



Top Stories

New bird flu outbreaks reported in Europe

Cases of the H5 type of the avian flu have been discovered in Romanian and Ukrainian fowl. Romania has banned hunting in parts of the country and Ukrainian troops have moved from house to house in villages rounding up chickens, ducks and geese for a mass cull.

Scissors, screwdrivers OK on US flights beginning December 22

Carry-on rules relaxed for US domestic flights just in time for year end holiday travel rush.

Featured story

First face transplant performed on French woman

Surgeons in France have performed a face transplant operation on a French woman who had lost her nose, lips and chin after being savaged by a dog.

Wikipedia Current Events

- 2005 Lake Tanganyika earthquake: Many people were feared dead after an earthquake measuring 6.8 on the Richter scale struck Lake Tanganyika near the town of Kalemie in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.
- Civil Partnership Act 2004: The United Kingdom begins registration of civil unions for same-sex couples.

Wikipedia Current Events

- 2005 Kashmir earthquake: Pakistan renews SOS Children's Villages role as custodian of all orphans and unaccompanied children following the earthquake.
- Israeli-Palestinian conflict: A Suicide Bomb attack kills at least five people in Netanya, north-western Israel. The attack follows confirmation from Shaul Mofaz that Israel will resume its policy of "targeted killings".
- Venezuelan elections apparently result in Hugo Chavez's party and allies winning all 167 seats, as opposition parties boycott the election claiming election fraud.

New bird flu outbreaks reported in Europe

Cases of the H5 type of the avian flu have been discovered in Romanian and Ukrainian fowl. Romania has banned hunting in parts of the country and Ukrainian troops have moved from house to house in villages rounding up chickens, ducks and geese for a mass cull.

The village of Ciocile in the Romanian county of Brăila has been quarantined and thousand of birds have been killed in an attempt to contain the outbreak, the Bucharest Daily News reported. The H5 virus had been detected in nearby villages of Bumbacari and Dudescu in previous tests on Thursday.

Romanian Agriculture Minister Gheorghe Flutur said that further

tests in a British laboratory will be needed to determine whether the outbreak is the lethal H5N1 strain, which is feared to be able to mutate into a form that would be easily transmitted between humans.

The H5N1 strain has already been confirmed in the villages of Ceamurlia de Jos, Maliuc and Caraorman, where the virus is suspected to have been brought by birds from Russia. The large delta area is a destination for migrating fowl.

Meanwhile, five Ukrainian villages in the Crimean peninsula have been the site for a mass cull in order to contain the country's first bird flu outbreak. Though tough measures are being taken in the area, villagers say their poultry had been infected by the disease for more than two months without any official action being taken.

Ukrainian Agriculture Minister Oleksander Baranivsky confirmed the virus as the H5 subtype on Saturday. He said that the virus was highly lethal to birds and potentially dangerous to humans. According to official data, more than 2,500 birds had died since Friday. Samples were sent to British and Italian laboratories to determine whether the virus is the H5N1 strain.

Though Ukraine had previously been declared free of bird flu, the H5N1 virus strain had been found near its borders in Romania and Russia. Ukraine's top veterinary surgeon, Petro Verbytsky, however stressed that no humans had been

affected by the virus, and that contagion was unlikely. "There is 1,000 times less chance of becoming ill from bird flu than there is from tuberculosis," he said.

The H5N1 strain of the avian influenza has killed almost 70 people in parts of Asia since 2003, prompting the slaughter of millions of fowl.

UN accuses US of wholesale rights violations in Iraq

John Pace, human rights chief for the United Nations Assistance Mission in Iraq (UNAMI), condemned both the US-installed Iraqi government and the US Armed Forces for breach of human rights, centring largely around widespread detention without authority or trial.

"There is no question that terrorism has to be addressed. But we are equally sure that the remedies being applied... are not the best way of eliminating terrorism," Pace said during an interview on Sunday .

He quoted instances where Iraqi judges had ordered the release of groups of prisoners, and had found not only that their orders had been refused, but found themselves locked up as a reprisal.

On the subject of the Saddam Hussein trial resuming Monday, Pace told Reuters, "Weakness in the system of administration of justice, in addition to the antecedents surrounding the establishment of this tribunal, will never be able to produce the kind of process that would be able to satisfy international standards."

He also pointed out that the Iraqi

authorities are the only legal entity allowed to detain prisoners, and that the US prison camps at Abu Ghraib and similar locations are therefore technically illegal.

Business Briefs for December 5, 2005

EU too quick to introduce new rules, UK study says

A UK government sponsored report, Routes to Better Regulation - A Guide to Alternatives to Classic Regulation, says the EU is too quick to introduce new rules without considering alternative measures. "All too often the EU looks to introduce prescriptive rules and regulations rather than consider alternative solutions, which can achieve the same goals and help to slash costly red tape," said David Arculus, chairman of the task force that compiled the report. The EU Commission, under president Jose Manuel Barroso has insisted on impact studies before deciding on whether to propose legislation. The Commission announced it will kill off several legislative proposals that have failed to make progress, and is proposing streamlining existing EU rules. The study proposed taking no action instead of introducing new rules. In January, the task force will become an independent commission, which will increase it's political strength.

JPMorgan plans to offshore 30% of its back office

JPMorgan is planning to hire 4,500 graduates in India over two years. The plan moves 30% of its back office offshore. The company intends to move the majority of its foreign exchange trades to Mumbai and Bangalore and to move much of the processing of credit derivatives contracts. This is an area where US and UK regulators have expressed concern

about backlogs across the industry.

Top al-Qaeda leader killed in Pakistan

Pakistani security forces have reportedly killed Abu Hamza Rabia, one of top five leaders in international islamic fundamentalist campaign al-Qaeda. With the help of the United States, Pakistani forces tracked down Rabia and killed him in a rocket attack near the Pakistani-Afghan border.

Rabia was among five people who were killed in the blast on Thursday in North Waziristan. According to official reports corroborated by Pakistani President General Pervez Musharraf, the blast was set off as the victims were making explosives inside a suspected al-Qaeda hideout. An anonymous senior intelligence officer said that a missile attack triggered a massive explosion in a stockpile of bomb-making materials, grenades and other munitions.

Hamza Rabia is a key associate of Ayman al-Zawahiri, a prominent figure in al-Qaeda. "After Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri, Rabia was the most senior al Qaeda official for international terrorism planning," a US counterrorism official said.

According to officials, Rabia ranks somewhere between third and fifth in the organization's hierarchy. He is believed to have become the network's operational commander after the capture of Abu Farraj al-Libbi in Pakistan in May.

Intelligence officials said that Rabia was the target of the attack due to his alleged involvement in terror attacks and killings of government officials. He was

brought to Miran Shah, a strategic tribal region where remaining al-Qaeda members are believed to have been hiding, by al-Zawahri, who is believed to have been on the run along the border. Officials, however, say that they have no idea on the whereabouts of al-Zawahri or Osama bin Laden.

Bodies of Rabia and two other foreigners were retrieved and buried by associates from outside Pakistan, according to Pakistan's English-language Dawn newspaper.

Today in History

- 1768 - The first edition of the Encyclopædia Britannica was published.
- 1917 - Halifax Explosion: A ship in Halifax Harbour carrying trinitrotoluene (TNT) and picric acid caught fire after a collision with another ship and exploded, devastating Halifax, Canada.
- 1922 - The Irish Free State came into existence, one year after the signing of the Anglo-Irish Treaty.
- 1957 - Project Vanguard: An attempt to launch the first American satellite failed with an explosion on the launch pad at Cape Canaveral (pictured).
- 1989 - Marc Lépine killed 14 women in the École Polytechnique Massacre in Montreal, leading to new gun control laws in Canada.
- December 06 is Independence Day in Finland (1917), Constitution Day in Spain.

Quote of the Day

"All idealisation makes life poorer. To beautify it is to take away its character of complexity — it is to destroy it." ~ Joseph Conrad

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+1-866-653-4265
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