



Top Stories

Missing boy scout from North Carolina found alive

At 11:00 a.m. [EST] the missing boy scout from North Carolina was found alive.

Italian journalist freed by Afghan captors

Italian journalist Daniele Mastrogiacomo and his interpreter was released by his Taliban captors in Afghanistan, hours ago, after being kidnapped and held hostage since March 5.

Featured story

North Korea boycotts talks on nuclear program

According to Japan's chief envoy, Kenichiro Sasae, North Korea will not take part in 6-party talks regarding their nuclear program until the United States releases 25 million USD to the N. Korean government.

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- In a 2007 Cricket World Cup tie-up, India beats Bermuda by 257 runs; the highest margin of victory in the history of one-day internationals.
- The Prime Minister of Canada Stephen Harper releases a budget forecasting a surplus of C\$3.3 billion, and offers tax cuts for families and seniors and increased spending in Ontario and Quebec with the possibility of an election later this year.
- People's Bank of China Governor Zhou Xiaochuan starts talks with

Wikipedia Current Events

leadership of the Inter-American Development Bank to include the People's Republic of China as its newest member. This may signal erosion of Taiwan's status in the Latin American and Caribbean region.

- The government of Iraq seeks custody of former Vice President Taha Yassin Ramadan so he can be hanged at dawn tomorrow after having been recently sentenced to death for his role in killing 148 Shiites in 1982.
- Waleed bin Attash, a suspected al Qaeda operative, confesses plotting the USS Cole bombing as well as the bombing of two United States embassies in Africa.
- The Supreme Court of the United States hears *Morse v. Frederick*, in which an Alaskan high school student argues free speech rights in connection with his displaying a banner reading "Bong Hits 4 Jesus" in front of a Juneau high school.
- Daniele Mastrogiacomo, an Italian journalist working for *La Repubblica*, is set free by the Taliban. He had been kidnapped in the Afghan province of Helmand on March 6.
- The Israeli Ministerial Committee for Symbols and Ceremonies declares the 2006 Israel-Lebanon conflict a war.
- At least 75 miners are dead after a methane gas explosion in the Ulyanovskaya coal mine in the city of Novokuznetsk in the Kemerovo

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region of Siberia.

- The Airbus 380 makes a publicity flight with Lufthansa to New York and then Chicago.
- A suicide bomber attacks a Western convoy in Kabul causing casualties.
- Six-party talks resume to discuss progress in implementing last month's agreement, with North Korea and the United States having resolved an issue about North Korean funds frozen in a Macau bank.

Methane gas explosion at Ulyanovskaya Mine kills at least 106; Dozens still missing

A methane gas explosion occurred at the Ulyanovskaya Mine near the city of Novokuznetsk in the Kemerovo region of Siberia. At least 106 people have been reported to be killed in the blast. Conflicting reports say that at least thirteen to forty-three miners are still trapped underground or missing, as well as 75 to 93 have been reported to have survived the blast.

The mine disaster is the deadliest accident in Russia's mining industry in over a decade. The mine, which was opened in 2002, had around 200 miners inside at the time of the methane gas explosion.

The Kemerovo governor Aman Tuleyev said that when the blast occurred, the mine's management was underground inspecting a newly installed safety system made by a British company. British

experts and representatives of a management of the mine have gone down under the ground shortly before explosion. Tuleyev stated that on mine start-up, "the newest English system on a safety of conducting mountain works under the ground" should take place.

The operator of the mine is Yuzhkuzbassugol, Russia's biggest producer of deep-mined coal. The spokeswoman of the Emergencies Ministry stated that the blast occurred at 08:00 GMT, and that eighty-three miners had been safely evacuated from the mine shaft.

A380 makes maiden flight to US

The Airbus A380, the world's largest passenger plane, was set to land in the United States of America on Monday after a test flight. One of the A380s is flying from Frankfurt to Chicago via New York - the airplane will be carrying about 500 people.

It is being billed as the first time it has carried a near-normal number of passengers, though most will be staff of Airbus and German airline Lufthansa.

A second A380 is also travelling to the U.S. on Monday, but without passengers. This will be branded as a Qantas flight and fly from Frankfurt to Los Angeles LAX airport. The first leg of the flight going towards New York will be travelling under a Lufthansa flight number, and is due to arrive at New York's John F. Kennedy airport at 12:30 EST (16:30 UTC).

The test flights are being used to monitor everything from how easily the plane docks at the terminal gate to the way the in-flight dining and entertainment services work.

Deliveries to Singapore Airlines, its launch customer, are not due until October - two years late.

Delays of the production of the A380 have cost Airbus more than 6 billion dollars. Airbus has warned there could be additional charges to come.

These monetary problems have led to a recently-announced restructuring program at Airbus, called Power8, in which 10,000 jobs go and several factories will be sold to Airbus partners. France will lose 4,300 jobs, followed by Germany having a loss of 3,700 jobs, while the United Kingdom and Spain will see 1,600 and 400 jobs cut respectively.

The Belgian government has announced that it will give up to 150 million € (\$ 199 million) in aid to help sub-contractors which supply Airbus and employ thousands of workers.

Football: Chelsea beat out Spurs in FA Cup replay

Two second half goals by Andrei Shevchenko and Shaun Wright-Phillips were enough to give Chelsea a lift to the FA Cup semifinals earlier today at White Hart Lane. The first of the matches ended in a 3-3 draw last week at Stamford Bridge, where Chelsea had to come from 3-1 down to force the replay. Dimitar Berbatov, who scored in the last game, was paired up front with Robbie Keane for Tottenham, while Chelsea played Andrei Shevchenko and Didier Drogba up front as strikers. Martin Atkinson was the match referee for the evening at White Hart Lane in London.

Both teams started at a frantic pace, neither wanting to go to extra time in the match. The first real chance fell to Tottenham's Robbie

Keane after he was found by Berbatov's flick, but Ashley Cole's last gasp dive blocked the Irishman's shot. Chelsea were restricted to long range efforts at the start of the half with two shots by Ballack and one by Wright-Phillips flying wide of the net. Spurs had two more chances from Dawson and Berbatov, but neither troubled Chelsea keeper Petr Cech.

After the restart, Tottenham had several quick chances, but Cech was able to stop both a cross in to Chimbonda and a low drive from Steed Malbranque. Shevchenko then produced a well taken goal by running down the left, cutting to his left foot, and curling an unstoppable shot past England international keeper Paul Robinson. Chelsea doubled their lead 7 minutes later through Shaun Wright-Phillips after his first-time shot went across Robinson and into the back of the net. Martin Jol responded to the Chelsea goals by replacing Malbranque with Jermain Defoe, but the next few attempts on goal from Spurs would be off target shots by Zokora. Ricardo Carvalho then brought down Berbatov in the penalty area and were awarded a penalty by referee Martin Atkinson. Robbie Keane scored from the spot putting pressure on Chelsea for the last 10 minutes of the game. Spurs pushed forward, but were unable to convert any chances, and they were eliminated from the FA Cup.

The win gives Chelsea a date in the cup semifinals against Blackburn, while Tottenham's next match is at home to Reading in the Premiership.

Football: Ronaldo penalty sends United to FA Cup semifinals

A penalty by Cristiano Ronaldo in the 76th minute was all that

separated Manchester United and Middlesbrough earlier today at Old Trafford. The FA Cup 6th round replay was forced after a Ronaldo penalty a week ago which tied the last match at 2-2, sending the second game to Old Trafford. Middlesbrough started with the deadly strike pair of Mark Viduka and Yakubu up front, while Manchester had Alan Smith and Wayne Rooney as paired strikers.

United came out with the first good chances of the game as Wayne Rooney had an attempt on net, but saw his shot blocked by defender Jonathan Woodgate. Nemanja Vidic then had a chance for United off a Giggs corner, but his powerful header was held by keeper Mark Schwarzer. Ronaldo then had a shot on net after the ball fortuitously fell to his feet, but the Portuguese midfielders strike flew just wide. Middlesbrough survived through the first onslaught and had their first real chance on 16 minutes when a deflected pass by Xavier found its way to Mark Viduka, but his shot flew wide of Tomasz Kuszczak's goal. Woodgate soon saved Middlesbrough again as he blocked a cross net pass from Ronaldo which was aimed for a wide open Alan Smith. Wayne Rooney was then given a clear run in on goal after he was found by a well time through ball from Giggs, but Mark Schwarzer spread wide to snatch the ball from Rooney's feet. Mark Viduka then made space in the United penalty box and dropped off a pass for Stuart Downing, but his right footed shot flew wide yet again.

Ronaldo again threatened 'Boro, but he saw his wide angled shot bang off the crossbar after rounding Schwarzer. Rooney again was given a break away on net, but he was again stopped by the Australian Schwarzer. Soon after,

Jonathan Woodgate brought Ronaldo down in the box, and United were awarded a penalty. Ronaldo sent the ball high and to the left of Schwarzer as the keeper went the wrong way, and United took the lead. Middlesbrough had little more in the way of attacking threat, with a wide shot by Morrison being all they could muster. The game did end on a sour note, however, after a few scuffles and a cynical challenge on Ronaldo by James Morrison saw several yellow cards handed out and Morrison was shown red.

United will take on Watford in the semifinals of the cup while Middlesbrough have only the Premier League to focus on now, with their next match being played at West Ham.

Contaminated pet food causes massive recall

At least 10 pets, 9 cats and 1 dog have died as a result of eating contaminated pet food, says the United States Food and Drug Administration, or FDA. The contamination caused cats and dogs to both go into kidney failure.

At least 51 brands of cat food and 40 brands of dog food have been recalled. The manufacturer of the food is Menu Foods, which is based in Mississauga, Ontario in Canada. The brands include: Iams, Nutro, and Eukanuba pet foods. Nestle, Purina PetCare Co., Procter & Gamble and Hill's Pet Nutrition Inc. are voluntarily recalling their pet foods as a precaution. The FDA says that only wet food has been reported to have caused the deaths. The food was sold between December of 2006 and March 3 of 2007. The recall includes pouches and cans of wet food that total over 60 million.

"We are still trying to find out what

the true picture is out there of animals. We're talking about 1 percent of the pet food [supply] and it's really just impossible to extrapolate at this point," reported the FDA's head veterinarian, Stephen F. Sundlof.

The manufacturer is currently performing tests to determine what might have caused the contamination, but so far, the source has not been identified.

"We're testing and testing, but we can't identify the problem in the product," said Sarah Tuite, a spokeswoman for Menu Foods.

Anywhere from 40 to 50 cats and dogs were fed the contaminated food during testing by Menu Foods, and at least seven of those animals died. The species or how many cats or dogs died during testing is not known.

The FDA says that the possible cause of the contamination could be from heavy metals, lead or fungi inside wheat gluten which is used in pet foods as a "filler."

A complete list of the products recalled can be found here: Menu Foods Recall List. Pet owners are urged to stop using any and all food on that list that may still be in their home. Owners are also asked to seek immediate veterinarian attention if the pets are suspected of eating the food.

The recall could cost over 30 million USD.

2007 Cricket World Cup: West Indies vs Zimbabwe

West Indies beat Zimbabwe by 6 wickets (with 13 balls remaining) in Group D of the 2007 Cricket World Cup at Sabina Park, Kingston, Jamaica.

This victory ensured the West Indies qualified for the Super 8 phase.

West Indies won the toss and elected to field first.

2007 Cricket World Cup: India vs Bermuda

India beat Bermuda by 257 runs in Group B at the World Cup at the Queen's Park Oval, Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago.

India's innings of 413 runs broke the record for the highest runs scored in an ICC World Cup ODI. The previous record was held by Sri Lanka with a haul of 398 runs, scored against Kenya in the 1996 World Cup. In addition, India's win is the largest victory margin (by runs) in ODI history.

Bermuda won the toss and elected to field first.

Black registrar to hold mass wedding in Belgium

In Sint-Niklaas, Belgium, a multicultural mass marriage event is to take place next Wednesday, on the U.N.-designated International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. More than 550 couples have already registered to make a devotion pledge or renew their wedding vows before municipal officer Wouter Van Bellinghen. The alderman called for the event after three couples cancelled their marriage because Wouter is black.

Van Bellinghen, whose Rwandan parents gave him up for adoption, grew up in Sint-Niklaas as the youngest child in a family of 4 adopted children. Van Bellinghen is a member of the political party Spirit, which strives for more Flemish autonomy in Belgium. After the 2006 municipal elections in Belgium, he became the first black

councillor in Belgium, responsible for civilian, youth and international affairs in Sint-Niklaas. "The combination of his black skin colour with the shiny white brides dresses will be very photogenic..." mayor Freddy Willockx predicted when he presented his councillors. One month after Van Bellinghen took office, the media reported that three couples refused to be married by a black registrar.

At first, Van Bellinghen wasn't very surprised. "As a coloured person, I go through this every day. That's just the reality in Flanders. Only, I didn't expect this to happen so fast." After the incident, Van Bellinghen got hundreds of calls and letter from people supporting him, including prime minister Guy Verhofstadt, who condemned "such as stupid form of racism".

Socialist mayor Willockx accused the far-right political party Vlaams Belang (Eng. Flemish Interest) of creating the atmosphere for his deputy's experience. Vlaams Belang is second in the polls for the elections next June in Flanders. But, as Van Bellinghen pointed out: "This is not just a problem in Sint-Niklaas, or in Flanders, but all over Europe. And there are racists in every political party here."

Since Van Bellinghen made the news, the number of wedding ceremonies he has to lead has doubled, and even bookings for 2008 are coming in. Because many people regretted the fact that they could not be married by the famous alderman, he decided to organise a mass wedding, on the International anti-racism day. Not only future and established couples can take part in the ceremony, but even teens who want to prove their love. "Anyone can wed that day. I'm not a racist."

Similar to the television show Fata Morgana, Wouter has 5 challenges for the couples and for the city of Sint-Niklaas: together, they are to realise the biggest wedding pledge, a big wedding photo, a big group hug on the market square, a multicultural dessert buffet and a big first wedding dance.

Doctor robbed, car-jacked and locked in boot while car set alight

A 34 year old obstetrician from Forestville on Sydney's Northern Beaches has escaped after he was robbed, car-jacked and locked in the boot (trunk) of his BMW, which was set alight. Police say the doctor was locked in the boot while his car was set alight, but was allowed to escape before flames engulfed the vehicle.

The Doctor was believed to have been heading to The Mater Hospital in North Sydney when he was waiting at the intersection of West and Falcon Streets in Chatswood around 3:15AM AEDT when a small red sedan with two men claiming to be police officers signalled him to stop. After crossing the intersection, the doctor stopped his car at the side of the road.

The doctor was then approached by the two men and when he asked to see identification, one man grabbed the keys from his car's ignition before they both pulled the doctor out of his vehicle, hit him in the stomach with a hammer and stole his mobile phone and wallet. The robbers also demanded his key and credit cards along with their access codes before locking him in the boot.

Police allege that the men drove to several locations to withdraw cash and buy things before driving to Carisbook Street in Linley Point at around 4 a.m. local time where

they set the car alight with the doctor still in the boot.

Crime Manager of the Harbourside Local Area Command, Detective Inspector Houlahan said that the doctor then "heard a click in the boot area and he heard someone call out: 'Get out of the car'"

"When he pushed the boot up he found his car engulfed in flames."

Det. Insp. Houlahan said the doctor told police he did not unlock the boot himself, and it appeared the man's captors unlocked it before fleeing.

Det Insp Houlahan said that the doctor appeared to be "very distraught" and tired after the ordeal, and wanted to get home and see his wife and two young daughters.

He could only provide police with a vague description of his captors, but said the men were both Caucasian males aged in their 20s, and that one of them was about six feet tall (183cm) with short blond hair and medium build said Det. Insp. Houlahan.

Google's YouTube to present its best video awards

This week Google's on-line video sharing website YouTube launches its own awards ceremony. The site will present the best user-generated videos posted during 2006 in seven categories. The starting point is Monday and users will end voting on Friday. Winners will get their trophies on March 26.

The categories that YouTube is going to present include: most creative or inspirational video, best series, as well as music video or commentary and best comedy. The last category, number seven, is called "most adorable video ever"

and it is to continue the tradition of videos starring cats and dogs while asleep.

Those that are nominated are able to promote themselves on YouTube during the following five days. These users are also able to plead for votes.

The \$1.65 billion Google's acquisition gathered a huge number of fans. According to Jamie Byrne, head of YouTube product marketing, 2006 was a pioneering year for sites that rely on user's content.

However, companies like Viacom, believe one category is missing - "Best Professionally Produced Copyrighted Video." Last week Viacom sued Google together with YouTube for more than \$1 billion. The lawsuit states that the ever increasing popularity of YouTube is due to a massive uploads of copyrighted videos including "The Colbert Report" and "South Park".

Former Arizona Governor says he saw a UFO during the 1997 Phoenix Lights

Former Arizona Republican Governor Fife Symington III said that he had witnessed one of the "craft of unknown origin" during the 1997 Phoenix Lights event, but noted that he didn't go public with the information. In an interview with the Daily Courier in Prescott, Fife said: "It was enormous and inexplicable. Who knows where it came from? A lot of people saw it, and I saw it too. It was dramatic. And it couldn't have been flares because it was too symmetrical. It had a geometric outline, a constant shape."

Fife also noted that he did request information from the the commander of Luke Air Force Base, the general of the National Guard,

and the head of the Department of Public Safety. But none of the officials he contacted had an answer for what had happened, and were also "perplexed."

Frances Barwood, who was the former Phoenix city councilwoman in 1997 and who launched an investigation into the event, said that out of the more than 700 witnesses she interviewed, "The government never interviewed even one."

Senior Russian official questions role of NATO, Eurasian Economic Community

Igor Ivanov, Secretary of the Russian Security Council, said that the Eurasian Economic Community (EuroAsEC) could take the place of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).

Speaking at a press conference, Ivanov said that the CIS has already played a great role in the development of all the countries and that its current role is rather overestimated.

At the moment, the EuroAsEC consists of six members and three observers.

In his speech Ivanov also expressed his concern with what he termed US and NATO interference into the affairs of Russia's neighbor countries.

Speaking on behalf of the entire Security Council, one of whose members is the the Russian President Vladimir Putin, he said that Russia will have to be politically and economically active to defend its interests.

Canadian Green Party leader set to challenge MacKay for seat

Green Party of Canada leader

Elizabeth May announced Sunday that she will seek the party's nomination for the seat of Central Nova in the next federal election.

The riding is represented currently by Conservative Party MP Peter MacKay, who has held the seat since 1997. MacKay is Canada's Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister of the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency. MacKay was born in New Glasgow, Nova Scotia and completed an Arts degree and Law degree in the province.

His father, Elmer MacKay, who was with the Progressive Conservative Party of Canada, had been re-elected six times in the riding. Former Prime Minister Brian Mulroney also held the riding in 1983. Elmer resigned in order to give Mulroney a seat in Parliament.

As a teenager, May moved from the United States to Cape Breton Island in Nova Scotia. In her press release of March 18, 2007, May explained that she began her vocation as an activist and political campaigner in Nova Scotia. "It is entirely fitting that I now come back here to launch my first full campaign as leader of the Green Party of Canada", May stated.

May ran recently in a federal by-election, held on November 26, 2006, in the Ontario riding of London North Centre. Although May came in second behind Liberal Party candidate Glen Pearson, the Green Party had increased their vote by 20% over the previous election. If May won the seat of Central Nova in the next election, she would be the first ever Green MP in the Canadian House of Commons.

On her choice of Central Nova, May suggested in her press release that she had to "follow [her] heart" and

felt compelled to "run in Nova Scotia and that challenging a prominent member of the government will enable [her] to keep a strong focus on why Nova Scotia and Canada cannot afford another government led by Stephen Harper."

In the latest federal election of January 23, 2006, MacKay took the seat of Central Nova with 41% of the vote. In that election, the Green Party candidate, David Orton, came in fourth with under 2% of the vote.

In the latest national Strategic Counsel poll, conducted for CTV News and the Globe and Mail, the Conservatives are at 36%, the Liberals 31%, the NDP at 15%, and the Green Party at 10%. The margin of error is plus or minus 3.1 percentage points.

65th running of the Aiken Trials held

The 65th running of the Aiken Trials was held Saturday, on March 17th at the Aiken Training Track in South Carolina. The event consists of six horse races of a quarter mile to 4 1/2 furlongs that bring experience to new challengers in the field of racing competition.

Five of the races were for two-year-old horses and contenders that have not previously won. The sixth race is for horses who have never won a sweepstakes.

Organizers of the event looked to draw between 10 and 12,000 spectators. Tailgating, and a special VIP tent, along with live music and expanded food vendor services added to the event which has been growing each year. It is the first of three events that form the Aiken Triple Crown. The races began at 2 p.m and lasted until about 5 p.m.

Trial 1

The first trial, a quarter mile 2 year old maiden open, was won by Tigeroo owned by Dogwood Stable, ridden by Jessica Schultz and trained by Ron Stevens.

Trial 2

The second trial, a quarter mile race open to 2 yr old maiden colts and geldings, was won by Atrevido Bandito owned by Lansdon Robbins, ridden by Jessica Schultz and trained by Brad Stauffer.

Trial 3

The third trial, a quarter mile race open to 2 year old maiden colts, was won by Warriors Lass owned and trained by Carl Durr, ridden by Evequiel Lopez.

Trial 4

The forth trial a 4 1/2 Furlongs race open to 3 year old and up maiden colts and geldings was won by Private Nekia who is owned by Nekia Farm, ridden by Bruce Snipes and trained by Chad Frederick.

Trial 5

The fifth trial a 4 1/2 Furlongs race open to 3 year old and up maiden fillies and mares was won by Confederate Bond who is owned by Nekia Farm, ridden by Bruce Snipes and trained by Chad Frederick.

Trial 6

The sixth trial a 4 1/2 Furlongs race open to 3 year old and up that have never won a sweepstakes was won by Cyberflash who is owned by Nekia Farm, ridden by Bruce Snipes and trained by Chad Frederick. Cyberflash's time of 53 3/5 seconds matches the track record.

Today in History

1602 - The Dutch East India Company was established.

1852 - Uncle Tom's Cabin, a novel by Harriet Beecher Stowe about slavery in the United States before

the Civil War, was first published.
 1883 - The Paris Convention for the Protection of Industrial Property, one of the first intellectual property treaties, was signed.
 1987 - The antiretroviral drug AZT became the first antiviral medication approved for use against HIV and AIDS.
 1995 - The Aum Shinrikyo sect carried out a poison gas attack on the Tokyo subway system, killing 12 people and injuring more than 6,000 with sarin.
 March 20 is Independence Day in Tunisia (1956).

Quote of the Day

It is not only what we have inherited from our fathers and mothers that exists again in us, but all sorts of old dead ideas and all kinds of old dead beliefs and things of that kind. They are not actually alive in us; but there they are dormant, all the same, and we can never be rid of them. Whenever I take up a newspaper and read it, I fancy I see ghosts creeping between the lines. There must be ghosts all over the world. They must be as countless as the grains of the sands, it seems to me. And we are so miserably afraid of the light, all of us.
 ~ Henrik Ibsen

Word of the Day

contemn; v

1. To treat or regard with contempt.

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+1-866-653-4265
 (toll-free in the U.S.)
 +1-202-742-5918
 (outside the U.S.)
 +44-871-218-6397
 (U.K. / Europe)

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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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