

Top Stories

Israeli soldier convicted in killing of British activist in Gaza Strip

An Israeli ex-soldier has been found guilty of the manslaughter of a British student acting as a human shield in Palestine.



Marines accused of assaulting Australian freed by US military court

Two U.S. marines were recently cleared of charges in the brutal assault of an Australian youth in a Townsville nightclub February 2004. The alleged assault occurred within Australian jurisdiction, however permission was given by the victim and Attorney-general Phillip Ruddock for the matter to be transferred to a military court in the US.



U.S. Supreme Court rules on government display of Ten Commandments

The United States Supreme Court has ruled that "non-neutral" displays of the Ten Commandments in courtrooms violate the U.S. Constitution's First Amendment guarantee of religious neutrality, but that "historical" displays are permitted.

Wikipedia Current Events

- Bill C-38 passes through the Canadian House of Commons, placing Canada on track to become the third country in the world to legalize same-sex marriage, likely by July.
- AMD files an antitrust lawsuit against rival chipmaker Intel.
- Pakistan's Supreme Court suspends the acquittal of five men accused of raping Mukhtaran Bibi.
- Italian police detain Angelo Sacco after a shooting spree in Bogogno, near Milan. Three people are dead.

Wikipedia Current Events

- In the Solent, Queen Elizabeth II conducts a fleet review of 167 naval, merchant and tall ships from Britain and 35 other nations to commemorate the bicentenary of the Battle of Trafalgar. Ironically, the largest ship in attendance is the French aircraft carrier, Charles de Gaulle. Naval vessels from as far away as Japan and South Korea are in attendance. The tall ships will conduct a re-enactment of a Napoleonic War naval battle later in the day.
- In France, police search offices of specialty chemicals company Rhodia and finance ministry in the investigation of accounting irregularities and inside trading. Finance minister Thierry Breton was a member of the Rhodia board.
- Countries backing the ITER fusion reactor meet in Moscow to decide and the experimental fusion reactor will be built in Cadarache, Southern France, instead of Japan.
- Emperor Akihito of Japan and empress Michiko pay an unannounced visit to the memorial of Korean war dead during his visit in Saipan.
- A team of US and Canadian scientists announces that they may have found a way of vaccination against lassa fever.
- Guinea-Bissau's former president Kumba Yala declares that he accepts the results of presidential elections in the country "in the interest of peace and democracy" but still insists that he actually won. No candidate has won 50% of the vote and the next round of elections commences in July.

Civilians testify to Halliburton fraud, coercion

The Democratic Party held a public committee, aired on C-SPAN 3, at which former civilian employees based in or administering operations in Iraq, testified to specific instances of waste, fraud, and other abuses and irregularities by Halliburton and its subsidiary Kellogg, Brown, and Root

(KBR).

Allegations of fraud by Halliburton, specifically with regard to its operations Iraq, have persisted since before the Iraq War. The associations between U.S. Vice President Dick Cheney and Halliburton, have been the basis for repeated speculation over possible political improprieties and business profiteering from the war.

Among the senators and representatives present at the hearing were Byron Dorgan (presiding), Henry Waxman, Frank Lautenberg, and Mark Dayton.

Among those testifying were Bunny Greenhouse, former Chief Contracting Officer of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Rory Mayberry, former Food Program Manager for Halliburton subsidiary, and Allan Waller, of the Lloyd-Owen International security and operations firm.

Greenhouse, who provided the bulk of testimony, spoke for several minutes about her involvement in the evaluation and crafting of government Army contracts, and how explaining how superiors undermined and dismissed her concerns of illegal business practices. "Ultimately my main concern was the repeated insistence that the Rio contract be awarded to KBR without competitive bidding," Greenhouse said. She testified to have been given misinformation in answer to her complaints, and being "overtly misled" by KBR managers.

Mayberry, still in Iraq, testified by video from questions prepared by the committee. He said that KBR routinely sold expired food rations to the Army. The interviewer asked, "Are you saying that Halliburton deliberately falsified the number of meals they prepared and then submitted false claims for reimbursement and that they did this to make up for past amounts auditors had disallowed?" Mayberry firmly answered "Yes." He said that serving expired food ration was "an everyday occurrence, sometimes every meal." He explained that

Halliburton systematically overcharged for the number of meals as well, saying, "they were charging for 20,000 meals and they were only serving 10,000 meals." Dorgan later commented, "obviously there's no honor here, by a company that would serve outdated food to our troops in Iraq."

Mayberry also claimed would-be whistleblowers were threatened "to be sent to Falluja" and other "places under fire" if they talked to media or governmental oversight officials. In 2003 and 2004, Falluja had been well known as dangerous for foreign troops and civilians. "I personally was sent to Falluja for three weeks. The manager told me that I was being sent away until the auditors were gone, because I had talked to the auditors," Mayberry said.

"The threat of being sent to a camp under fire was their way of keeping us quiet. The employees who talked to auditors were sent to camps under more fire than other camps, and Anaconda." This report led Dorgan and others to voice considerable outrage that U.S. citizens would be personally threatened with harm for talking to oversight officials or media.

Allan Waller testified to specific examples of how KBR officials had conspired in blocking Lloyd-Owen fuel transports, and using other coercive means against its competitor. The British Lloyd-Owen has a direct contract with the Iraq government to provide fuel to various parts of the country.

In his introductory remarks, Dorgan explained that Senate Republicans had blocked or ignored any requests by Democrats to have a formal bipartisan hearing, resulting in the need for an independent committee.

Scenario for impeachment of Lula raised in Brazil

São Paulo, Brazil – The government of the Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva and his party, the Workers' Party are the target of several serious accusations of corruption.

This is the most severe political crisis since Brazilians first attained their right to vote for a President in 1989, the former President Fernando Collor de Mello was elected.

The ruling Workers' Party has not succeeded in its defense against the accusations. The Brazilian deputy Roberto Jefferson said that the ruling party bought the support of some Brazilian deputies, paying 30 thousand Brazilian Reals (US\$ 12 thousand) each, every month. Although Jefferson said that he had no proof of this, he gave a very detailed description of the alleged corruption scheme.



*The President of Brazil Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva.
Photo: Marcello Casal Jr./AB*

The testimonies of other witnesses and the investigation that is being made by police gave support for some of the Jefferson's claims. Independent investigation being made by newspapers and magazines, and the publication of documents and other evidences, expose the government and Workers' Party more and more.

Popular support for the President is deteriorating. Except for the Workers' Party and the Communist Party of Brazil (PCdoB) which are part of the government, there is not another political party in Brazil denying the accusations. All newspapers and magazines publish stories every day related to the scandal. The Workers' Party itself is divided: some members believe that the accusations are true and that something went wrong, others prefer to deny the evidences and they argue that the party is innocent.

A great part of the work of the Brazilian parliamentarians is related to the investigation of the scandals. Besides the Votes-for-cash scandal denounced by Jefferson, there are the Bingo's scandal, the Post Office scandal and the Brazilian Reinsurance Institute (IRB) scandal. All of these scandals are being submitted to investigation by Brazilian parliamentarians.

One important question is whether President Lula knew about the alleged scandals in his government or not. If he knew and he did nothing he was conniving or he participated, it is the worst. If he didn't know, someone can say that he was very incompetent because he didn't see something so big under his nose.

Today, the authority and the efficiency of the President is being questioned. Some people say that it was the former Minister José Dirceu who actually took great part of the decisions in Lula's government. The politicians say that President Lula must take control of his government, that he should do a major reform of his government and that he should get away from the people who are involved in the scandals.

Besides the corruption denunciations, the government of President Lula is being criticized by his weak social agenda. The programme called "Zero Hunger" has showed little results and many people accuse it of being just a marketing strategy.

The management of the economy has being praised by some analysts. However, critics, even inside the government like the Vice-President José Alencar have already criticized it, because of the high interest rates. There is not severe inflation, but unemployment is high, and salaries are low.

The next days or the next month may be decisive to the future of Lula. He must show that he is not involved in the corruption scandals, he must reform the government and he must prove that he is competent. The positive factor are that the Brazilian economy is not seriously contaminated by the political crisis until now, the population is perplexed but calm and the politicians are not envolving the President in the denunciations, although they demand the investigation of all corruption allegations. However, nobody knows how much this situation will remain or if it will remain until the end of the government of President Lula in 2006.

*This article contains first-hand journalism
by a Wikinews Reporter.*

Workers' Movement and other social movements support Lula, Senators warn of 'Chavenization'



President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva and the leader of MST João Pedro Stédile. Photo: Wilson Dias/ABr.

São Paulo, Brazil – Representatives of the Landless Workers' Movement (MST) and other social movements linked to the Workers' Party (PT) had a meeting with the Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva on June 22.

They said that they defend the investigation of corruption schemes, however they said that the Lula government is the victim of a destabilization campaign. They blame the President of the United States George W. Bush for the crisis. They say that the government of Lula is victim of a coup attempt by Bush supporters.

Senator Heloísa Helena from the Socialism and Freedom Party (PSOL) said that the coup idea is nonsense. Other parliamentarians, even some of the Workers' Party, didn't agree with the coup argument. Some senators said that only the Workers' Party itself initiated the crisis. Some senators who do not belong to the Brazilian ruling party PT warned of a scenario like the one in Venezuela where the President Hugo Chávez concentrated all political power on his hands using the support of social movements.

This article contains first-hand journalism by a Wikinews Reporter.

France secures site for 10 billion euro nuclear fusion research project



Scientist working inside a current fusion reactor; ITER will have 40 times the internal volume.

France has won a years-long battle to host ITER, the 'next step' in nuclear fusion research. Nuclear fusion is the process that powers our sun, and could potentially lead to almost unlimited energy available on Earth.

The six partners in the international project — the European Atomic Energy Community (EURATOM), the People's Republic of China, Japan, Korea, Russia and the United States - declared today in Moscow that the device will be constructed at Cadarache, in France. The other contender for the project was Japan.

The two countries had fought a long and hard battle to secure the site of the experiment, seen as the next step towards nuclear fusion, until Japan finally withdrew its bid today.

Under the terms of the agreement, France will pay 50% of the construction costs of the 10 billion euro (£6.6bn) program costs, while Japan will gain 20% of the 200 research jobs that will be part of the project, but pay only 10% of the costs.

"We believe that the Iter project should start as soon as possible for the sake of mankind's future," said Nariaki Nakayama, Japan's science minister.

Professor Sir Chris Llewellyn Smith, head of the of UK Atomic Energy Authority's (UKAEA) Culham division, responsible for the UK's thermonuclear fusion programme, said that "rapid construction of Iter will be a major step in the development of fusion as a potential large-scale source of electricity that will not contribute to climate change."



French environmental groups have shown dismay at the news of the siting decision. Mediane, one such group, said "We are against the project because it's very

dangerous and will not create jobs in the region." A group of several French environmental groups, Sortir du Nucleaire (Get Out of Nuclear Energy), said ITER was dangerous as scientists did not know "how to manipulate the high-energy deuterium and tritium hydrogen isotopes used in the fusion process. ITER will never produce electricity. Maybe, well after ITER, another reactor in 100, 150 or 200 years will do so — but that's far from certain."

The JET nuclear fusion project in the UK has operated for twenty years and has used tritium for ten; it has a 100% safety record with no radiation ever being released.

ITER will follow on from the work of such experiments as the European JET, the Japanese JT-60u, and the American TFTR and DIII-D. It is not designed to produce electricity, but to research technologies that will allow a prototype nuclear fusion power plant — 'DEMO' — by around 2060. The ITER program itself will last for thirty years — ten for construction, and at least 20 years of operation.

Nuclear fusion works by forcing the atomic nuclei — in this case isotopes of hydrogen, namely deuterium and/or tritium — to combine under great heat and pressure. The products of the reaction have a lower mass than the original reactants — releasing energy according to Einstein's famous equation of $E = mc^2$.

The fuel is derived from sea water, meaning that fusion is an almost limitless source of energy.

Nuclear fusion produces no waste products other than helium, and does not contribute to global warming in anyway. Little radiation is produced by the reaction; a nuclear fusion power plant will take less than 100 years to become completely safe after decommissioning. Further more, fusion reactors have very little fuel inside them at any one moment — so therefore no chance of a 'meltdown' — and can shut down in seconds if the fuel supply is cut off.

Lukashenko accuses foreign donators of ideological expansion

The President of Belarus, Alexander Lukashenko, accused foreign funds and donators of ideological expansion in

Belarus during his meeting with talented youth today.



President of Belarus, Alexander Lukashenko

"In recent years, activities of foreign donors, who were carrying out ideological expansion on Belarus disguised as humanitarian aid, and really stealing State's intellectual possession, was curbed," Lukashenko said.

Students, which Lukashenko met, were receivers of Belarusian presidential stipendies. He said, that the idea of domestic funds was created "in uneasy times" to keep talented students in Belarus.

Lukashenko requested last year that each trip abroad for sake of education be limited.

Norway and Denmark conducting observation flights over Belarus and Russia



Belarus in green, Russia in blue

In accordance with the Treaty on Open Skies, Norway and Denmark started conducting observation flights over Belarus and Russia yesterday. These flights are expected to last until July 1, with seven Belarusian and two Russian inspectors monitoring foreign planes.

The treaty establishes a program of unarmed aerial surveillance flights over the entire territory of its 34 state participants. The treaty is designed to enhance mutual understanding and confidence by giving all participants, regardless of size, a direct role in gathering information about military forces and activities of concern to them.

Russia and Belarus signed the treaty in 1992 in Helsinki.

According to the spokesman of Belarusian Ministry of Defense, Russia and Belarus have finished their analogous flight over the USA on June 25.

Wal-Mart heir John Walton killed in plane crash

John Walton, son of Wal-Mart founder Sam Walton and the 11th richest person in the world, has been killed in a plane crash on June 27 in Wyoming. He was 58 years old. The crash occurred shortly after takeoff from Jackson Hole Airport in Grand Teton National Park at about 1:20 p.m. CDT. Walton was the only person killed in the crash.

"We're sad that John Walton, who was well-known and much-loved in this valley, died doing something that he loved to do, which was fly aircraft," said Joan Anzelmo, a spokeswoman for Grand Teton National Park.

Walton was killed while flying an experimental ultra-light aircraft with small gasoline engine and wings made of material similar to sail-cloth.

Because the aircraft was unregistered and experimental, officials at the National Park indicate that there will not be an NTSB investigation. Officials at Grand Teton National Park will, however, conduct their own internal investigation.

Walton was named to the board of directors of Wal-Mart in 1992 -- he never worked for the company. He had served as a Green Beret during the Vietnam War and was awarded the Silver Star for saving the lives of several members of his unit while under fire. Walton was involved in several business interests over the years, including crop-dusting and boat construction.

Israeli soldier convicted of killing British activist in Gaza Strip

A former Israeli soldier has been convicted by an Israeli court of the manslaughter of a British student who was acting as a human shield in the Gaza Strip in April 2003.

Ex-sergeant Wahid Taysir, serving with the

Beduin Unit in Rafah, hit Tom Hurndall with a single shot to the head from an army watchtower, using a sniper rifle with a telescopic sight. Hurndall had been guiding children away from an area of shooting in the Palestinian town of Rafah.

Twenty-two year old Hurndall fell into a coma and died of his injuries nine months later in a London hospital. Taysir's defence lawyers had tried to claim during the trial that Hurndall's death was due to malpractice by British doctors.

The Israeli army had initially declined to carry out an investigation into the shooting. After the British government started their own enquiry and cited Taysir as having fired the fatal shot, the Israeli army made the decision to prosecute Taysir, who is no longer serving in the army.

The verdict took more than an hour to read out in a small courtroom in southern Israel. As well as being found guilty of manslaughter, Taysir was found guilty of obtaining false testimony, submitting false testimony, obstruction of justice, and improper conduct.

Taysir's sentence will be decided next week. Another soldier was also jailed for lying to protect Taysir.

Hurndall's father Anthony was one of 50 people in the courtroom. Afterwards he welcomed the verdict, but claimed that the Israeli army acted with impunity too often. The Israeli government insist that there is no policy that tolerates shooting civilians.

Taysir is an Israeli Arab of the Beduin tribe. He served in the Israeli army as a volunteer.

Wikinews Back Page



Today in History

- 1613 - Shakespeare's Globe Theatre burned to the ground.
- 1880 - Tahiti became a French territory.
- 1922 - France granted 100 hectares at Vimy Ridge "freely, and for all time, to the Government of Canada, the free use of the land exempt from all taxes".
- 1933 - Italian boxer Primo Carnera knocked out American Jack Sharkey to become the heavyweight boxing champion of the world.
- 1995 - During the STS-71 mission the Space Shuttle Atlantis became the first Space Shuttle to dock with the Russian Mir space station.
- 1995 - The Sampoong Department Store collapsed in the Seocho-gu district of Seoul, South Korea, killing 501 and injuring 937.

Quote of the Day

"Perfection is achieved, not when there is nothing more to add, but when there is nothing left to take away." ~ Antoine de Saint-Exupéry

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