



Lead Stories

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General Petraeus: Fight for Afghan town Marja is 'just the initial operation'

General [David Petraeus](#), the [U.S.](#) general who oversees the war in [Afghanistan](#), says the fight for the southern town of [Marja](#) — called [Operation Moshtarak](#) — is just the first operation in a long campaign.

Petraeus says the battle of Marja is just the beginning. "This is just the initial operation of what will be a 12- to 18-month campaign, as General [Stanley] [McChrystal](#) and his team have mapped it out," he said.

During an appearance on NBC's [Meet the Press](#), Petraeus said the enemy is formidable. He did not predict how long the operation in Marja, a traditional Taliban stronghold, would continue. He said only that the fighting is tough. "When we go on the offensive, when we take away sanctuaries and safe havens from the Taliban and the other extremist elements that we and our Afghan and coalition partners are fighting in that country,

they are going to fight back. And we are seeing that in Marjah. We will see that in other areas," he said.

The general spoke from [Tampa, Florida](#), where he heads the [U.S. Central Command](#), which is responsible for military operations in both Afghanistan and Iraq.

He noted the difficulties encountered in [Iraq](#) when former President [George W. Bush](#) sent in additional troops in what was called a "surge." Petraeus was asked if, once again, Americans should prepare for significant losses. "They will be tough. They were tough in Iraq. Look, I have repeatedly said these types of efforts are hard and they are hard all the time. I do not use words like optimistic or pessimist. I use realist. And the reality is it is hard, but we are there for a very important reason and we cannot forget that," he said.

So far, 12 [NATO](#) troops have died in the offensive. Three others were reported killed in separate, unrelated incidents in southern and eastern Afghanistan. Operation Moshtarak is the largest military action against insurgents since the [War in Afghanistan](#) began in 2001 by the United States invasion of the country.

Petraeus was also asked about the military's controversial "[don't ask, don't tell](#)" policy, which President [Barack Obama](#) has pledged to end. While refusing to comment directly on the policy, Petraeus responded by saying stating that he hadn't experienced any problems with gays and lesbians in the military in the past. "I served, in fact, in combat with individuals who were gay and who were lesbian in combat situations and, frankly, you know, over time you said, 'Hey, how's this guy's shooting?' Or, 'How is her

analysis?' or what have you," he said.

The general also noted his opposition to torture saying, "Whenever we have, perhaps, taken expedient measures, they have turned around and bitten us in the backside." He added, "We end up paying a price for it ultimately. [Abu Ghraib](#) and other situations like that are non-biodegradable. They don't go away. The enemy continues to beat you with them like a stick."

Meanwhile, the Obama administration's Afghanistan strategy got a vote of confidence Sunday from retired General [Colin Powell](#), who served as President Bush's [Secretary of State](#) during his first term in office.

Powell said it is a good, comprehensive plan. But at the same time, he acknowledged he has concerns about whether or not the Afghan government can follow-up once the NATO operation pushes the Taliban out. "I hope their capability will increase. The [Afghan National Army](#) is improved but clearly not up to U.S. standards yet. And the police force - they have a lot to prove, they do not yet have the confidence of the people," he said.

Powell was interviewed on the CBS television program [Face the Nation](#).

Toyota accused of misleading public over recalls

[Toyota](#) has been accused by a U.S. House of Representatives committee with misleading the public and investigators over its [recent recalls](#).

The accusations, in a statement from the House Energy and Commerce Committee, claim that Toyota both relied on a flawed study in its (con't)

assessment of the issue of sticking accelerator pedals at the heart of the recalls, and then made misleading statements about its response. According to the authors of the letter, [Henry Waxman](#) and [Bart Stupak](#), Toyota dismissed, rather than investigated, the idea that the cars' computers were at fault. In a statement, James Lentz, the president of Toyota's American division, claimed that hardware issues were to blame, and that dealers were repairing the faulty part. Toyota also released a study commissioned from the research firm Exponent that said electronic systems were not to blame.

According to the House committee, however, the study involved only six vehicles, none of which had problems with their electrical systems, and was insufficient to produce an accurate result. "Our preliminary assessment is that Toyota resisted the possibility that electronic defects could cause safety concerns, relied on a flawed engineering report and made misleading public statements concerning the adequacy of recent recalls to address the risk of sudden unintended acceleration."

The company is under a criminal investigation, and has received two subpoenas for documents from two House committees relating to the recalls, although whether they are directly related to the letter is unclear. The documents are related to accelerator issues in several models, as well as brake problems with the Prius hybrid car, and were served earlier in February by a federal grand jury and the [Securities and Exchange Commission](#). Toyota has released upwards of 75,000 pages of documents under the requests.

In a separate, though related, development, it has emerged that Toyota last year negotiated a limited recall for two models, the [Toyota Camry](#) and [Lexus ES](#), that were affected by the accelerator recalls, saving the company an estimated

\$100 million. A confidential internal presentation in July 2009 made the claim, and a month later, a Lexus ES, one of the models under the limited recall crashed in California, killing four people. The claims apparently referenced a September, 2007 recall of floor mats that could trap gas pedals, the same problem that triggered a full recall of numerous Toyota cars to fix the same problem. In the same presentation, the company claimed to have avoided recalls of another model related to rust, as well as delaying new federal safety regulations.

USA upsets Canada in Olympic ice hockey

Score: Canada 3 - United States 5

The [United States men's ice hockey team](#) upset host country [Canada](#), 5-3, in a preliminary round game on Sunday at the Winter Olympics. It is being called the Americans' biggest Olympic win since the 1980s "[Miracle on Ice](#)" victory over the former [Soviet Union](#).

The game was only 41 seconds in when [Brian Rafalski](#) of Team USA fired a slap shot that deflected off Canadian star [Sidney Crosby's](#) stick and bounced past Canadian goalkeeper [Martin Brodeur](#).

The [Canadians](#) evened the game on a goal nearly nine minutes into the contest on [Eric Staal's](#) shot. The capacity crowd roared its approval and the stadium announcer was still giving the details of Staal's goal when Rafalski scored again.

Canada evened the game in the second period, but American [Chris Drury](#) put Team USA ahead again, 3-2. The Americans took a 4-2 lead on [Jamie Langenbrunner's](#) shot with just under 13 minutes left in the game.

Crosby cut the U.S. lead to 4-3 with about three minutes left. Canada pulled goalie Brodeur, adding an [extra attacker](#) in a desperate attempt to tie the contest. The hosts had clearly outplayed the Americans, with a shot advantage of 45-23. But

U.S. goalie [Ryan Miller](#), frustrated the Canadians all night, including their last-ditch attack.

Then with just 45 seconds left in the contest, American [Ryan Kesler](#) reached around his opponent to slap the final U.S. goal into the empty Canadian net, making it 5-3.

The game was just a preliminary round match, but in hockey-mad Canada, where the sport first originated, it was more than that. To lose to the United States in the Olympics on home soil was devastating.

After the game, Canada fans — many in replicas of the team's red and white Maple Leaf jerseys — seemed stunned as they filed out of the [Canada Hockey Place](#). Some Americans chanted "U-S-A, U-S-A!" But many Canadians, including Melissa Mazeman of [Winnipeg, Manitoba](#), were still trying to realize what had happened.

"As soon as that first goal was scored within in the first minute, that did hurt, it was kind of crushing," she said. "But every U.S. player — or every U.S. fan I have seen on the street — I have said congratulations [to]."

Meanwhile, Canadian coach Mike Babcock has replaced Brodeur in the lineup, with [Roberto Luongo](#) of the [Vancouver Canucks](#). Babcock said Brodeur's coordination with his defensemen that led to turnovers and four goals out of 22 American shot attempts. He also noted that Brodeur did not make many big saves.

Babcock said, "We're in the winning business. And to win at any level you need momentum-changing saves."

Team USA fan David Loring of [Colorado Springs, Colorado](#), one of a vastly outnumbered corps of fans wearing USA Hockey gear, gave goalkeeper Ryan Miller the credit for preserving the win.

"[Team USA] played really well tonight. I have to tell you, (con't)

they got outplayed by Canada. We had some really good goalie work this evening. Brodeur made some nice saves, but Miller really played well tonight. That was the difference I thought."

However, not all Americans are happy. The general manager of the U.S. men's team, [Brian Burke](#), feels the team isn't playing at it's best. "I'm not happy with the way we've played to this point. We have to play significantly better. We're playing with about 10 guys carrying us. They don't hand out any medals for finishing first in the preliminary round," Burke said.

He continued saying, "Our center-ice play, we've made some glaring turnovers that have resulted in scoring chances. And our overall intensity for 60 minutes — for the first 10 minutes in the second period, I thought we were nonexistent."

Chris Drury agreed saying, "I'd still say we would be the underdogs on our lack of experience, certainly now that the tournament takes on a whole new meaning with single elimination. We do need to get a lot better."

The win is the United States' first Olympic win over Canada since the [1960 Winter Olympics](#). It also came one day short of the 30th anniversary of the U.S. hockey win over the former Soviet Union in the [1980 Winter Olympics'](#) Miracle on Ice in [Lake Placid](#).

The victory assures the Americans an automatic quarterfinal berth. Canada could still make the round of eight, but must beat [Germany](#) in a play-in game Tuesday to reach the quarterfinals.

Car bomb explodes outside court in Northern Ireland

A bombing outside the courthouse in [Newry, Northern Ireland](#) has been blamed on republican dissidents. The car bomb went off at around 10PM (2200 GMT) on Monday night, while police were evacuating the area

following coded warnings. A senior police officer said it was a "miracle" that no one was killed or injured.

Local [Sinn Féin](#) MP Conor Murphy said that he could hear the explosion from his home four miles away. He condemned those responsible, saying they had nothing to offer "except the prospect of a return to the past".

"It is only by sheer miracle that nobody was killed or injured" said Police Chief Inspector Sam Cordan. Coded warnings of the bomb were received by a hospital and some local businesses.

There have been several incidents over the past year linked to republican groups who oppose the Northern Ireland peace process. Just days ago in the village of [Keady](#), around 20 miles from Newry, a mortar bomb was left outside the police station. However, Monday's attack is the first successful detonation of a car bomb since 2001.

Najibullah Zazi pleads guilty in plot to bomb New York subway

[Najibullah Zazi](#), an [Afghan](#) immigrant, pleaded guilty to conspiring to use weapons of mass destruction, conspiring to commit murder in a foreign country and providing material support for a terrorist organisation, on Monday in [United States District Court](#) in [Brooklyn, New York](#). He was a part of the plot to detonate explosives in New York's subway system in late 2009. He admitted participation in a suicide attack conspiracy led by the [Al-Qaeda](#). According to him, this was in protest of [US presence](#) in Afghanistan. He will be sentenced on June 25 and faces a possible life term without parole.

Zazi said in court he was recruited by Al-Qaida in [Peshawar](#), while on a visit to join anti-American insurgency in 2008 and went into a training camp in [Waziristan](#). He refused to identify

his trainers and recruiters. Zazi had decided "I would sacrifice myself to bring attention to what the [U.S. military](#) was doing to civilians in Afghanistan."

He admitted receiving weapons training at the camp and knowledge about explosives. He tried to build homemade explosives using cosmetic products. Zazi then went to [New York](#) just before the eighth anniversary of the [September 11 attacks](#). He planned to assemble the bombs there and detonate them in the following days.

[Attorney General Eric H. Holder Jr.](#) said at a news conference that the Zazi case represented one of the most serious threats to the United States since the 9/11 attacks. "Were it not for the combined efforts of the law enforcement and intelligence communities, it could have been devastating," he said. "This attempted attack on our homeland was real, it was in motion and it would have been deadly."

Zazi, who was born in [Afghanistan](#), raised in [Pakistan](#) and later attended high school in [Queens](#), New York and lived in [Colorado](#), had cooperated with the authorities in recent weeks and had worked out an agreement with them regarding his plea bargain.

Female lawyers to be granted court access in Saudi Arabia

Female lawyers in [Saudi Arabia](#) may soon be granted limited court access for the first time. Mohammed al-Issa, the justice minister, said that the law was part of [King Abdullah's](#) ongoing reform to Saudi Arabia's judicial system. The law would allow female lawyers to represent other women at family-related cases, including marriage, divorce, and child custody.

Saudi women that are educated in law are currently permitted to work in the female section of government and court offices. Positions of higher authority are reserved for the opposite sex. The [Saudi](#) (con't)

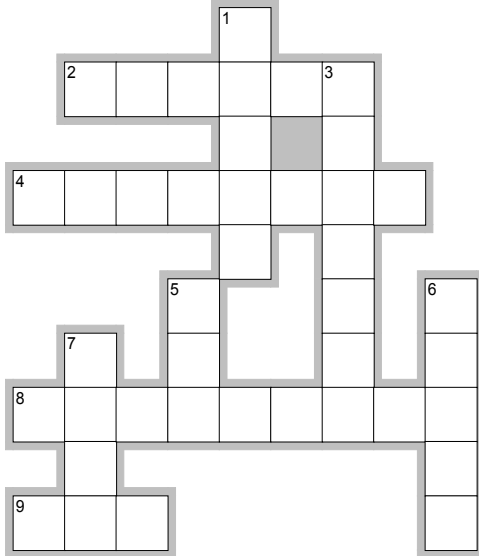
government is also building specialized "personal status" or family courts where female lawyers will be permitted to practice.

Women rights are strictly defined by **Sharia** law in Saudi Arabia. Employment and educational opportunities are dependent on a system of male guardianship. For example, a female under the age of 45 must gain the approval of a male before traveling.

The law, among other measures, is a minor easing of the restrictions placed on women in Saudi Arabia.

Puzzle of the Day

Today's puzzle is a crossword.



EclipseCrossword.com

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•Across

- 2. small
- 4. English came from this group
- 8. German airline
- 9. not old

Down

- 1. by sound
- 3. version of a book
- 5. UTC -8
- 6. "___ set? Go!"
- 7. hill of sand

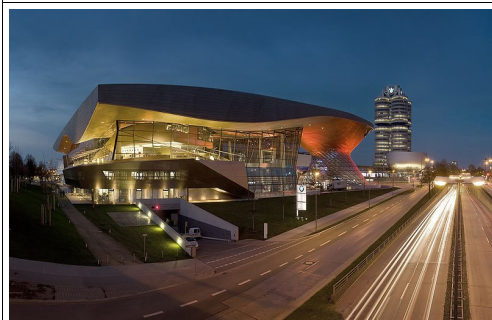
Puzzle of the Day

•Yesterday's solution



EclipseCrossword.com

Commons Picture of the Day



BMW Welt, Munich, Germany

Quote of the Day

A man travels the world over in search of what he needs and returns home to find it.

~ [George A. Moore](#) ~

Word of the Day

incandescent *adj*

- 1. Emitting light as a result of being heated.
- 2. Shining very brightly.
- 3. Showing intense emotion, as of a performance etc.

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Quote of the Day

http://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Main_Page

Word of the Day

http://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Main_Page

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