trial of the man charged with the murder of missing British backpacker Peter Falconio.

It took the jury more than eight hours to reach a verdict. 47-year-old Broome mechanic, Bradley John Murdoch, has also been found guilty of the assault and deprivation of liberty of Mr Falconio's girlfriend Joanne Lees. Mr Falconio's body has never been found.

Murdoch flagged down Mr Falconio and Ms Lees on a remote Central Australian highway in July 14, 2001. He then shot Mr Falconio and bound Ms Lees with cable ties and threatened her with a gun.

Telling jurors that he "entirely agreed" with their verdict, Chief Justice Brian Martin sentenced Murdoch to a mandatory life sentence. Murdoch's defence lawyer, Grant Algie, indicated an appeal would be lodged against the conviction. "Obviously we are disappointed with the result," he said.

Outside court, Ms Lees said she hoped Murdoch would tell her and Falconio's family the location of her partner's body. "Today marks an intense period of distress for myself and the Falconio family. This will enable us to take another step (forward)," she said.

The eight-week trial heard from 85 witnesses and had more than 300

exhibits tendered. The court heard that Mr Falconio and Ms Lees were travelling around Australia when they were flagged down by Murdoch. Murdoch told them he saw sparks coming out of the exhaust of the couple's orange Kombi van and took Mr Falconio to the back of the vehicle to show him. Ms Lees heard a gunshot before Murdoch bound her hands with a pair of cable ties. She managed to escape the van, and hid in bushes for hours until she flagged down a road train.

DNA matching Murdoch's was found on the T-shirt Ms Lees was wearing when she was found. The court heard it was 150 quadrillion times more likely to match the DNA of Murdoch than any other person in the Northern Territory. Matching DNA was also found on the gear stick of the van and inside the cable ties.

In his defence, Murdoch claimed he had nothing to do with the crime. He admitted to the fact he was a drug-runner, detailing numerous trips across Australia. His former drug-running partner also gave evidence, saying he believed Murdoch was filmed at a truckstop after Mr Falconio was murdered.

Murdoch has been in prison since August 2002. He was arrested in Port Augusta over the abduction and rape of two women in South Australia. He was acquitted of those charges, but immediately arrested over the Falconio case.

Shots fired at Sydney church

30 Kilometres from the scene of racial violence in Sydney last night, more than 20 shells have been recovered from a Catholic school and church in South Auburn after gunshots were heard.

During a christmas carols event at Saint Joseph the Worker Primary School patrons heard what they thought to be gunshots. Upon investigation two of the school's staff members discovered bullet holes in their cars.

The Catholic church is reported to be concerned about the incident as children as young as five were at the event.

No reprieve for Stanley Williams, Crips street gang founder

Stanley "Tookie" Williams, founder of the Crips street gangs, was executed by lethal injection in the State of California just after midnight local time Tuesday at the San Quentin State Prison after spending 24 years on death row. He was 51 years old.

Williams said no final words before his execution. It took two nurses 12 minutes to insert catheters into each of his arms, one nurse and one catheter per arm. The lethal doses were injected at 12:20 am, and Williams was pronounced dead at 12:35.

Hopes for clemency were dashed Monday when California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger declined to commute Williams's sentence to life imprisonment. Last minute appeals to the U.S. Supreme Court were also denied.

Williams was convicted in 1981 of the murder of Albert Owens during the robbery of a 7-Eleven convenience store, as well as the murders of motel owners Tsai-Shai and Yen-I Yang, and their daughter Yee Chen Lin in 1979.

Following his conviction, Williams became an outspoken anti-gang

activist and was four times nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize. His anti-gang message began in 1993. He co-authored with Barbara Becnel an elementary school book series called "Tookie Speaks Out", and wrote a memoir called "Blue Rage, Black Redemption."

Gauntanamo detainee David Hicks seeks UK passport

According to his lawyers, Australian terror suspect David Hicks may be granted British citizenship tonight, a move that could see his release from Guantanamo Bay prison.

Hicks's lawyer David McLeod said his client may be able to leave the US facility in Cuba when the High Court reveals its decision tonight. "We're quietly confident that the judge will order that he be granted British citizenship," Mr McLeod said.

Hick's court action is based on his mother's British citizenship and is aimed at securing his release. He has a right under the British Nationality Act to apply for British citizenship. However, the British Home Office is reportedly fighting the application saying that because he was accused of "acts that are prejudicial to the United Kingdom", the British Government would strip him of citizenship immediately - if it were granted.

Mr Hicks' Australian lawyer says: "What we'll be doing is probably prevailing on the US Government to honour their agreement with the UK Government and release him to the UK and not to subject him to the military commissions," said Mr McLeod. "The UK Government has repatriated its other citizens and we hope they honour that."

Despite the Australian Howard Government's strong support for US military commissions and refusal to ask for Hicks's return to Australia, the British Blair Government has condemned the military commissions as a violation of international law. Britain won agreement from the US Bush Administration that no British citizen would be forced to face trial by military commission, and got its citizens released from Guantanamo Bay.

Hicks' lawyers expect him to be granted British citizenship tonight. They will immediately request the US and British governments release him to Britain.

Hicks, 30, was due to be the first of nine detainees to face the US military commissions last month before a US District Court judge stopped in the proceedings. His trial is due to be held late next year. The US Government detained Hicks since 2001, after his capture in Afghanistan. He has been charged with attempted murder, conspiracy and aiding the enemy. He is believed to be the only Westerner left in Guantanamo Bay prison.

Sydney racial violence continues

In a second night of racial violence in Sydney, residents have been bashed and property damaged throughout the eastern suburbs. Hundreds of men, some armed with guns and crowbars, damaged cars and businesses, and attacked people randomly. Five men have been arrested and charged.

Police called in riot equipment and extra officers saying car loads of people arrived in the area with many taking part in attacks on

property. A witness said police with guns drawn arrested a number of people. There were reports of gunshots near North Cronulla beach, but police said there had been no shots fired.

Hundreds of men congregated around Lakemba Mosque at 4:30pm after rumours spread that it would be attacked. The men scuffled with police, and three officers received minor injuries.

There have been more reports of SMS messages promoting further violence against the opposing parties circulating.

In an escalation of yesterday's conflict, up to 70 cars invaded Cronulla and Brighton-le-Sands on Monday night - following the vicious attacks by Cronulla locals on Sunday. According to the Sydney Morning Herald, Twenty carloads of men arrived at Cronulla by about 10.30pm, smashing shops and cars and threatening people who got in their way.

A woman was reportedly stabbed in Caringbah. Four men attacked patrons of a Pizzeria, knocking a woman unconscious on the footpath and smashing windows. Around 100 Cronulla locals surrounded a car carrying men of Middle Eastern appearance. Police dispersed the mob and let the car escape.

At Brighton-Le-Sands, about 100 men in cars arrived in the area, throwing objects at cars and shops. Mobs ripped out garbage bins, police dogs and helicopters were called as furious locals began to gather, threatening to take back the streets from "wogs and Lebanese". Police yelled at local residents to stay inside.

A police media release listed these assaults occurring:

A 27-year-old Bexley woman and her 30-year-old husband were attacked at a restaurant at Caringbah both suffering facial and head injuries.

A 35-year-old Lansvale man suffered head injuries and severe facial bruising after being attacked at a Cronulla youth hostel.

A 45-year-old Cronulla man suffered fractured ribs and head injuries as he attempted to place garbage bins outside his Hume Street home.

A 49-year-old Woolooware man suffered a fractured forearm after being struck by a baseball bat at Cronulla.

Five men were arrested and charged. The men were from Guildford, Sandringham, Ashcroft, and Hurstville, and the charges included assault police, not comply with directions, driving in a manner dangerous, being in custody of a knife, assault, breach of bail, assault occasioning actual bodily harm, affray and malicious damage. The men charged were between 22 and 30 years of age.

Earlier, about 200 men had assembled outside a Mosque - some armed with pistols. The group said they had gathered to protect the Lakemba mosque because of a threatened attack on it by a gang from the southern beaches. Another group said they were preparing to travel to Maroubra Beach, where up to 300 locals, many armed with crowbars, waited for an arranged fight.

Police confiscated iron bars and other weapons and blocked roads around the mosque. About 20 police cars surrounded the mosque, where four men showed their pistols and ammunition to a news crew, and boasted that

others were carrying arms. Police were pelted with rocks as the crowd dispersed, but no one was injured.

Amidst fears of a third night of violence in Sydney some 450 police officers have been deployed in the city to respond to any disturbances. The New South Wales Deputy Commissioner of Police Andrew Scipione says that while they have no specific intelligence, Police expect more unrest tonight. He has also said that if needed he will seek assistance from police in other states.

The New South Wales Parliament will be recalled from their Christmas-New Year holiday on Thursday 15 December, 2005 to pass legislation giving police the power to shut bottle shops and hotels, lock down areas and impound and search vehicles.

At present police in New South Wales can ask bottle shop and hotel owners close their doors but can not force them to do so.

Police are also investigating SMS messages calling on young Arabs to start another round of attacks at Cronulla Beach next Sunday. Another congratulated Australians for the fight against the Lebanese, but called for more attacks. "We'll show them! It's on again Sunday," the message said.

A Usenet posting signed by an unknown entity "Action for Australia" is calling on Australians to become "True Blue Patriots" and rally on Australia Day in 2006. "We will assert our democratic right to march through the streets of Lakemba," the posting said.

Claiming that the Sydney suburbs of Bankstown and Lakemba are

the true source of the "lebanese and muslim trouble", they are wishing to arrange a march through Lakemba to demonstrate that "Australians wish to reclaim the streets".

Business Brief for December 13, 2005

UK's Marks and Spencers wins tax rebate case

The UK's retailing giant, Marks & Spencer, has won their case at the European Court of Justice. The court's ruling allows losses made in foreign operations to be offset against taxes to be paid in the UK. It is expected that this ruling will require that the UK treasury pay out significant amounts as a number of firms are poised to bring their own cases to take advantage of this ruling.

U.S. Fed continues trend

In a widely expected move, the U.S. Federal Reserve bumped the interest rate a quarter percent to 4.25%. This is the 13th consecutive rate hike since June of 2003. The central bank left open the possibility of additional rate hikes, but analysts are predicting the trend is probably near a close.

The Fed also rewrote its 2 year old explanatory statement by removing language that viewed interest rates to as adding to growth. Because many financial decisions are effected simply by what, and when, the Fed speaks the Fed wanted to remove any associations between policy actions and any set timetable or speed of their delivery.

Today in History

1896 - Glasgow Subway, the third oldest metro system in the world, began operations in Glasgow, Scotland.

1911 - Norwegian explorer Roald Amundsen (pictured) and his team became the first people to reach the South Pole.

1918 - King Väinö I of Finland renounced the throne after the defeat of Imperial Germany in World War I.

1989 - Chile held its first free election in 16 years and elected Patricio Aylwin as the new President of the Republic.

1995 - The Dayton Agreement was signed in Paris, France to end the Yugoslav wars.

Quote of the Day

"My creed is that public service must be more than doing a job efficiently and honestly. It must be a complete dedication to the people and to the nation with full recognition that every human being is entitled to courtesy and consideration, that constructive criticism is not only to be expected but sought, that smears are not only to be expected but fought, that honor is to be earned but not bought." ~ Margaret Chase Smith

About Wikinews

We are a group of volunteer journalists whose mission is to create a diverse community where citizens from around the globe (including **you**) can collaborate to report the news on a wide variety of current events. By making our content perpetually available for free redistribution and use, we hope to contribute to a global digital commons.

Got news and no computer? Call the Wikinews Hotline

+1-866-653-4265
(toll-free in the U.S.)
+1-202-742-5918
(outside the U.S.)

License

This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution License. Articles published in this Print edition were created by Wikinewsies.

To view a copy of this license, visit:
<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.5/>
or send a letter to
Creative Commons
543 Howard Street, 5th Floor
San Francisco, California, 94105, USA

Audio Wikinews

Audio Wikinews is a public domain, non point-of-view news radio program recorded daily.
<http://en.wikinews.org/wiki/Wikinews:Audio>

About Wikinews Print Edition

For more information about Wikinews Print Edition visit:
<http://en.wikinews.org/wiki/Wikinews:Print>