



Top Stories

'Kama Sutra' worm set to strike

Computer virus spread by e-mail attachments is set to create havoc on those machines infected on the 3rd day of any given month.

Tensions continue to rise in Middle East over "Mohammad Cartoons"



Freedom of the press and religious backlash still at odds over the re-publication of

cartoons.

Featured story

United States Department of Justice workers among government Wikipedia vandals



In response to the recent Wikipedia vandalism by the staffers of U.S. Congressmen, Wikipedia has set up

its own page listing each edit made by any congressional IP address. Also IP addresses from the CIA, the Department of Justice, the Marines, and the Navy are listed on that page for having made several cases of vandalism.

Wikipedia Current Events

•A plot to assassinate President Mikhail Saakashvili of Georgia by shooting down his helicopter has been foiled.

Wikipedia Current Events

•The United States expels Venezuelan diplomat Jeny Figueredo Frias in retaliation for yesterday's expulsion of suspected US spy John Correa from Venezuela. A State Department spokesman described the move as part of "tit-for-tat diplomatic games".

•The International Atomic Energy Agency has deferred until Saturday a vote on whether to report Iran to the UN Security Council over concerns its nuclear programs may produce weapons.

•Two car bombs explode minutes apart in southern Baghdad, killing at least 16 people and wounding more than 90 others.

•A strong earthquake registering magnitude 5.9 shakes northeastern Japan, but there is no danger of a tsunami.

•Hezbollah fires some 30 mortar shells at IDF outposts along the northern Israeli border, lightly wounding an Israeli soldier. In response, Israeli Air Force strikes Hezbollah targets in southern Lebanon.

•At least three Qassam rockets are fired from Gaza by Palestinian militants at Israeli civilian targets. One rocket strikes a home in Kibbutz Karmiyah, injuring four people, including a one-year-old infant. The home belongs to a family recently evicted during Israel's 2005 unilateral disengagement from the Gaza Strip.

Wikipedia Current Events

•The United States Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld likens Venezuela's President Hugo Chávez to Adolf Hitler. In retaliation, Venezuelan Vice President José Vicente Rangel refers to the US as the Third Reich.

•The al-Salam Boccaccio 98, a ferry carrying 1272 passengers and 105 crew, sinks in poor weather in the Red Sea while travelling between Saudi Arabia and Egypt.

•Dutch D66 party chairman Boris Dittrich resigns because the Dutch Government voted 'Yes' to Dutch participation in Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan.

New pre-Iraq war memo leaked

Britains Channel 4 News and The Guardian report on a secret transcript of a meeting between Bush and Blair on the 31st of January 2003, two months before the beginning of the Iraq war. The memo has been viewed by Phillippe Sands, a professor of international law at University College London, and by Channel 4 news.

According to the reports, the memo reveals that the invasion of Iraq was already decided at the point of the meeting and that Bush insisted that "the diplomatic strategy had to be arranged around the military planning". Blair is quoted responding that he is "solidly with the president and

ready to do whatever it took to disarm Saddam".

The memo also reveals that Bush suggested "flying U2 reconnaissance aircraft planes with fighter cover over Iraq, painted in pink", so that "if Saddam fired on them, he would be "ever so gay" (sic)".

At the time of the meeting, world opinion was leaning toward giving inspectors more time and holding off any military intervention.

According to the reports, President Bush "thought it unlikely that there would be internecine warfare between the different religious and ethnic groups".

The British government did not deny the existence of the memo last night, but insisted that "the prime minister only committed UK forces to Iraq after securing the approval of the House of Commons in a vote on March 18, 2003." It added that they "do not comment on the prime minister's conversations with other leaders."

The BBC reported that Chief spokesman for the National Security Council Frederick Jones said that "the White House would not comment on what was said or not said in alleged private conversations between Mr Bush and foreign leaders," and added that the White House "was not going to re-litigate how the nation went to war".

Iraqi Police Find 14 Tortured Dead Bodies

Fourteen bodies were found by Iraqi Police in Baghdad Iraq. According to the Iraq Interior Ministry, the bodies appeared to have been tortured. Each one had been blind-folded and had their hands tied behind their back. The

men, all civilians, were stabbed repeatedly, had marks on their wrists which suggests their wrists were tied together, and all of the victims had gunshot wounds to their heads.

Eleven of the men were found in the back of a truck. The other three were found near a road in Rustamiya on the southeastern outskirts of the capital.

Police do not yet know the identities of the men.

Shi'ite-led Interior Ministry security units are being accused by Sunni leaders for carrying out retribution killings against the Sunnis, however, the ministry denies the charges.

Leisel Jones sets two new swimming world records at trials

Australian swimmer Leisel Jones has broken two swimming world records this week. Swimming at the Australian trials in Melbourne for the Commonwealth Games, Leisel knocked over one second off her old 200m breast stroke world record, coming in at 2:20.54.

Two days later she did it again, this time knocking almost half a second off the 100m breast stroke. Finishing in 1:05.17 she regained the 100m record from Jessica Hardy, who had beaten Leisel's old record at last years World Championships in Montreal.

Also at the trials, Libby Lenton set a new 100m freestyle world record of 53.22 and Jade Edmiston reduced the 50m breast stroke record to 30.31.

Federal judge calls EPA head's post 9/11 conduct "conscience-shocking".

Federal judge, Judge Deborah A.

Batts refused to grant former Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) head, Christine Todd Whitman, immunity from a class-action lawsuit brought by people in lower Manhattan and Brooklyn. The suit seeks to hold Whitman personally liable for her actions as EPA administrator and the suit claims that thousands of people (including children) were "unnecessarily exposed" to airborne asbestos and other hazardous substances.

"Whitman's deliberate and misleading statements made to the press, where she reassured the public that the air was safe to breathe around lower Manhattan and Brooklyn, and that there would be no health risk presented to those returning to those areas, shock the conscience." the judge said in her 83-page ruling. "Shock the conscience" is a legal standard that lawsuits must meet to hold U.S. government officials personally responsible for their actions.

"No reasonable person would have thought that telling thousands of people that it was safe to return to lower Manhattan, while knowing that such return could pose long-term health risks and other dire consequences, was conduct sanctioned by our laws," Batts said. The statements by Whitman came two days after the September 11, 2001 attacks that brought down the twin World Trade Towers.

Batts noted that the EPA and Whitman repeatedly reassured residents that the air seemed safe to breathe. The EPA's own internal watchdog discovered that the agency gave misleading assurances apparently at the urging of White House officials.

Bloomberg News states that calls to Whitman's consulting firm and to the EPA weren't immediately returned.

'Kama Sutra' worm set to strike

Computer security experts warn that a malicious computer worm, dubbed "Kama Sutra," is set to wreak havoc this Friday, February 3rd on Microsoft Windows computers worldwide. Kama Sutra is designed to destroy files that end in .doc, .zip and .pdf.

The Kama Sutra worm has been spreading through cyberspace since January 16, packaged in emails with subject headings such as: "give me a kiss" and "crazy illegal sex."

When users click an email attachment, their PCs become infected with destructive, self-replicating software. The worm affects Microsoft Windows operating systems - it is programmed to go to work on the third of every month - overwriting or corrupting Microsoft files and others - such as Portable Document Format (PDF) files.

"This one can damage your office files, your Microsoft Excel spreadsheets and your Powerpoint presentation," Tino Klironomos, a computer retailer, said. "(The files will be) all gone, history."

Computer security company LURHQ reports that there may be hundreds of thousands of machines already infected with the worm, which also goes by the monikers "BlackWorm," "CME-24," "Blackmal," "Mywife.E" and "Nyxem."

To prevent the worm, Windows users should arm themselves with anti-virus software. People can

also protect their PC with up-to-date anti-virus gear and firewall protection. Free anti-virus tools are available from many anti-virus organisations. These tools can detect and remove the Kama Sutra worm from an infected machine.

Experts say: "Make sure your virus definitions are up to date. Besides being careful about opening email messages and attachments, users should back up their most valuable computer files on an external device such as a CD, zip drive or DVD."

Steve Bass at PC World says: "Stop worrying. If you update your virus program signatures regularly, and do a weekly AV scan, I don't think you have much to worry about..."

Other advice is not to open any messages with the subject headers "crazy, illegal sex", "give me a kiss" and "hot movie."

The worm will not affect machines running on non-Windows operating systems such as Mac OS X or GNU/Linux.

Indonesia warns Australia over West Papuan asylum seekers

Indonesia's ambassador to Australia has warned that relations between the two neighbors could be "strained" if the Howard Government grants political asylum to a group of refugees from the troubled Indonesian province of West Papua.

The 43 West Papuans, pro-independence activists and their families, arrived on Cape York, Australia on January 18th after a five-day voyage in an outrigger canoe. They were later taken to an immigration detention facility on Christmas Island, a remote Australian territory in the Indian

Ocean.

A spokesman for the group says they fear they will be killed if returned to Indonesian-controlled Papua, where a pro-independence movement has been operating since the 1960s.

Jakarta's ambassador warned of strained relations if they are granted asylum. Indonesia's ambassador, Teuku Mohammad Hamzah Thayeb, said the group had nothing to fear from Indonesian authorities. Asked if granting asylum to the group would strain Australia/Indonesia relations, Thayeb said: "I would hope it will not, but it certainly would have an effect. That's why we have to manage this together and find a solution." Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono has also guaranteed the group's safety should they return.

Queensland National Senator Barnaby Joyce, who met with the 43 refugees on Christmas Island, said they appear to have a genuine asylum claim and had been persecuted because of their Christian beliefs. "There are documented cases of members within their families being shot," he said. "There's certainly on the record experiences of them being jailed and tortured so I think they would be under risk if they went back," he said.

The group, which includes seven children, arrived carrying a banner accusing Indonesia of terrorism and genocide in the province. Indonesian troops have been repeatedly accused of rights abuses in Papua province, which was taken over by Jakarta in 1963. Over 100,000 Papuans, one-sixth of the population, have died in military operations.

Immigration Minister Amanda Vanstone said, "if they ask for protection we will consider the claim appropriately and if it is appropriate to offer it, we will offer it."

The leader of the asylum seekers, Herman Wainggai, says the Indonesian military treat indigenous Papuans "like animals". Mr Thayeb disagreed: "We have changed fundamentally within ourselves," he said.

Indonesia offered Papua special autonomy in 2001 in an effort to quell unrest from the Melanesian population in the resource-rich area. Mr Wainggai described the Papuan autonomy as a "sham", and said there have been many reports of the Indonesian military "murdering and raping people, and destroying villages since autonomy came into force."

Papua controversially became an Indonesia province after a vote in 1969 overseen by the United Nations called the "Act of Free Choice". The Act of Free Choice was drafted by the UN and gave every adult the right to vote on the issue of independence. However, only 1022 people hand-picked by the Indonesian authorities were allowed to vote. Reinforcing the dubious nature of the poll, the voters gave 100 per cent approval to become part of Indonesia.

Indonesia's ambassador said there was no reason for the West Papuans to seek asylum as they were not criminals.

The Australian Greens said Indonesian ambassador's assurances that West Papuan asylum seekers would be safe if they returned home should not be

believed.

"The new Indonesian Ambassador's assurances about the safety of West Papuan refugees if they are returned to Indonesia are not credible," Senator Nettle said. "The escalating repression of the independence movement and generalised suppression of the people of West Papua is well documented."

"The Australian government should not give in to Indonesian pressure," Senator Nettle said.

Senator Joyce said the group of native West Papuans were Christian, which meant they are ethnically, religiously and politically isolated after an influx of Indonesians to the province.

Tensions continue to rise in Middle East over "Mohammad Cartoons"

The publishing of a series of cartoons of the Prophet Mohammad, (viewable at <http://www.uriasposten.net/pics/JP-011005-Muhammed-Westerga.jpg>) in a Copenhagen newspaper sparked a string of harsh, in some places violent reactions in the Middle East, forcing European leaders to try to calm the situation.

This backlash started in late September 2005, when the Danish newspaper Jyllands-Posten published a dozen cartoons depicting the Prophet Mohammad. The images ranged from serious to comical in nature; a particularly satirical cartoon portrays Mohammad with a bomb wrapped in his turban. The Copenhagen-based newspaper states that the images were meant to inspire some level of public debate over the image of Islam in Europe, and had no direct aim of offending

anyone.

However, many Muslims follow the doctrine of aniconism concerning the portrayal of Mohammad. This tenet of Islam states that Mohammad, the founder of Islam, should not be depicted in any type of art, regardless of the intent of the piece. This belief, along with the potentially insensitive nature of some of the caricatures, have caused offense to some Muslims in the Arab world.

In the past month, the controversy over these cartoons escalated. The cartoons were re-published last month in Spain, Italy, Germany, France and the Netherlands (where the latter two nations have large Muslim populations), and have begun to re-circulate throughout the Middle East.

Many Danish companies have been targeted for boycotts. As Wikinews reported last week, Arla Foods, Denmark's top dairy company, has seen their sales fall to zero in some Middle East nations. Carrefour, a French retail chain, has pulled all Danish products from its shelves in the region. Earlier this week, protests were held throughout the region, including the Gaza Strip in Jerusalem, where Hamas supporters led an assault and protest that surrounded the European Union offices for Israel.

Hamas members, some armed with guns, stormed the EU office (which is primarily staffed by Arabs) and demanded apologies from EU member states, or face serious consequences. "It will be a suitable reaction, and it won't be predictable," said Abu Hafss, a member of the Al Quds Brigade (an affiliate of the group Islamic Jihad), in a press conference

outside the EU offices. And the Abu al-Reesh Brigades, a group related to the late Yassir Arafat's Fatah party, warned that EU member states had 10 hours to apologize for the cartoons or their citizens would be "in danger".

Jamila Al Shanty, a newly elected Hamas legislator, stated that more rallies will be planned in protest of the cartoons. "We are angry - very, very, very angry," Al Shanty said today, adding that "No one can say a bad word about our prophet."

Jyllands-Posten, the newspaper that first published the cartoons did issue an apology to Arab countries on Monday, shortly after the EU office incident. But with the support of the government of Denmark, the newspaper had earlier defended its actions fiercely, citing the universal right to free press, and its duty to serve democratic traditions by inspiring debate. Indeed, Anders Fogh Rasmussen, Prime Minister of Denmark, said "We are talking about an issue with fundamental significance to how democracies work." In fact, some European pundits have placed more fault on Muslims for refusing to "accept Western standards of free speech and pluralism".

However, some world leaders have elected to help defuse what could be a major social crisis in Europe and the Middle East. France's foreign minister Philippe Douste-Blazy said that freedom of the press should be exercised "in the spirit of tolerance", sentiments which were echoed by United Nations General Secretary Kofi Annan. Ursula Plassnik, foreign minister of Austria, said that the European community must "clearly condemn" acts which insult religion. And Hamid Karzai,

president of Afghanistan, warned Europe that "any insult to the Holy Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him) is an insult to more than 1 billion Muslims and an act like this must never be allowed to be repeated."

Rasmussen, in an interview with Arabic TV Al arabia, told that "...Danish government condemns any expression and any action which offends people's religious feelings..." and and said also that he does not understand why, as the cartoons were originally published in September, the situation has truly started to deteriorate in the past week.

Report details British billionaire donations to Australian political party

An Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) report has revealed that British billionaire Michael Ashcroft made a record \$1 million donation to the Liberal Party of Australia. The AEC is legally required to make public the identities of major donors to political parties.

The controversial donation by Lord Ashcroft (deputy chairman of the British Conservative Party), to the Liberals in 2004, is believed to be the biggest single donation from an individual in Australian politics. His donation pushed the Liberal Party's total for 2004-05 to \$66.5 million. Australian Democrats' senator Andrew Murray expressed alarm at the foreign donation. "There is no such thing as a free lunch," he said. "Foreign interference and influence in Australian domestic politics is absolutely unacceptable. Donations from overseas entities and foreigners must be banned outright."

Senator Murray has calculated that

between 1998-99 and 2002-03 a total of \$607,178 was paid to Australian political parties from foreign entities. He is concerned that foreign foundations can elude Australian disclosure laws.

"I don't know about you, but I've never met a businessman ever that will give you that amount of money without expecting something in return," Senator Murray said.

Australian Electoral Commission figures have also finally disclosed the backers behind the new right-wing religious party, Family First. Craig Winkler, chief executive of software firm MYOB, gave \$200,000 to the party, while Dan Daniels, a Victorian pharmaceuticals millionaire, contributed \$95,000.

The federal Opposition say around \$8million given to the Liberal Party in 2004-05 will remain undisclosed under looming changes to the rules governing political donations.

"If the Liberal Party receives the same level of donations next year, up to \$8million in secret donations will flow to Liberal Party coffers with no public scrutiny," Opposition spokesman for state affairs Alan Griffin said.

Prime Minister John Howard led the Liberal/National coalition to its fourth consecutive election victory in 2004. The win has boosted the Liberal government's majority, giving it control in both houses of parliament.

Ashcroft, 59, who is also the largest individual donor to the British Conservative Party, serves with Howard on the conservative International Democrat Union committee.

Today in History

1859 - Constantin von Tischendorf found the Codex Sinaiticus, a 4th-century uncial manuscript of the New Testament, in a monastery at the foot of Mount Sinai in Egypt.

1862 - Bacardi, one of the world's largest rum producers, was founded as a small distillery in Santiago de Cuba, Cuba.

1899 - The Philippine-American War broke out.

1945 - Winston Churchill, Franklin D. Roosevelt and Joseph Stalin met at the Yalta Conference.

1957 - USS Nautilus, the first nuclear-powered submarine, logged her 60,000th nautical mile, matching the endurance of the fictional Nautilus described in Jules Verne's novel 20,000 Leagues Under the Sea.

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Quote of the Day

"If one took no chances, one would not fly at all. Safety lies in the judgment of the chances one takes. That judgment, in turn, must rest upon one's outlook on life. Any coward can sit in his home and criticize a pilot for flying into a mountain in fog. But I would rather, by far, die on a mountainside than in bed." ~ Charles Lindbergh

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