



Top Stories

Wikinews investigates Wikipedia usage by U.S. Senate staff members

Staff members of the offices of United States Senators, using Senate-linked IP addresses, have been editing Wikipedia, according to an investigation conducted by Wikinews contributors. In some cases, they have removed negative facts about Senators from the articles.

Iran demands that IAEA end surveillance of its nuclear program

Shortly after ending its cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the government of Iran has now ordered the IAEA to discontinue surveillance of their developing nuclear program.

Featured story

U.S. expels Venezuelan diplomat

Diplomatic staff member from Venezuela given 72 hours to leave the United States after diplomatic row erupts following the expulsion of a U.S. naval attache in Venezuela for alleged spying.

Wikipedia Current Events

- Chad and Sudan sign the Tripoli Agreement, ending the Chadian-Sudanese conflict.
- Heather Wilson, a New Mexico Congresswoman with NSA oversight authority, became the

Wikipedia Current Events

first Republican on an intelligence committee to call for a congressional investigation into Bush's warrantless wiretap program.

- An explosion at Russian military base at Kurchaloi in Chechnya kills at least 12 soldiers. The cause is unknown; however, a separatist attack has been officially ruled out.
- Japanese Princess Kiko is pregnant with her third child.
- Thousands of native South Americans march 900 miles south of Rio de Janeiro to the spot where Sepe Tiaraju was killed in 1756, demanding that land in Brazil be given for a new "Guaraní nation."
- In Afghanistan, 4 killed and 11 wounded by police firing on hundreds of protesters attempting to storm US military base.
- The blogger Egyptian Sandmonkey has discovered that the Muhammad cartoons were printed in October of 2005, during the Islamic holy month of Ramadan, in the Egyptian newspaper Al Faqr.

Insurgency targeting of teachers causes south Thailand school closures

With an increase in the number of insurgent attacks targeting teachers, many schools in Thailand's southern province of Yala have closed. The country's interior minister, Kongsak

Wanthana, has given assurances that security for this group will be increased and teachers will be able to return to work.

School closures were initially sparked with the shooting of four teachers at Ban Lue Mu school in Yala late last week. These had been teachers awaiting a military escort home, a fifth teacher was shot on his way home. Approximately 250 primary schools in Yala province were closed due to teachers being afraid to go to work. The three southernmost provinces have problems in ensuring adequate education cover as many teachers in the violence-torn area have sought transfers elsewhere in the country.

Attacks on those viewed as supporting the government have seen a recent increase in the area, with insurgents mounting attacks on motorcycles during the day in addition to remotely detonated bomb attacks. Since the start of February the death toll exceeds one person per day. Generally identified as having started in early 2004, the insurgency in the predominantly Muslim provinces that border Malaysia are reported to have resulted in a death toll exceeding 1,000.

Jyllands-Posten reconsiders printing holocaust denial cartoons

Jyllands-Postens (The Jutlands Post)'s editor-in-chief, Carstem Juste has scrapped supposed plans to publish holocaust-denial

cartoons simultaneously with Iranian paper Hamshahri. The message currently on the front page of their website indicates that the news was, "based on an over-interpretation of a statement made by Culture Editor Flemming Rose". Juste emphasizes that the cartoons will under "no circumstances" be published by the paper prior to seeing them.

Jyllands-Posten, Denmark's most widely-circulated newspaper, has come under criticism for its original publishing of the so-called "Mohammad Cartoons". Originally published with the intent of sparking debate about the image of Mohammad, the founder of Islam, the images have instead sparked a series of dangerous, sometimes bloody riots throughout the Middle East following their republishing in newspapers throughout Europe and the Arab world.

Hamshahri's announcement concerning the publishing of cartoons questioning the reality of the Holocaust came in response to the cartoons, which have been viewed as highly offensive and insulting to many Muslims throughout the Middle East and the world at large. The announcement follows a brief period earlier this year when the government of Iran faced worldwide rebuke when its President, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, referred to the Holocaust as a myth fabricated by the West to secure a Jewish homeland in the state of Palestine.

According to the Associated Press, the Post's culture editor, Flemming Rose had offered to print the planned holocaust-denying cartoons commissioned by Iranian paper Hamshahri as a response to the riot-provoking cartoons

depicting the prophet Mohammed. In an interview with CNN's American Morning on Wednesday, Rose said that Jyllands-Posten would contact Hamshahri to print the pictures the same day.

Bird Flu found in Africa

The H5N1 Avian Flu virus, also known as the Bird Flu, has been found in Nigeria, Africa by Italian scientists. Tests done on samples in a laboratory confirm that the strain is the one that can kill people, although no human cases have been reported said the Paris-based United Nations body. This is the first time it has appeared on the continent.

Reports say tests of the virus closely resemble the virus in Asia. The virus has been discovered in poultry flocks in a large Nigerian farm. "It is the first report of the disease in Africa," the Paris-based World Organization for Animal Health (OIE) said on Wednesday.

"It's going to be very difficult to mount an eradication campaign," said Dr. Alex Thiermann, president of the OIE's international animal health code, from Paris, France. "With what we have today, it is a highly pathogenic H5N1 - the same, or very closely related to the previous ones," said Thiermann. He also added, "a full genetic analysis of sample viruses is expected to be completed by late Thursday."

Maria Zampaglione of the Paris-based OIE said "An outbreak has been detected. A local poultry farm keeping 46,000 birds was affected, of which 42,000 were infected and 40,000 of those, died." The farm is located in Jaji, which is a village in the northern state of Kaduna.

"The farm is located near the

Niger Delta, one of the largest over-wintering areas for wild birds in Africa." said Thiermann.

Quarentine measures on the control and movement of poultry have been taken, and the farm has been disinfected said Nigerian authorities.

"However, it is too early to say how serious the outbreak is and how big its spread could be," said Ilaria Capua of the Italian bird flu centre in Padua. "We have to be cautious in evaluating the possible implications of these findings."

In Rome, Samuel Jutzi, a director of the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization said, "if the situation in Nigeria gets out of control, it will have a devastating impact on the poultry population in the region. It will seriously damage the livelihoods of millions of people and it will increase the exposure of humans to the virus."

"When you have 46,000 chickens in a house, usually you have some degree of biocontainment...So these (chickens) are not likely to be the ones to first encounter migratory waterfowl," Thiermann said.

Wildlife circles have been debating on whether or not wild birds are spreading the virus around the globe. Experts believe they are playing a role but most believe poultry movement, poultry products and poultry manure is the main cause of the spreading of the virus.

"But probably not in this case," said Thiermann. "While it's too early to blame the wildlife, it's very likely to be in an area that's remote enough that it's not likely to be associated with international trade."

OIE spokeswoman Zampiglione also said, "Experts had been fearing an African outbreak for months. The conditions there are more likely to lead to contagion from birds to man."

One of the "Lackawanna Six" may have been among Yemeni prison escapees

The FBI and relatives of Jaber Elbaneh, 38, a member of the Lackawanna Six and former resident of Lackawanna, New York, are trying to find out if he is one of the 23 members of Al-Qaeda who escaped from a Yemeni prison on Friday February 3, 2006.

The Yemeni Times reported Tuesday that one of the men that had escaped was Gaber Al-Bana'a which authorities say could be Elbaneh. The Middle Eastern Media Outlets have spelled his name many different ways, and the Buffalo FBI office is investigating the latest accounts and reports that refer to Elbaneh. "We're making inquiries and trying to get some answers," said FBI spokesman Paul M. Moskal. Elbaneh has a \$5 million dollar bounty on his head.

A U.S. official said, "Jaber Elbaneh was a member of the cell and was among those who escaped from prison in Yemen. Elbaneh never returned to the US after his training in Afghanistan. The other six of the Lackawanna cell were arrested when they returned to the U.S.."

The Lackawanna Six are a group of American-born men of Yemeni descent, arrested in Lakawanna New York, who pleaded guilty after admitting they attended an al-Qaida training camp. They had traveled to Afghanistan in 2001 and were arrested in Lackawanna, near Buffalo, in 2002. Their

sentences range between 7-10 years. The members of the cell also included Mukhtar Al-Bakri, Sahim Alwan, Faysal Galab, Shafal Mosed, Yaseinn Taher, Yahya Goba and Jaber Elbaneh, who was in a Yemeni prison.

French satirical weekly reprints caricatures

Paris, France The French satirical weekly Charlie Hebdo reprinted in its Wednesday February 8, 2006, issue the cartoons originally printed in Jyllands-Posten, representing caricatures of the Muslim prophet Muhammad. Charlie Hebdo is known for its ferocious critical tone and general hostility towards organized religion.

Charlie Hebdo normally prints 100,000 copies; 160,000 were printed of these issues, but were sold out before midday. The paper announced an exceptional re-issue of 160,000 the next day.

Some French Muslim associations had tried to obtain an injunction against the publishing of the paper, claiming that the cartoons incited to racial and religious hatred, but the court rejected their request on procedural grounds without examining the facts of the case. The public prosecutor had recommended rejection because of the procedural issues. The judge, Jean-Claude Magendie, remarked that the 1881 law on the Press is very formal in order to protect the rights of defense with respect to freedom of speech.

The French government had law enforcement officers, many equipped for riot control, guard the outside of the parisian offices of the paper, should some protesters try to disrupt public order. However, at mid-day, no protesters could be seen. Charlie

Hebdo is normally highly critical of police action and extraordinary security measures.

RU486 debate enters Australian Senate

The looming debate on whether the Australian Health Minister Tony Abbott or the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) should regulate mifepristone, RU486, has entered the Australian Senate, February 8. A free vote is due to be conducted on this issue.

The first speakers have been all women speaking in support of passing control from the Health Minister to the TGA: Australian National Party Senator Fiona Nash, Australian Democrats Senator Lyn Ellison, Australian Labor Party Senator Claire Moore. They have drawn attention to the fact that abortion is already legal in Australia, the inappropriateness of a Parliament minister to regulate a single drug versus a scientific and independent body, and if RU486 is an unsafe drug then the TGA will not approve the drug. Petitions were presented by Moore with the undersigned stating "medical experts, not the health minister" should regulate the drug.

Australian Liberal Party Senator Gary Humphries then spoke, stating that the bill is a "mistake", not because of the possible risks, or that the TGA is unfit to perform the evaluation, but because RU486 is "not just another drug", "facilitating a medical procedure that is not just a medical procedure". Australian Greens Senator Kerry Nettle spoke in favour of the bill, making mention of views of others on the supposed push polling of some groups opposing the bill. Liberal Senator Nick Minchin, the new Leader of the Government in the Senate, spoke in support of Humphries and

his views, and "was not persuaded to support [the] bill", and expressed his "conservative" views that life begun "from conception onwards". Family First Party Senator Steven Fielding spoke out against the bill also, likening the TGA as comprising of "unelected bureaucrats". He further commented that Family First cannot consider the social policy issues without considering social views, and drew attention to the TGA's response in the earlier Senate inquiry that the TGA "cannot consider social and ethical issues". Fielding drew attention to the guillotine being placed on the debate of the bill and the attitudes of the non-Government senators earlier criticising the Government on the industrial relations legislation being "rammed through" late last year.

Other senators, including Guy Barnett (Lib.), Helen Polley (Labor), also later spoke against the bill; Senators Judith Adams (Lib.), Ruth Webber (Labor) spoke in support.

Opposition attacks government over involvement in wheat kickbacks as Australian Parliament resumes sitting

The Australian Parliament resumed sitting February 7, 2006, with the Australian Labor Party Federal Opposition attacking the Government during Question Time over its involvement and knowledge of illegal kickbacks being paid by AWB Limited to Saddam Hussein.

Opposition leader, Kim Beazley, and Shadow Foreign Affairs minister Kevin Rudd asked all of the Opposition's questions during Question Time and focused solely on the Oil-for-Food program.

One item of interest during the

session was a statement to the Parliament on March 25, 2003, where the Prime Minister John Howard had said "...the oil for food program has been immorally and shamefully rorted by Saddam Hussein"; questions arose when the Prime Minister first knew of the rorts taking place and what action he took into investigating AWB. The Prime Minister has stated that he "[denies] that the government turned a blind eye" to warnings that he has received and at the time "it was common between the government and the opposition that the AWB was an organisation of total integrity and repute."

Beazley later moved a censure motion against the Prime Minister, the Deputy Prime Minister Mark Vaile, and the Minister for Foreign Affairs Alexander Downer for their "failure" to investigate warnings and their "gross negligence in allowing AWB to provide \$300 million to the Saddam Regime". The motion failed along party lines.

Military presence increased in Melbourne for 2006 Commonwealth Games

Police Chief Commissioner Christine Nixon has warned of an increase in police and military activity in Melbourne, Australia, in preparation for the Commonwealth Games. Officials say a major security sweep of Melbourne is underway at the athletes' village.

A 24-hour temporary police station inside the 20-hectare Parkville site will be staffed by 109 officers. The station will house a monitoring centre for the village's closed-circuit TV network. Melbourne's newest police station, keeping tabs on nearly 6000 athletes and officials from 71 countries will operate for seven weeks.

Ms Nixon said people should not be alarmed. "They will be seeing, over the next month or two, an increase in some air activity and perhaps military on the streets coming into place for the support they'll give to the Games." Commissioner Nixon says the defence forces have an important role to play.

"You won't certainly see an armed soldier walking down the streets of Melbourne, that's not the security level that we have and the presence that we need," she said. "Military will be there, they'll be checking trucks and cars going into venues, they'll be doing all of that."

More than 150 Defence Force personnel and police moved on to the village site on Tuesday. Games Minister Justin Madden said the sweep would continue until athletes arrived at the village on March 5. Sweeps of all venues will take place before the Games begin.

More than 1200 defence staff have been seconded to the Games security team. F/A-18 Hornets and Black Hawk helicopters will enforce a 75km no-fly zone around the MCG.

Every vehicle that enters the village - and every other venue - will have to first pass through a bomb search bay that includes X-ray machines. Army security sweeps are continuing across all venues. These, combined with comprehensive bag and personal checks at Games time, are seen as the best way to guard against a terrorist strike.

"If people ring up and say, 'Oh look, there's a bomb in it', we'll be pretty much able to say 'no,

there's not'," Commissioner Nixon said.

While security is being stepped up at the village, Ms Nixon said there is no direct threat to the Games overall. "We have a medium-level of security at these Games," she said. "The risk assessment is we have no direct threat to the Games, no evidence at all."

The Victorian Government has declared Birrarung Marr, Alexandra Gardens, Albert Park and the Yarra River to be official Games venues, giving police the power to enforce tough anti-protest laws. A similar ruling on Yarra Park - home to the MCG - will also come into effect.

Games laws provide for fines of \$2000 for offences such as blocking access, erecting signs, kicking stones or throwing missiles in "venues".

Sexual harassment in the first grade

A six year old boy in the first grade at Downey Elementary School in Brockton, Massachusetts was suspended for touching a female classmate.

The boy allegedly touched the girl underneath the waistband of her pants. The child's mother, Berthena Dorinvil, said he is too young to know what sexual harassment is and wondering what everyone is talking about.

The boy was suspended for three days but hasn't returned afterwards because he feels uncomfortable about returning. His mother is trying to transfer him to another school.

The Brockton Superintendent of Schools says they take all allegations of sexual harassment seriously and conduct

investigations. The principal is trained to handle these situations and assisted as needed by the district sexual harassment officer.

A spokesperson for the Brockton Public Schools has said it is unfortunate this situation has gotten this kind of publicity. They also said they wouldn't have suspended the boy without conducting an investigation.

Danish mission in Beirut set ablaze

In Lebanon Sunday, protestors set fire to the building housing the Danish mission. About 200 people were detained by police, 30 were injured and at least one person died according to officials. Prime Minister Fuad Saniora said 76 Syrians, 35 Palestinians and 38 Lebanese were arrested.

Ghazi Aridi, Lebanese Information Minister, said that the Lebanese government had unanimously "rejected and condemned the ... riots," which "harmed Lebanon's reputation and its civilized image and the noble aim of the demonstration."

"The Cabinet apologizes to Denmark," said Aridi.

Norway-led peacekeeper base attacked in Afghanistan

Demonstrators today attacked a Norwegian peacekeeper base in Meymaneh, Faryab, north-west Afghanistan. The demonstrators fired at the base, threw handgranades and molotov cocktails. 32 Norwegian, 16 Finnish, 3 Latvian and once Icelandic peacekeepers were present at the camp during the attack, say the Norwegian Defence Forces.

According to local authorities, says MTV3, four demonstrators were

killed. The amount of injured demonstrators varies between five and thirty, depending on the source. In addition, five Norwegian peacekeepers were injured. The original attack consisted of around 700 demonstrators, says AFP. There was a 'core' team of around 30 armed demonstrators within the crowd.

The ISAF peacekeepers fired teargas and warning shots in response to the demonstrators' attacks. Britain has, according to BBC, sent 120 reinforcements. Fighter airplanes have fired warning shots around the crowd. According to some sources, Afghani police and military were sent to the area as well.

The purpose of the demonstration remains unknown, say the Finnish Defence Forces, but it is believed that the demonstrations have a connection with the Muhammad cartoons published by Jyllands-Posten

Outrage in Mexico after Sheraton Hotel evicts Cuban officials

An order given by the U.S. Treasury Department to the Sheraton Hotel in Mexico City to expel 17 Cuban officials visiting the capital has sparked political outrage and has been strongly condemned by the Mexican government.

Mexico's Foreign Relations Department has started a probe and warned that it could fine or even close the hotel if it can prove the hotel violated Mexican laws.

The Cuban officials visited Mexico last week to attend a meeting with U.S. energy executives. They moved to another Mexico City hotel on Saturday after the Sheraton Hotel evicted them.

According to Kirby Jones, president of the U.S. - Cuba Trade Association, the U.S. Treasury Department pressured the hotel's owner, Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide, claiming it was violating a 1961 law that bans U.S. companies from doing business with Cubans.

Journals tackle scientific fraud

After a rapid succession of cases of major scientific fraud, scientific journals are questioning the effectiveness of the current peer review system and asking what their role should be in policing fraud.

Less than a month after the confirmation that Korean scientist Hwang Woo-Suk's cloning results were falsified, another case was discovered. A Norwegian researcher had made up patient histories of about 900 people for a study on cancer. Richard Horton, the editor of *The Lancet*, in which the research appeared, has responded to the scandal, "Peer review is a great system for detecting badly done research, but if you have an investigator determined to fabricate an entire study, it is not possible to pick it up."

While carefully examining the data for every publication would be prohibitively expensive, several techniques to screen for falsified data have been developed. For example, images can be checked for after-the-fact manipulation. The scandals have led to some readers looking more carefully at suspicious papers for evidence that the data are human-manufactured. Jan Hendrik Schön's fraud was partly revealed due to just such analysis by readers in 2002.

Some institutions are taking further steps to prevent fraud. In October, Emory University introduced a tip line where people can anonymously report suspicions of scientific misconduct. So far, five investigations have been launched based on reports to the tip line.

While many are working to deter future scandals, some scientists have pointed out that such fraud does not discredit all science. Dieter Imboden, the president of the Swiss National Science Foundation's Research Council, has said: "Bear in mind that every experiment will be repeated at some stage and it is one of the important principles of science that only things which can be verified independently by different groups are considered to be safe scientific facts."

Today in History

474 - As the seven-year old Leo II was deemed too young to rule, his father Zeno was crowned as the co-emperor of the Byzantine Empire.

1895 - Volleyball was invented at a YMCA in Holyoke, Massachusetts.

1943 - World War II: The Battle of Guadalcanal in the Solomon Islands ended, giving the Allied forces a key victory in the Pacific War over the Japanese military.

1950 - Red scare: Senator Joseph McCarthy accused the U.S. State Department of being filled with communists.

1960 - Joanne Woodward was honored with the first star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame.

February 09 is Ashurah in Shi'a Islam (2006)

Quote of the Day

"Does it really matter what these affectionate people do — so long as they don't do it in the streets and frighten the horses?"

~ Mrs Patrick Campbell

About Wikinews

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