



Top Stories

British top General says troops are unwelcome in Iraq

The Head of the British Armed forces, General Sir Richard Dannatt, has told the Daily Mail that troops are unwelcome in Iraq and that if they are not withdrawn soon, the situation could become catastrophic.

Buffalo, New York snow storm closes schools, leaves nearly 400,000 without power

Lake effect snow has come early to parts of Western New York, especially in Buffalo, New York and its suburbs. Lake effect snow started to fall at about 12:00 p.m. [EST] which was heavy at times and forecasters called the weather event "unprecedented."

Featured story

Small aircraft crashes into building in New York City

A small aircraft struck an apartment building in New York this afternoon, killing the pilot and a flight instructor. Cory Lidle, a pitcher for the New York Yankees baseball team, was the registered owner of the aircraft and is believed to have been piloting it; his passport was found on the scene.

Wikipedia Current Events

- Father Boulus Iskander, an Iraqi Syriac Orthodox priest, is kidnapped and beheaded by extremist Islamist terrorists in Mosul.

Wikipedia Current Events

- Ban Ki-Moon is elected to be the eighth Secretary-General of the United Nations, to succeed Kofi Annan in January 2007.
- The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration bans fixed-wing aircraft from the East River corridor in New York City unless they are in contact with air traffic control. The change follows a crash of a plane into an apartment building earlier in the week.
- Wal-Mart is ordered to pay \$78 million in compensation to current and former employees for breaking labor laws in the U.S. state of Pennsylvania by forcing its employees to work through rest breaks and off clock.
- The US government has rebuffed UK calls to close its controversial detention centre at Guantánamo Bay in Cuba.
- A coroner has recorded a verdict of unlawful killing on ITN reporter Terry Lloyd, who was shot dead by US forces in southern Iraq in March 2003.
- Tony Blair has said he agrees with "every word" the new head of the British Army said on the Iraq war that UK troops "exacerbated" security problems and should withdraw "sometime soon".
- Two people protesting the impeachment of Plateau State governor Joshua Dariye are killed by riot police in Jos, Nigeria.

Wikipedia Current Events

- The British and Irish governments set a provisional date of 26 March 2007 for restoring devolution to Northern Ireland.
- Bangladesh's Muhammad Yunus and the Grameen Bank win the Nobel Peace Prize for working to advance economic and social development among the poor.
- The United States is encouraging a vote on a United Nations resolution, which currently would impose an arms embargo and freezing of North Korean funds connected to North Korean nuclear and ballistic missile programs, despite opposition from the People's Republic of China, which has veto power.

Buffalo, New York snow storm closes schools, leaves nearly 400,000 without power

Buffalo, New York – Lake effect snow has come early to parts of Western New York prompting a State of Emergency and a flood watch to be issued, especially in Buffalo, New York and its suburbs where nearly 2 feet of snow fell during the afternoon and last night. Snow started to fall at around 12:00 pm EST on Thursday, October 12, heavy at times and contained thunder and lightning. Forecasters called the weather event "unprecedented." A driving ban has been issued for Tonawanda, New York, Buffalo and Amherst where at least "80% of roads in Amherst are impassible." The Buffalo Niagra International

Airport opened at almost 3:30 p.m. [EST]. The New York State Thruway, or interstate 90 is closed from nearly Rochester, New York to Dunkirk, New York which is nearly 110 miles long. Motorists at the Williamsville, New York toll barrier are being turned around. I driving ban remains in effect while a state of emergency exists.

Water is going to be shut off in 24 hours due to the lack of electricity to water pumps in the area and in a press conference, Mayor of Buffalo, Byron Brown issued a "boil water advisory." Brown also said that "70,000 of the 75,000 residents and businesses in Amherst are still without power." Residents are asked to bottle water and prepare for the outage. It is not known when water will be turned back on. At least 30 water intake pumps in Erie County, of the 50 the county has, have no power. Officials say that businesses and residents could be out of water by 5:00 p.m. [EST].

At least 3 people have been killed due to the storm. Two of those people were killed in car related accidents in Lancaster, New York which was a two car accident, and the other person was in Niagara County and died after being hit by a vehicle. One person died when hit was crushed by a falling tree in Amherst. The individual was in the process of removing snow from his property.

Hundreds of trees have snapped in half as the snow started to fall around the city. Many trees, which still have their leaves, have broke into pieces as the heavy wet snow began to pile up, as much as an inch an hour. Early on Thursday, the airport had received nearly 9 inches (23cm) of snow and climbing. The storm has caused many delays and cancellations in

flights leaving from or going to Buffalo.

Nearly 400,000 people in Buffalo and surrounding suburbs have are still without power and forecasters at the NOAA are warning people "not to go outside in an area where heavy snow has fallen unless absolutely necessary." Power may not be restored to the affected areas until Sunday and possibly next week in some areas. Damage to trees is extensive with nearly every tree destroyed on Granger Place in Buffalo.

"This was extremely heavy snow and most of the trees still have most of their leaves ... we can't do a complete damage assessment until the snow stops falling," said spokesman for Niagara Mohawk, Westerns New York's area power company, Steve Brady.

"At 8 pm [on Thursday], utility companies were reporting over 50,000 customers without power. The reason for the widespread power outages has been the combination of very heavy water laden snow accumulating on the trees that still have most of their leaves. Tree's limbs break under the weight of the snow and bring down power lines as they fall," said a statement on NOAA's website.

"[This is the] snowiest day in 137 years [of weather records]. Six inches of snow occurred on October 13, 1909 and again on October 31, 1917," added the NOAA weather statement.

Many business and nearly every school in Western New York are still closed due to the weather and the snow is forecasted to move south again over the Buffalo Metropolitan area, but snow amounts are not expected to be

significant. Wind is expected to be strong and gusty which could bring down tree limbs which are broken, but still attached to the tree. Some areas could see an additional 6 inches of snow by Saturday morning.

The flood watch takes effect at 2:00 p.m. [EST] and continues through Saturday.

Microsoft says no delay for European launch of Vista

Microsoft confirmed today that it will ship Vista (the latest version of it's Windows operating system) in Europe and Korea as scheduled, despite warnings from the European Commission competition committee and Korean fair trade regulator. A press release on the Microsoft website said it had been in 'constructive dialogue' with both bodies. According to Brad Smith (the company's general counsel) Microsoft has agreed to several changes set out by the EU body.

The discussion mostly centers around the inclusion of Google search facilities, Adobe PDF creation tools and Microsoft's own security software in the operating system. As Microsoft Windows is used by 90% of the consumer computer market both committee's expressed concerns that the bundling of these services and software would push companies offering similar products out of the market.

In September Microsoft raised the possibility of the Vista launch being delayed in the EU and Korea however the company's CEO Steve Ballmer last night confirmed this would not be the case. At the time Microsoft said it was unsure what changes the commission required to it's new OS. Warnings were apparently first received by the company in March when EU

Competition Commissioner Neelie Kroes said there could be issues with the new software.

This is not the first time the software giant has clashed with EU legislators. In 2004 it was ruled to have abused its position as market leader to push Media player using Windows. A record €497 million fine was imposed at the time and a further €280.5 million in July this year (after courts ruled Microsoft had not complied with the ruling). In the 2004 action Microsoft was required to share information stored on its servers with competing companies, something it has so far failed to do. The company now faces a €300 million a day fine for each day it does not comply.

Four bodies found on Florida's Turnpike

Florida Highway Patrol says that the bodies of four people, two adults and two young children, were found on the Florida's Turnpike a few miles south of the I-95 interchange in Fort Pierce, Florida.

Highway Patrol Troopers recieved a call around 8 a.m. from someone who spotted the bodies of a male and female adult, who were both in their 20's to 30's, and a male and female child, between the ages of 4 and 6, on the southbound side shoulder of the Turnpike.

St. Lucie County Sheriff Ken Mascara said that the victims had been shot multiple times. Mascara also said that no vehicle was found, but there were tire tracks nearby.

The Sheriff's office says that they think the bodies were shot on the scene because of the posture of the family. The mother's body was

found holding on to the children on either side of her.

The area where the bodies were found is near the St. James Golf Club as well as several home developments. A resident of a nearby housing development reportedly heard shots or fireworks around 3 a.m.

The turnpike has several traffic cameras in the area, however Sheriff Mascara says they were not recording at the time.

Chinese ban on Wikipedia lifted for now

Internet users on the Chinese-forums.com website report that the longtime block of Wikipedia by China has been at least temporarily lifted. Absent an announcement from the Chinese government, it's unclear what the conditions were that caused the site to be accessible from within China.

A blog by Wikipedia contributor Andrew Lih says that someone in "Beijing emailed me saying he could suddenly start using Wikipedia again. Some folks in Hubei said it was still blocked. Shanghai and Guangdong users said parts were accessible."

He continued that "from a Beijing China Netcom's residential DSL connection, the English language and other foreign language versions are now accessible, but the Chinese version is still blocked", noting that the Chinese-language version is the most important one to most Wikipedians in the country.

The blog entry goes on to explain the finer points of China's blocking system, which is more complex than most media outlets suggest.

Wikimedia head Jimmy Wales told Moneycontrol.com yesterday that, "We don't know what they took offense to. We really don't intend to compromise the way Google did. We also feel that the block is an error. I am trying to set up high-level meetings in China to state our case and explain why we should be unblocked. We have no idea what the result of that would be. But we are somewhat hopeful. Wikipedia is not a haven for dissidents but an encyclopedia. About 99.9 per cent of Wikipedia has topics that are not of interest to the Chinese Government. There is no political component. We are hopeful that they can see the point."

He also told the outlet, he stressed how such bans were blocking Chinese perspectives in the global media. "[The] Chinese people would like to contribute to Wikipedia to give the Chinese point of view for the entire world to see. And China needs to be better understood by the rest of the world."

The third block of Wikipedia, which was implemented 19 October 2005, was issued without explanation or an expected length. Wikipedia has been blocked twice before, the first from 2-21 June 2004, due to the 15th anniversary of the Tian'anmen Square Incident.

A website called baidu.com runs a self-censored wiki-based encyclopedia website, called baidubaik.com, launched in April of this year.

Wikipedia is a project of the Wikimedia Foundation, a charitable organization based out of St. Petersburg, Florida. Its 2007 annual convention, Wikimania, is set to take place in Taipei.

Former head of Radio Liberty Russian Broadcasts criticizes Kremlin's reaction to Russian journalist's murder

Mario Corti, former head of Radio Liberty Russian Service, criticized pro-Kremlin media reporting on the murder of independent Russian journalist Anna Politkovskaya as an insult to the victim. In a commentary in Russian and English posted on FreeMediaOnline.org, Corti took issue with Russian media reports referring to President Putin's assertion that Politkovskaya's murder would benefit Russia's enemies.

In speaking with journalists in Dresden, Germany, on Tuesday, President Putin downplayed Politkovskaya's importance by saying that "she had minimal influence on political life in Russia" and that her murder caused "much more harm than her publications did." FreeMediaOnline.org reported that pro-government media in Russia interpreted this comment as a signal to journalists that the value of Politkovskaya's reporting and, by implication, the work of other journalists should be measured by how much damage they cause to Russia's reputation.

Corti wrote that Politkovskaya's death was not a blow to Russia's reputation but a blow to those who brought shame to Russia by their "evil deeds." Politkovskaya's reporting exposed numerous murders, cases of torture and other human rights abuses in Chechnya and in other parts of the former Soviet Union. Her reports angered the Russian establishment and she was frequently harassed and detained by Russia's security services.

Corti also wrote that the pro-Kremlin media reaction to

Politovskaya's murder has caused many pro-democracy Russians to doubt whether they can still live in Russia. He countered, however, that her death has a greater meaning in showing that the struggle for human rights and for the dignity of all men has always required sacrifices. According to Corti, Politkovskaya loved Russia and wanted it to become a fully democratic country in which people respect each other, a country without torture, and a country in which the dignity of every person takes priority over everything else.

Corti was in charge of Radio Liberty's Russian broadcasts from 1998 to 2003. He now works as an independent journalist and is a member of the FreeMediaOnline.org Board of Directors, a California-based nonprofit organization supporting media freedom worldwide.

Free speech is not solicitation: American Civil Liberties Union Advocates against a referendum for a constitutional amendment that would ban gay marriage in Virginia have residents and police in Warrenton at odds with the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU).

Anti-solicitation ordinances were used as the basis to block three persons who canvassed a neighborhood to oppose the legislation, and they were subsequently ordered to leave the area. The gay marriage ban they opposed is on the up-coming ballot for the mid-term election.

"The right of canvassers to enter onto private property to express their views is protected by the First Amendment to the Constitution," said Kent Willis of the ACLU. The First Amendment

deals with the right to free speech.

Homeowners can ask persons to leave their property, "but homeowners should not expect the police to remove canvassers from neighborhoods just because they find their presence irritating, or they don't like the content of their message."

New Zealand bank manager robbed own bank

Mark Andrew Scott, 39-years-old, and his partner, Vanessa Ada Scott, 27-years-old, both pleaded guilty near the end of the hearing to a charge of aggravated robbery and two charges of kidnapping after June 20 when they tried to rob the bank Mark Scott had been managing for a year.

Mark Scott, former US marine and veteran of the Gulf War, was the manager of the BNZ (Bank of New Zealand) Wellsford bank in Auckland.

During the pre-trial hearing, or more correctly depositions hearing, at North Shore, Auckland's district court, Mark Scott asked about the NYC plane crash, and then criticizing the inefficiency of the court system and then alleged that police stole from him. The police had in fact taken a silver pin from his jacket which was used as evidence.

The couple could face a maximum of fourteen years in jail.

When Mark Scott went to work early he left the side door open so his partner and two other men, Richard Simon Cowell and Lewis Blackwood-Manukau, could gain entrance into the bank. During the robbery all female employees were tied up. Mark Scott, however, was not bound until he gave NZ\$136,000 in cash to the

robbers.

Deborah Poa, employee for BNZ, tried to escape but was attacked in the face but she did manage to gain attention of a passerby who contacted the police. She told the court that she did not trust Mark Scott. "[There was] just something about him. One minute he would be all calm ... the next, all aggressive."

The two men who helped with the robbery were found outside the bank and the couple were formally charged that day by police.

To date \$2,860 is yet to be recovered and \$370 had already been used on groceries. The couple had some of the money found at their home by police.

After being calm all morning the couple returned to the court upset and then started shouting and swearing the justices of the peace when they learned that the hearing would adjourn part heard and postponed until December. "Two months here, two months there ... all that bull ... you know?" Mark Scott said.

On Tuesday the robbers and the Scotts will appear in court.

Recent American E. coli outbreak linked to cattle

The recent E. coli outbreak that killed three people and sickened nearly 200 in the United States and Canada has been linked to cattle. The outbreak affected people who ate contaminated bagged spinach. Shortly after the outbreak began, the contaminated spinach had been traced to the Salinas Valley region of California. Now, health officials say the contamination came from cattle manure.

The infected cattle manure was found on a ranch in Salinas Valley that is adjacent to the field that produced contaminated spinach. How precisely the infection was transported from the ranch to the spinach field is still unknown. Dr. Kevin Reilly of the California Department of Health Services said that "we don't know if wild swine are playing a role or not, but we do know that on this particular ranch, there is a very large population of wild boar, and we have witnessed on this site that they have torn through fencing and under fencing and have the ability to access the field". The bacteria could have been carried by wild animals from the cattle ranch to the spinach field.

Joan Rose, a microbiologist and food safety expert at Michigan State University, commented that it is not surprising that cattle manure was the source of the infection. "If you start to look at the pathogen levels even in untreated sewage, it's minor compared to animal waste", she said.

British top General says troops are unwelcome in Iraq

The Head of the British Armed forces, the Chief of the General Staff, General Sir Richard Dannatt, has told the Daily Mail that troops are unwelcome in Iraq and that if they are not withdrawn soon, the situation could become catastrophic.

These remarks seem to be in sharp contrast with those of the Prime Minister earlier this year when he said "But don't be in any doubt. No-one, but no-one I spoke to [in Baghdad], from whatever quarter, wanted us to leave precipitately. An arbitrary timetable ie without conditions being right, would be seen for

what it would be: weakness."

General Dannatt told the BBC Radio 4 Today programme this morning that he had to "speak up for what is right for the Army" but that his remarks to the Daily Mail "were neither substantially new or substantially newsworthy". He said that the presence of UK troops "exacerbates" the problems "not right across the country, but only in parts of it".

The BBC reported that "Downing Street had issued a short statement in response to the general's comments. It said: "It's important that people remember that we are in Iraq at the express wish of the democratically elected Iraqi government, to support them under the mandate of a UN resolution.""

The Scotsman in a Key Quote highlights the General saying - "I think history will show that the planning for what happened after the initial successful war fighting phase was poor, probably based more on optimism than sound planning."

The Times draws attention to Blair's speech at the Labour Party Conference just two weeks ago saying why the troops will have to stay in Iraq - "If we retreat now, hand Iraq over to al-Qaeda and sectarian death squads and Afghanistan back to al-Qaeda and the Taleban, we won't be safer; we will be committing a craven act of surrender that will put our future security in the deepest peril."

Al Jazeera leads with the story, under a picture of a military ambulance being loaded, with the headline UK army chief pleads for Iraq pull out, and quotes extracts from the General's interview with the Daily Mail including: "We are in

a Muslim country and Muslims' views of foreigners in their country are quite clear. As a foreigner, you can be welcomed by being invited in a country, but we weren't invited certainly by those in Iraq at the time. The military campaign we fought in 2003 effectively kicked the door in. Whatever consent we may have had in the first place, may have turned to tolerance and has largely turned to intolerance. That is a fact. I don't say that the difficulties we are experiencing round the world are caused by our presence in Iraq, but undoubtedly our presence in Iraq exacerbates them." The report concludes with a snapshot of the chaos in Baghdad by reporting an attack by gunmen on a TV station, when 11 staff were killed in the biggest attack yet on the media.

The Washington Post carries a report from Associated Press headed 'British Army Chief Who Called for Iraq Withdrawal 'Soon' Denies Rift With Government' in which the General is reported as saying that by "soon" he meant a phased withdrawal over two or three years. He is reported as saying to Sky News, "We'll probably reduce our soldiers over the course of the next year or two or three -- let's wait and see. That's what I mean by sometime soon,". He denied that he was attacking government policy saying to BBC radio "We don't do surrender. We don't pull down white flags. We're going to see this through."

Alongside a photograph of British soldiers rushing to the scene of a helicopter crash in Basra May 6 2006, Fox News, commenting on the story, says "Dannatt's comments are certain to infuriate Blair, who is President Bush's key ally in the Iraq war. It is highly

unusual for a sitting British military commander to publicly criticize the government's foreign policy. ... Britain's involvement in Iraq has proved highly controversial from the outset. Millions protested on the streets in the lead up to the war in 2003, while high profile cabinet ministers have quit the government as a result of Tony Blair's support for the U.S.-led action."

BBC News quotes Prime Minister Blair as saying that he agrees with "every word" the General said and that transcripts of later radio interviews showed Sir Richard was saying "the same as we all are". Subsequently, BBC New 24 at 9pm, reported that when Blair said he agreed with "every word", he was referring to what the General had been saying in radio and TV interviews this morning and not to the original interview reported in the Daily Mail. This cleared up a misunderstanding evidenced in discussions among commentators and in Any Questions this evening.

The British Army Rumour Service, ARRSE, which describes itself as "THE unofficial British Army community website". asks viewers to complete the sentence "Sir Richard Dannatt is...". As at 18,50 13 October, of the 181 responses, 144 agreed that he was absolutely right and 26 that he was right only from military point of view. The same site has blogs from troops in theatre.

Sir Malcolm Rifkind M.P., interviewed by Channel4 News, said that he agreed with every word the general said, but deplored the fact that he had said it while still a serving officer. Like Civil Servants, members of the Armed Forces owed allegiance to the democratically elected government of the day and should

not express their personal opinions while still in uniform.

Reports that the White House is interested in what General Dannatt is saying, were confirmed when, at a White House briefing, in response to a question about that part of General Dannatt's interview in which he says its time for the British troops to come home, White House spokesman, Tony Snow said [referring to later interviews conducted this morning] that "he says that's not what he said. ... he said that he was misquoted and that "that particular comment [in the original interview] was actually rather largely taken out of context."

Today in History

1066 - Battle of Hastings: The Norman invasion forces of William the Conqueror defeated the English army and killed Harold Godwinson, the last Anglo-Saxon king of England.

1773 - The first recorded ministry of education, the Commission of National Education, was formed in Poland.

1947 - Flying a Bell X-1, test pilot Chuck Yeager became the first person to break the sound barrier.

1953 - Qibya massacre: Israeli military commander Ariel Sharon and his Unit 101 special forces were ordered to "inflict heavy damage on the inhabitants" of a village on the West Bank.

1981 - Hosni Mubarak was elected President of Egypt, one week after Anwar Sadat was assassinated.

October 14 is Simchat Torah in Judaism begins at sunset (2006), Teachers' Day in Poland.

Quote of the Day

I am totally convinced from my experience of working with poor people that they can get themselves out of poverty if we give them the same or similar

opportunities we give to others. The poor themselves can create a poverty-free world — all we have to do is to free them from the chains that we have put around them. ~ Muhammad Yunus

Word of the Day

solecism; n

1. An error in the use of language, especially an error concerning etiquette.
2. Any faux pas involving a transgression against the norms of expected behavior.

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