



Top Stories

Abu Musab al-Zarqawi killed in airstrike



Al Qaeda in Iraq head Abu Musab al-Zarqawi has been killed in an airstrike north of Baqubah Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri Maliki has said.

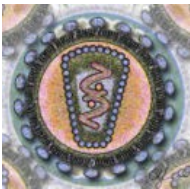
Oil falls \$1.19 on news of al-Zarqawi death



A barrel of oil got cheaper after news broke that Al Qaeda's leader in Iraq Abu Musab al-Zarqawi had been killed in a US airstrike Thursday.

Featured story

New HIV drug could stop virus from spreading



In a small-scale trial on humans, American scientists say they may have developed a new drug that could stop the spread of HIV and "rapidly clears" the blood of the virus.

Wikipedia Current Events

- A delegation from the rebel Lord's Resistance Army arrives in Juba, Sudan for peace talks with the Ugandan government to be mediated by Riek Machar, Vice President of Southern Sudan.

Wikipedia Current Events

- According to an aide to Iraq's prime minister Nuri al-Maliki, the leader of Al-Qaeda in Iraq and one of the world's most wanted men, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, was killed by a U.S. air raid. Al-Zarqawi's body was retrieved and visually identified by known scars, tattoos and fingerprints.
- First Lieutenant Ehren Watadazzz, publicly refuses to go to Iraq, saying it would make him party to war crimes.
- Iraqi Prime Minister al-Maliki fills the last open posts of his Council of Ministers, appointing Qadir Obeidi as defense minister and Jawad Bulani as interior minister.
- Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa, a former ambassador to France and one of the first women in Bahrain to practice law, is elected President of the UN General Assembly.
- The Broadmead area of Bristol, United Kingdom is temporarily closed following the discovery of an unexploded German bomb from World War II.
- Reposal of Abouna Matta El Meskeen, at the age of 87. Abouna Matta was the Spiritual Father of over 120 monks in the Monastery of St. Macarius the Great in the Wilderness of Shiheet.
- Microsoft makes Windows Vista beta 2 available for general download.
- Game 1 of the NBA Finals (Dallas Mavericks vs. Miami Heat) will be played at 8:35 PM EST.

New HIV drug could stop virus from spreading

In a small-scale trial on humans, American scientists say they may have developed a new drug that could stop the spread of HIV and "rapidly clears" the blood of the virus.

"There is a lot of interest in this product ," said editor Keith Alcorn of the National Aids Manual.

The drug called PA-457 which is derived from betulinic acid and comes for by-products from paper manufacturers, is being manufactured and developed by Maryland drug manufacturer Panacos Pharmaceuticals. The drug is known as a maturation inhibitor, which is a new group of drugs. Its purpose is to break down the protective protein coating of HIV. The drug exposes the inner genetic material by making holes in the coating of the virus essentially causing it to break down and disabling its ability to be passed from one human to the next. The drug also shows that it works on strains of HIV to which other drugs are resistant to. The drug is also compatible with other HIV drugs.

"It's a truly novel new class of drugs, and I really support their development. If [PA-457] turns out to be non-toxic, easy to use and not to select for resistance, it will find good use," said Charles Boucher who researches HIV at Utrecht university medical center in the Netherlands.

"It stops the virus by interfering in one of the final stages in its assembly and stops it from 'budding out' from the wall of a cell," said Alcorn.

Scientists are expected to begin a larger scale test on 48 people in one month, whose drugs are no longer working; however, the drug itself is not likely to be available for wide-scale use for at least 3 years. Test subjects will be administered either a placebo or PA-457 which will be taken in combination with the medication they already take.

"This provides the basis for future studies that will be designed to provide a detailed understanding of the interaction between PA-457 and its target as well as insights into the design of new generations of maturation inhibitors," said CEO of Panacos Pharmaceuticals, Graham Allaway.

At least 80% of those suffering from the disease have shown that their medication is resisting the virus.

Five kidnapped South Korean natural gas plant workers released

Five South Korean natural gas plant workers that were kidnapped yesterday have been released to a member of the Nigerian Senate, David Brigidi. The five ex-hostages walked into a Nigerian Government building and were in good health.

The kidnappers, who belong to the group Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta, released the workers after Mujahid Dokubo-Asari plead for the release. Mujahid Dokubo-Asari is a militant who is currently in prison and the kidnappers were demanding that he be released.

"All five Korean prisoners captured by our unit in the attack on the Daewoo camp were released at the request of Dokubo-Asari," said the group.

Shell Petroleum Development Company operated the plant in the Nigerian Delta where the hostages worked. Shell has since closed the plant after the group said yesterday that more attacks were "planned" on the facility. The plant is located in Port Harcourt and Daewoo Engineering and Construction Co. and Korea Gas Corp. were the workers employers.

Today the group again reaffirmed their earlier statement that all "oil companies in the Niger Delta are again warned to leave while they can."

International forces in Dili reached agreement

The international forces in East Timor have reached an agreement about the coordination of the military and police forces in the field. The agreement was reached during an urgent meeting held between representatives of the four countries, after an incident between Australian and Portuguese soldiers yesterday.

In the agreement reached between Australia, New Zealand, Malaysia, Portugal and the Timorese government, operational autonomy is given to the international forces, which will operate in cooperation and coordination with each other.

The agreement also stated that in an initial phase Dili will be divided by sector's, and each area will be under the control of an international force. Outside of its area of responsibility, the military or police force, will only be able to

operate if their actions are requested by the other international forces. Also was agreed that the police forces will assume total control of the city after the military forces leave their current occupied positions. A situation that is expected after the arrival of the remaining equipment, mainly vehicles, for the Portuguese Republican National Guard (GNR) and the arrival of the remaining Malaysian police officers and their equipment.

In an official notice, the Timorese Foreign Minister, Jos  Ramos Horta stated that "the objective on a long run is for the GNR to operate has a tactical intervention force in all the city of Dili".

Ramos Horta explained that "in the next days, maybe already tomorrow morning, they [the Australian, Malaysian, New Zealand and Portuguese forces] will do some coordination training, in way to assure that the four forces know exactly what each one will do". "Since some are from the Army and the others [Portuguese Republican National Guard] are a specialized police and that they never worked together, its useful to carry out some practical exercises", he added.

In another subject, Ramos Horta explained that the Australian soldiers that are in Maubisse, next to a rebel group lead by major Reinado, and in Gleno, Ermera, next to another group of "military opponents", are there "containing those elements".

"Those groups are not comparable with other people that are here in Dili and that must be disarmed", Ramos Horta said.

"The Australian presence in

Maubisse and Gleno aims in containing those groups on their areas, until arrives the moment in which the President decides that is time for also mister Alfredo Reinado and the others to put down their weapons", he said. "This is not urgent because they are not causing problems to anyone", he justified.

The urgency of the resolution and clarification of the command and cooperation of the international forces was originated after an incident between Australian and Portuguese soldiers. When yesterday a Portuguese GNR patrol transported three people to a temporary detention center managed by Australian soldiers.

The detainees were arrested by an GNR Special Operations team, after being caught looting a governmental warehouse, in Balide, Dili.

The Australian soldiers then refused to receive the detained men, questioning the legitimacy of the Portuguese soldiers to make arrests. The Portuguese contingent transported the detainees to the Timorese prison services in Dili.

Auckland man convicted of sedition

Auckland, New Zealand â Freelance journalist Tim Selwyn has been found guilty of sedition. This is the first conviction for sedition in New Zealand in over 75 years.

Selwyn faced two charges of "making a seditious statement" relating to pamphlets he had left near the scene of an axe attack on the Prime Minister's electorate office in November, 2004, which had called upon like-minded New Zealanders to "engage in similar acts of civil disobedience" and to

"take similar action of their own". The charges were laid under s81(1)(c) of New Zealand's Crimes Act 1961, which criminalises any statement intended to "incite... or encourage violence, lawlessness, or disorder". The offence carries a penalty of up to two year's jail. After deliberating for almost four hours, the jury convicted Selwyn of one charge, and acquitted him of the other.

Speaking after the trial, Selwyn said that the jury had "criminalised a press statement".

The trial has raised significant controversy within New Zealand, with many bloggers protesting. Blogger Idiot/Savant called the verdict "shameful" and said that it "opened the door to further prosecutions for what is effectively a political crime".

Selwyn is currently free on bail pending sentencing next month, and is likely to appeal.

Oil falls \$1.19 on news of al-Zarqawi death

A barrel of oil got cheaper after news broke that Al Qaeda's leader in Iraq Abu Musab al-Zarqawi had been killed in a US airstrike Thursday. The death of al-Zarqawi seems to have been interpreted by the market as good news for the future supply of oil from the region.

Short-Term Oil Prices, 2004-2006 (not adjusted for inflation).

This is against the backdrop in 2006 when the price of oil had reached a record high of \$70 a barrel.

Today on the New York Mercantile Exchange light crude futures for July dropped from over \$70 a barrel to a low of \$69.54 before

rising to \$69.63 for a \$1.19 loss. "There's less of a terror threat in Iraq now," said Naohiro Niimura, vice president of energy derivatives at Mizuho Corporate Bank Ltd, in Tokyo, who gave his reason for the fall.

Iraq lies over one-third of known oil reserves but since the Iraq war in 2003 has been unable to pump more than 2 million barrels a day - 1 million less than prior to the coalition invasion. In May exports were said to be 1.5 million bpd.

The line on a graph that plotted oil price had done a steady incline over recent years, though many factors are involved in the price of a barrel of oil so it is almost impossible to say how much the troubles in Iraq contributed to this rise.

Iraq's exports make up the largest proportion of its Gross Domestic Product and a significant proportion of world supply. Investors were said to have been worried about developing in the country citing lack of security and legal protection.

Al-Zarqawi, known for videoed beheadings, suicide bombing campaigns against coalition forces and civilians and reportedly some attacks on oil infrastructure inside Iraq, had claimed responsibility for bombing three hotels in Amman, Jordan. It was hoped the death of Osama bin Laden's operative in Iraq would remove a man who had opposed the US-backed Shiite-led state and western influence in the wider-region.

The Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri Maliki's recent appointment of new security and home affairs ministers also may have affected the oil market. Director general of marketing and economics at the

Iraqi oil ministry said both pieces of news together were "a positive indicator for security," said Shamkhi Faraj.

Other voices sounded a note of caution against the optimism "The situation in Iraq has now become so chaotic, that it transcends the death of one man, influential as al-Zarqawi was," said Edward Meir.

The analyst at Man Financial believes the threat to the Iraqi oil industry is political as well as physical.

"Yes, al Qaeda attacked oil installations but they were not the only actors and they were not the main actors," he said. "There is also a new factor -- political parties that are using threats against oil to gain leverage."

In an announcement about oil, Thursday, Deputy Prime Minister Barham Salih of the Iraqi government said it hoped to produce 4.3 million bpd in four years.

Abu Musab al-Zarqawi killed in airstrike

The head of al-Qaeda in Iraq, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, has been killed in an air strike on a building north of Baqubah city, according to the Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri Maliki.

"Today [sic] Zarqawi has been terminated," he said Thursday, and suggested the man the United States had placed a \$25 million price tag on for death or capture was located through intelligence.

"What happened today is a result of co-operation for which we have been asking from our masses and the citizens of our country," he said.

The leader of coalition forces in

Iraq, General George Casey said al-Zarqawi was killed in a safehouse about 8km north of the city in Diyala province.

Several aides also died with him in the Wednesday evening raid, including his key lieutenant and spiritual adviser Sheik Abdul Rahman. Some analysts believe a US counter-terrorism unit, Task Force 145, was involved in the attack.

Al-Zarqawi's body, recovered after 500-pound bombs had blown through his cover, was identified through fingerprint and scar analysis and head likeness. Al-Zarqawi, whose real name was Ahmed Fadhil Nazzal al-Khalayleh, was believed to be in his late 30s when he died.

The self-proclaimed frontman for Osama Bin Laden's activities in Iraq, al-Zarqawi, a Jordanian national, is said to have been involved in the beheading of foreigners, hundreds of suicide attacks, and an insurgency against coalition forces after the Iraq war in 2003.

It had been reported Al-Zarqawi's most recent campaign was to create problems between Shi'ite and Sunni groups in Iraq with ethnic killings.

For the Iraqi government the killing of the wanted murderer is what they sought but it remains unknown what effect the removal of this known figurehead of the Iraq insurgency will have on levels of violence in the country. Al-Zarqawi was not the only person to oppose the US-backed Iraqi government.

"Zarqawi didn't have a number two. I can't think of any single person who would succeed

Zarqawi...In terms of effectiveness, there was no single leader in Iraq who could match his ruthlessness and his determination," was the view of Rohan Gumaratna at the Institute of Defense and Strategic Studies in Singapore.

Applause was heard as Mr Maliki, with U.S. Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad and U.S. Gen. George Casey, by his side, told news reporters "al-Zarqawi was terminated."

Sources claiming to be Al-Qaeda in Iraq later confirmed that al-Zarqawi had been killed and said that they would fight the United States and the interim Iraqi government despite his death.

The US military also confirmed that six people were killed in the strike: Mr. Zarqawi, his spiritual adviser and four other people including a woman and a child.

Terrorists seize 50 in Iraq

On June 5, gunmen, who had posed as police officers, raided a bus station in central Baghdad and captured 50 people. Attackers raided bus stations and seized travellers and local vendors. This happened a day after 21 people were dragged off buses and killed in Diyala province.

Of the 50 people, there are two Syrians and one is an Interior Ministry official. The gunmen rounded up people from the area including people from the many travel agencies that populate the area. The people were then herded into cars and taken away.

"They took all the workers from the company and nearby shops," says Haidar Mohammed Eleibi, who works for the Swan Transportation Co. in the Salihiya

business district. Most of the buses at the station were headed to Jordan, Syria and Lebanon.

Rahul Mahjan gets two days in police custody

Rahul Mahajan, the son of slain Bharatiya Janata Party leader Pramod Mahajan, who was arrested on Monday under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, was remanded to two-day police custody by a Patiala House court in New Delhi on Tuesday.

Mahajan was discharged from Apollo Hospital and brought to the Tughlaq Road police station in a wheelchair. He was later produced in the court. Though the police wanted a five-day custody, the court granted only two days.

Subsequently, Mahajan was taken to the police station for interrogation. He was reportedly confronted with the other accused, Sahil Zaroo, who is also in police custody till June 12.

Zaroo was arrested in Srinagar on June 3 for allegedly purchasing and supplying drugs to the 7 Safdarjung Road bungalow in the early hours of June 2. He has allegedly disclosed to the police that he bought drugs at the instance of Mr. Mahajan's personal secretary Bibek Moitra, who subsequently died. The police also questioned Mr. Mahajan's erstwhile aide, Harish Sharma, to find out if he had any role to play in destruction of evidence at the scene of crime. Additional Deputy Commissioner of Police (New Delhi) Manish Aggarwal said they were also probing the role of the three domestic help.

Body found in the Christchurch, New Zealand Avon River

Anthony James Creamer's body was found in the Christchurch Avon River on June 6.

He was a sickness beneficiary and lived in Avonside Street, which is located near the Avon River.

Christchurch police Detective Inspector, Malcolm Johnston, said that there were no suspicious circumstances relating to the death, and no suspicious injuries had been identified. However, he said it was still too early to tell the exact cause of death and police could not yet rule out foul play.

"There is no apparent suspicious injuries, but we will wait for the results of the post-mortem," Johnston said.

A member of the public spotted the body tangled in weeds in the middle of the river near Locksley Avenue, in Dallington, about noon. They flagged down a police car and the officer jumped into the river and brought it on to the riverbank.

The body was fully clothed, and early suggestions were that it had not been there long.

The post-mortem should be completed by June 7.

Northern Ireland parties fail to form devolution committee

After three days of talks, parties in Northern Ireland have come to a stalemate over the election of a chairperson for a committee to help setup a devolved government in Northern Ireland. It is now up to Northern Ireland Secretary of State Peter Hain to choose to the next course of action.

The committee, known as, the Preparation for Government Committee convened Monday to begin its first task, the election of a chairperson for the committee. Its main task however is to help set a roadmap for devolved government in Northern Ireland. The committee is made up of the two republican parties (Sinn Féin and SDLP), the two unionist parties (DUP and UUP) and the non-sectarianist Alliance Party.

Sinn Féin's proposal is for the chairpersonship to revolve between them and the Democratic Unionist Party. However, the DUP refused that proposal.

The DUP proposed that Speaker of the Assembly Eileen Bell should be the chairperson. However, Bell stated that it would be inappropriate for her to take the post and refused. They also suggested the DUP MP for South Antrim William McCrea and Alliance Party leader David Ford as possible candidates.

Peter Hain called the refusal of parties to cooperate "frustrating."

Sinn Féin, SDLP and the Alliance Party have all blamed the DUP for the failure.

"Yet again the DUP, instead of helping to remove obstacles to devolution, have shown themselves to be nothing but obstructive and lacking in any spirit of co-operation," said Sean Farren of the SDLP.

Mark Durkan, the leader of SDLP, has criticized both Peter Hain and the DUP and its leader, Ian Paisley on Monday.

"If the DUP is not prepared to do the business or give any substantive indication in the course of June, then the British

government would be as well stopping the salaries at the end of June," said Sinn Fein's Martin McGuinness.

"The practical reality is that the two biggest parties have not shown they are prepared to move forward at all." said David Ford, the leader of the Alliance Party.

"The prevarication and petty wriggling by the DUP is preventing the potential for progress and holding us all up to public ridicule." said Ulster Unionist Party's Alan McFarland.

On Monday, Ian Paisley asked for extension of the November 24 deadline for two weeks. It was refused.

This is part of plan by British Prime Minister Tony Blair and Irish Taoiseach Bertie Ahern to set up a devolved government in Northern Ireland after it's assembly was suspended in October 2002 over allegations of a IRA spy ring.

If a plan for devolved government is not setup by November 24, direct rule from London will continue with greater input from the Republic of Ireland.

Today in History

- 68 - Roman Emperor Nero committed suicide after he was deposed by the Senate.
- 1815 - Congress of Vienna ended, redrawing the political map of Europe after the defeat of Napoleon.
- 1885 - The end of the Franco-Chinese War. China gave up Tonkin and Annam (most of present day Vietnam).
- 1934 - Donald Duck debuted in The Wise Little Hen.
- 1986 - The Rogers Commission released its report on the Space Shuttle Challenger disaster.
- June 09 is St. Colmcille's Day in Ireland

Quote of the Day

When you were born in this world
Everyone laughed while you cried
Conduct not yourself in manner
such
That they laugh when you are
gone.
~ Kabir ~

Word of the Day

solicit; *v*

1. To persistently endeavor to obtain an object, or bring about an event.
2. To woo; to court.
3. To persuade or incite one to commit some act, especially illegal or sexual behavior.

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