



Top Stories

Olympic torch extinguished three times in Paris

Olympic officials said pro-Tibetan protesters extinguished the Olympic torch three times while travelling through Paris, which was then put on a bus to keep it safe. Yesterday, protesters tried to grab and extinguish the torch in London, without succeeding.



Credit: Adam Brookes (cc-by-sa)

Gen. Petraeus, Amb. Crocker testify before US Armed Services Committee

United States General David Petraeus, the Commanding General of the Multi-National Force - Iraq (MNF-I), and Ambassador to Iraq Ryan Crocker, are testifying before the United States Senate Committee on Armed Services today, on the security and political conditions in Iraq.



Credit: Kevin McCoy (cc-by-sa 2.0)

Soyuz TMA-12 launches

At 11:16 GMT (17:16 local time) this morning, a Russian Soyuz-FG carrier rocket launched from Site 1/5 at the Baikonur Cosmodrome in



Top Stories

Kazakhstan, with the Soyuz TMA-12 spacecraft, on a mission to the International Space Station (ISS). Aboard were three cosmonauts; Russians Sergei Volkov and Oleg Kononenko, and South Korean Yi So-yeon.

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW

Wikinews interviews Australian statistician Brian Pink

The Australian Bureau of Statistics is responsible for some of Australia's largest surveys, including the Census of Population and Housing, held every five years. At its head is the Australian Statistician. The current Statistician, Brian Pink, started in his position on March 5, 2007, following the retirement of predecessor Dennis Trewin.



Wikipedia Current Events

The first Korean astronaut, Yi So-yeon and two Russian Expedition 17 cosmonauts are launched towards the International Space Station on board Soyuz TMA-12.

- Movement for Democratic Change Secretary General Tendai Biti calls for international intervention to thwart violence in the wake of the Zimbabwean presidential election.

Boy killed by shark in Australia

A boy in Australia has died after

being bit on the leg by a shark. The boy, who was sixteen years old was with a friend at the time of the attack. The friend claimed that he believed the victim was joking when he was being attacked by a shark. "I thought he was only joking, so I went over to him and as I flipped him over I saw his leg," he said.

The attack, which occurred off northern New South Wales, Australia, was the first fatality from a shark attack in the area for over two years. There have, however been many more attacks which have not resulted in deaths.

It is unusual for sharks to attack humans. According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), attacks on humans are normally a result of mistakes by the shark. The NOAA also says that sharks sometimes mistake humans for its natural prey, such as fish or a marine mammal or sea turtle, and that sharks most often will release the person after the first bite. It has also been claimed that the majority of shark bites are "hit-and-run" attacks by smaller species, such as blacktip and spinner sharks.

Gen. Petraeus, Amb. Crocker testify before US Armed Services Committee

United States General David Petraeus, the Commanding General of the Multi-National Force - Iraq (MNF-I), and Ambassador to Iraq Ryan Crocker, testified today before the United States Senate

Committee on Armed Services on the security and political conditions in Iraq.

In General Petraeus' opening statement he said, "I recommended to my chain of command that we continue the drawdown of the surge combat forces and that, upon the withdrawal of the last surge brigade combat team in July, we undertake a 45-day period of consolidation and evaluation."

General Petraeus further told the Senators that the security gains that have been made in Iraq are "fragile and reversible". He said that Iran is supporting the insurgents.

Ambassador Crocker spoke about the recent fighting that took place in southern Iraq, centered around Basra. "Taken as a snapshot, with scenes of increasing violence, and masked gunmen in the streets, it is hard to see how this situation supports a narrative of progress in Iraq," he said.

"There is still very much to be done to bring full government control to the streets of Basra and eliminate entrenched extremist, criminal, and militia groups. When viewed with a broader lens, the Iraqi decision to combat these groups in Basra has major significance," said Crocker.

The ambassador also shed light on base negotiations between the US and Iraq. "The agreement will not establish permanent bases in Iraq, and we anticipate that it will expressly foreswear them," Crocker said. "The agreement will not specify troop levels, and it will not tie the hands of the next administration."

Committee chairperson Carl Levin,

Michigan, criticized Prime Minister of Iraq Nouri al-Maliki, saying that the government of Iraq was at risk due to "incompetence and the excessively sectarian leadership."

Senators John McCain, Arizona, the ranking member of the committee, and Hillary Clinton, New York, committee member, are expected to question Petraeus and Crocker. Barack Obama, Illinois, will get his chance when Petraeus and Crocker testify before the United States Senate Committee on Foreign Relations later today at 2:30 p.m. EDT (UTC-5).

Together the three make up the remaining major party candidates in the 2008 United States presidential election.

The proceedings, which are open to the public, were interrupted by protestors on more than one occasion. "Bring them home!" yelled one of them as he was escorted out of the room.

Soyuz TMA-12 launches

At 11:16 GMT (17:16 local time) this morning, a Russian Soyuz-FG carrier rocket launched from Site 1/5 at the Baikonur Cosmodrome in Kazakhstan, with the Soyuz TMA-12 spacecraft, on a mission to the International Space Station (ISS). Aboard were three cosmonauts; Russians Sergei Volkov and Oleg Kononenko, and South Korean Yi So-yeon. Volkov and Kononenko make up the ISS Expedition 17 crew, whilst Yi is flying as a Spaceflight Participant through the Korean Astronaut Programme. All three are making their first trip into space.

Two major firsts are being achieved on this mission. Yi is the first South Korean to fly in space, and Volkov is the first second-generation space traveller, his

father Alexander Volkov having flown three space missions, Soyuz T-14, TM-7 and TM-13, spending over a year aboard the Mir space station across the three missions.

Soyuz TMA-12 successfully separated from the carrier rocket about nine minutes after lift off. Docking with the Pirs module of International Space Station is planned for Thursday at 13:00 GMT. In preparation for docking, the Progress M-63 cargo spacecraft undocked at 08:30 GMT yesterday morning, and was de-orbited to burn-up in the Earth's atmosphere at 11:50.

The TMA-12 spacecraft will remain docked to the ISS as an emergency escape capsule until October, when it will be used to return the Expedition 17 crew to Earth, along with space tourist Richard Garriott. Yi So-yeon will return to Earth aboard Soyuz TMA-11, which is scheduled to land in just under a fortnight's time.

This is the 99th manned flight of the Soyuz programme, the first of which was launched in late April 1967, and the 107th manned flight of the Soviet/Russian space programme. It is the fifteenth orbital, and third manned launch of 2008.

Wikinews interviews Brooks Lindsay, founder of Debatepedia

A reporter from Wikinews recently interviewed Brooks Lindsay, who is the founder of the online wiki Debatepedia, which claims to be the 'Wikipedia of Debates.'

Brooks told Wikinews that "Debatepedia is a non-profit, free wiki encyclopedia of debates, pro and con arguments, and supporting evidence and quotes

from scholars, experts, and op-ed writers (those figures that are actively engaged in these public debates)." He continued with "some people have called it the 'Wikipedia of debate', which is a pretty accurate description of what we are trying to do."

He finished by stating that the site is "trying to cover all of the pro and con arguments in any public debate, on any topic from a global to a local level, from any region in the world, and hopefully, in the future, in any language. The objective is to frame debates in a pro/con structure - when they appropriately belong in a pro/con structure - so that people can effectively "weigh" the "sides" in a debate, deliberate, draw conclusions, and take a stand. "

The second question asked why he founded Debatepedia. He replied by saying that "With arguments, evidence, and quotes being scattered across the Internet, it is currently too difficult for citizens to view all the pros and cons, quotes, and supporting evidence in debates, deliberate and take a stand. We are trying to fill this void, on a global scale, and by open-sourcing the effort over MediaWiki software."

When asked how Debatepedia will develop in the future Brooks said that he expects "the community of editors to grow to a much greater extent." He also said that he hoped to be able to "clean up some of the software elements," of the site.

When questioned about the importance of Debatepedia, Mr. Brooks said that "Debatepedia is important for the reader and citizen as a tool to deliberate more effectively, develop greater conviction in what is righteous and

what is not, and to generally increase citizen-engagement in debates, issues, and advocacy, across the world. For the writer, it is a way to have a greater voice and impact on other people, and other people's thinking; it's a great public service to help edit on Debatepedia, like on Wikipedia. Finally, there is the potential that Debatepedia will be used by leaders and representatives as a way to deliberate through a topic that they have to vote on, or as a destination to direct constituents to deliberate." He said it was "perhaps a lofty goal, but real nevertheless."

Today in History

- 1865 – Confederate forces under Robert E. Lee surrendered to Union troops led by Ulysses S. Grant at the Battle of Appomattox Courthouse in Appomattox Court House, Virginia, effectively ending the American Civil War.
- 1917 – World War I: The Canadian Corps began the first wave of attacks at the Battle of Vimy Ridge in Vimy, France.
- 1942 – World War II: Japanese forces defeated Allied troops at the Battle of Bataan on the Bataan Peninsula in the Philippines before beginning to forcibly transfer more than 90,000 prisoners of war to prison camps in the Bataan Death March.
- 1959 – NASA announced the selection of the Mercury Seven, the first astronauts in Project Mercury.
- 1989 – An anti-Soviet demonstration in Tbilisi, Georgia was quashed by the Soviet army, resulting in 20 deaths and hundreds of injured.
- April 09 is Araw ng Kagitingan in the Philippines.

Quote of the Day

Imagination is the queen of truth, and possibility is one of the

regions of truth. She is positively akin to infinity. ~ Charles Baudelaire

Word of the Day

omphaloskeptic n

1. One who contemplates or meditates upon one's navel.

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