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Top Stories

Turkey sends thousands of troops into northern Iraq



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Draft treaty to ban cluster bombs reached in New Zealand

An international meeting in New Zealand has produced a draft treaty to ban cluster bombs. Campaigners say the meeting has given a decisive push to efforts to create a meaningful global agreement, however, some say success is far from guaranteed.



Robert Gates hopes to continue US troop cuts in Iraq

US Defense Secretary Robert Gates, en route to AUSMIN consultations in Australia, says that he hopes the US will be able to reduce troop commitments in Iraq, but a pause in cuts may be needed after Australia withdraws its troops



EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW

2008 United States presidential election



The race for the White House includes Democrats and Republicans, as well as independents and third party candidates:

Independents: Ruth Bryant White, Tom Millican, Richard H. Clark, Brad Lord-Leutwyler, Frank McEnulty, Steve Kissing

Libertarian: James Burns, Bob Jackson, Wayne Allyn Root

National Socialist Order of America: John Taylor Bowles

Republicans: Sam Brownback, Duncan Hunter, Tom Tancredo

http://en.wikinews.org/wiki/Category:2008_United_States_presidential_election

Wikipedia Current Events

The White House announced that U.S. Army National Guard Master Sergeant Woodrow W. Keeble will posthumously receive the Medal of Honor for his heroism in the Korean War.

•The Swedish Academy, the body that awards the Nobel Prize in Literature, names the professor of literature Anders Olsson as one of its members to succeed poet and writer Lars Forssell, who died in July 2007.

•Turkey sends between three thousand and ten thousand troops into northern Iraq.

•The Northern Rock bank is formally nationalized by the British Government.

Wikipedia Current Events

•The U.S. warns the Serbian government that it has a responsibility to protect its assets after protesters set fire to the U.S. embassy in response to Kosovo's declaration of independence.

American Airlines plane diverted to Miami after landing gear problem

An American Airlines (AA) plane made a safe emergency landing after it was diverted to Miami, Florida after the pilot reported that there was a problem with the plane's front landing gear.

The plane, an McDonnell Douglas MD-80/MD-90 flight 862, took off just before 2:00 p.m. (eastern time) from Palm Beach

International Airport and was en route to Chicago, Illinois when the problem was reported just after takeoff. It circled above Miami International Airport to burn off fuel and made a safe and uneventful emergency landing.

The plane made a flyby of the airport's tower where officials could make a visual observation. The front gear appeared to be slightly bent in live footage shown by the Fox News Channel.

None of the 138 people on board the plane were injured.

Draft treaty to ban cluster bombs reached in New Zealand

An international meeting in New Zealand has produced a draft

treaty to ban cluster bombs. Campaigners say the meeting has given a decisive push to efforts to create a meaningful global agreement, however some say success is far from guaranteed.

The draft accord drawn up in New Zealand declares that cluster bombs cause unacceptable harm to civilians, and that their production, stockpiling and use must be banned.

The proposed accord has been named the "Wellington Declaration," after talks this week in the New Zealand capital involving 122 countries. The conference was organized by the Cluster Munitions Coalition, a network of 200 private organizations that includes leaders of the Nobel peace prize-winning International Campaign to Ban Landmines.

Activists hope the draft, which was signed by representatives of 82 of the attending nations, will be turned into a binding treaty at a follow-up meeting scheduled in Ireland in May.

However, British negotiators have warned that tough discussions lie ahead before a binding treaty is finally signed.

There is opposition to a global ban by the United States, Russia and China, as well as India, Pakistan and Israel. All are major producers of cluster munitions and none attended the Wellington summit. Washington opposes a ban because of the weapons' military effectiveness.

But Jody Williams, who was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1997 for her work to ban landmines, says she believes an international ban on cluster bombs

is inevitable.

"If we, you know, have 80 countries that subscribe to it at the end of Dublin, that will be in terrific, and the signing will be in December and we will use all of that time to bring more countries on board," she said. "I think we're going to see a very exciting new treaty banning cluster munitions, demonstrating that even in this difficult time we can continue to ban weapons that are indiscriminate and cause untold civilian casualties and harm."

Cluster bombs are designed to explode above the ground and release thousands of small bomblets primed to detonate on impact. Many do not explode immediately, and can lie in fields or villages, where they later kill and maim people who come across them.

Efforts toward an international ban began in Norway last year. The meeting in Wellington, and May's follow-up in Ireland, are part of what is being called the "Oslo Process."

Steve Wright, killer of five women in Suffolk, England, sentenced to life imprisonment

Steve Wright, yesterday convicted of the murder of five women in Ipswich, Suffolk, England, has today been sentenced at Ipswich Crown Court to life imprisonment. The bodies of the five women who worked as sex workers in Ipswich were found around the town in December 2006.

The judge, Mr Justice Gross said that a "substantial degree of pre-meditation and planning" was involved meaning the requirements for a whole life sentence for Wright was met. He said, "This was a targeted campaign of murder. It is

right you should spend your whole life in prison."

Speaking after the sentencing, Deputy Chief Constable of Suffolk Police, Jacqui Cheer said, "At the start of the inquiry we could not have asked for anything more. It is a tribute to all the people who have been involved - not only police officers but their support teams and all the members of the public who phoned-in offering information."

Turkey sends thousands of troops into northern Iraq

Reports say that Turkey has sent at least 10,000 troops into northern Iraq in an attempt to take down militants from the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) and their bases of operations. Reports also say that thousands more Turkish troops are prepared to enter Iraq if needed.

"The Turkish Armed Forces, which attach great importance to Iraq's territorial integrity and stability, will return home in the shortest time possible after its goals have been achieved," said a statement posted on the Turkish military's website.

The United States military in Iraq is "aware" that Turkish troops have begun to enter the country and Rear Adm. Gregory Smith, a U.S. military spokesman states that "Turkey has given its assurances it will do everything possible to avoid collateral damage to innocent civilians or Kurdish infrastructure."

"The United States continues to support Turkey's right to defend itself from the terrorist activities of the PKK and has encouraged Turkey to use all available means, to include diplomacy and close coordination with the Government

of Iraq to ultimately resolve this issue," stated Smith.

On Thursday February 21, Turkish troops began to take out buildings in abandoned villages believed to be hideouts for militants of the PKK.

Australian drug regulator requires warning on Zolpidem

Australia's Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) will require makers of the sleeping pill, Zolpidem (marketed as Stilnox in Australia) to provide a warning about its "bizarre" and "potentially dangerous" side effects. The warning follows a decision by the National Drugs and Poisons Schedule Committee (NDPSC) not to reschedule the drug.

The NDPSC had considered changing zolpidem from a Schedule 4 drug to a Schedule 8 drug, which would have placed it in the same category as drugs like morphine and made it more difficult for doctors to prescribe. The NDPSC said zolpidem did not meet criteria to become a Schedule 8 drug because there was insufficient evidence to suggest a "substantial risk of abuse, dependence or misuse for illegal purposes".

The warning follows more than 1000 reports of the drug causing people to walk, drive, eat and have sex while they slept, among other suspected reactions. A TGA spokeswoman said the Adverse Medicine Events Line had also received 19 reports of deaths, most of them suicides, where the patient had been taking zolpidem.

The spokeswoman said coronial inquests on most of these deaths had found no link between the death and zolpidem.

The warning to be included on the Consumer Medical Information sheet inside the packaging will say that the drug "may be associated with potentially dangerous complex sleep-related behaviours ... sleepwalking, sleep driving and other bizarre behaviours".

It will also warn patients not to mix zolpidem with alcohol or other Central Nervous System depressants and the drug should "limit use to four weeks maximum under close medical supervision".

Some patients have been prescribed the drug for a number of months, including 30-year-old Sydney woman Mairead Costigan, who fell to her death from the Sydney Harbour Bridge nearly six months ago. Costigan had been prescribed the drug for at least eight months, but just six days before her death she switched to another sleeping pill (zopiclone).

Ms Costigan's sister Siobhan said her family was disappointed but was not surprised by the TGA's decision.

"I understand that the committee received well over 100 submissions from members of the public who have been adversely affected or lost loved ones," she said.

Independent ACT politician and staunch opponent of the drug, Helen Cross said that after being prescribed zolpidem, she became addicted to it and tried to commit suicide three times. In one case, she sent friends a text message saying "goodbye" without remembering anything about the incident when police arrived to rescue her.

While prescription information for the drug says it can increase

depression and that "suicidal tendencies may be present", Ms Cross says doctors who prescribed the drug did not warn her about these side effects.

A spokeswoman for the drug's manufacturer, Sanofi-Aventis said it supported the TGA's decision.

The criticism was a "largely Australian-specific phenomenon and in our view does not accurately reflect [its] safety profile", she said.

Barack Obama wins Democrats Abroad primary

Barack Obama, the junior senator from Illinois and 2008 US presidential candidate won another primary this time in the support of Democrats living outside the United States winning the Democrats Abroad Global Primary after the results from the contest held across the globe have been tallied.

Obama got about 65 per cent of more than 20,000 votes submitted overseas. Democrats in more than 160 countries cast ballots by mail, fax, in person and for the first time, online. The group set up voting sites in more than 30 countries. The polls were open for one week, starting on February 5 and ending February 12. Most were not typical polling stations - balloting was held in bars, private clubs, or coffee shops.

Democrats Abroad is a officially sanctioned organization recognized by the national Democratic party. This means that Democrats Abroad gets 14 of the 4,000-plus votes at the national convention and is treated like a "state committee" despite not being an American state. However, the votes are half votes and not full votes. So far 9 delegates have been awarded due

to the Global Primary, the other 5 will be chosen at a Democrats Abroad convention in Denver in April.

The chair of Democrats Abroad India, Carolyn Sauvage-Mar said, "There were 100 and something voters who brought their kids, their friends, their families. Because they wanted that sense of being together for a really important political moment." Also adding, "This really gives Americans an opportunity to participate."

Sauvage-Mar noted that new and younger voters showed up to the events, including a couple of 18 year olds, Indian-Americans and naturalized citizens from Ghana and the United Kingdom. Giovanna Melandri, the Italian Minister for Youth and Sports holds dual citizenship in Italy and the United States, and is a Democrat, cast her vote for Obama.

"It wasn't an easy choice for me. I would still love seeing a ticket with Obama and Hillary, a drive for change is what is needed in the U.S. and I think that Obama has that drive," Melandri noted in a telephone interview with the Associated Press.

The Republicans have their own organization for citizens overseas, Republicans Abroad, however, it is not treated as a "state committee" by the Republican National Committee which heads the Republican Party. As such, they do not hold a primary and do not seat delegates at the convention.

Robert Gates hopes to continue US troop cuts in Iraq

Speaking aboard a military aircraft, Defense Secretary Robert Gates said that he intends to continue US troop reduction in

Iraq over the next 10 months, although he and other commanders are leaning to a July pause in cuts.

Secretary Gates was en route to attend the Australia-United States Ministerial Consultations in Canberra, Australia. The meetings, also known as AUSMIN, have been held annually since 1985.

Australia has recently announced plans to withdraw troops from Australia, but Gates indicated that this would not be a source of friction between the two allies.

"We're concerned about the stress on our own forces. The Australians are confronting that challenge themselves," he told reporters aboard the plane.

Gates said a brief pause "is probably necessary in order to be able to assess the pacing of any subsequent drawdowns."

Although he did not say how long a pause would be, his comments suggested that reductions could begin again before the end of the year.

"I don't think there's a need to be doing any trust-building at the AUSMIN meeting tomorrow," said Australian Defence Minister Joel Fitzgibbon on Friday. "The relationship remains very, very strong," he said. "The level of trust has never been higher and I look forward to working forward together with our American friends."

"As the winter accelerates into the springtime and the summer, that's going to increase in pace, and we're hopeful that we can continue that in a measured way that enables us to turn over the bulk of the responsibility to the Iraqis, but

at the same time we don't let this thing fall back down the hole again," Admiral William Fallon said. Fallon, the commander of United States Central Command, was speaking today in Ottawa, Canada at a defense conference. He made no mention of a pause.

Another topic at AUSMIN will be the military effort in Afghanistan, but Gates says he is not worried that Australia, now headed by Prime Minister Kevin Rudd, will reduce troop levels there.

"I've had two meetings with their defense minister at this point, and I don't have any sense of a change in direction in Afghanistan," Gates said.

Australia is expected, according to US defense officials, to request a greater role in decision-making process. The International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan is led by NATO, of which Australia is not a member.

46-passenger Venezuelan plane reported missing

A Venezuelan plane with 46 passengers onboard has been reported missing in western Venezuela, officials say.

The Santa Barbara Airlines plane took off just before dusk from the city of Mérida en route to Simón Bolívar International Airport outside the capital city of Caracas.

Noel Marquez, director of Venezuela's emergency management agency in Mérida, said the plane has failed to contact control towers. Civil Defense chief General Antonio Rivero told reporters that it is unknown whether or not the plane crashed or is simply missing.

Mérida a town roughly 680

kilometers (422 miles) from Caracas is a popular tourist location.

National Hockey League news: February 22, 2008

Tampa Bay Lightning @ New York Islanders

Chris Simon made his return to the Islanders lineup, as New York win their 6th straight, and the Lightning lose their 3rd straight, in this low scoring game at Nassau Veterans Memorial Coliseum in Uniondale, New York. Miroslav Satan broke the scoreless tie 5:37 into the third period, assisted by Sean Bergenheim and Drew Fata. Rick DiPietro picked up his third shutout of the season and improved his record to 26-21-7. Simon, who was suspended on December 19 for an on-ice incident where he stepped on Penguin Jarkko Ruutu's skate, played 9 shifts, on the ice for 6:17 of the game.

San Jose Sharks @ Philadelphia Flyers

Jonathan Cheechoo put San Jose up 1-0 15:56 into the first period. The Flyers tied the score on a Mike Knuble goal, his 22nd of the season. Milan Michalek put the Sharks back on top early in the third period, and Douglas Murray scored on a San Jose power play to put them up by 2. Joe Thornton had 2 assists for the Sharks, his 52nd and 53rd of the season. Evgeni Nabokov picked up his 33rd win of the season, stopping 26 shots while allowing only 1. The Sharks break a 5 game losing streak; Philadelphia is now winless in their last 9.

Atlanta Thrashers @ Carolina Hurricanes

Ray Whitney scored after a scoreless first period to give Carolina the first lead of the game. 1:40 later, Eric Perrin put Atlanta

on the scoreboard to tie the game 1-1. Moments later, a Ryan Bayda goal put Carlina back on top. Sergei Samsonov gave the Hurricanes a 2 goal advantage 12:25 into the second period. Atlanta cut the deficit in half when Mark Recchi scored on a Thrashers power play. Scott Walker made the score 4-2 3:51 into the third period. A Keith Aucoin goal increased Carolina's lead to 4. Todd White scored for Atlanta in the closing minutes of the game, but it wasn't enough to catch up to Carolina, who now snapped a 2 game losing streak.

Buffalo Sabres @ Toronto Maple Leafs

Brian Campbell put Buffalo in the lead 2:36 into the first period. Less than a minute into the next period, Thomas Vanek, coming off of a hat trick performance against Tampa Bay 24 hours earlier, increased the Buffalo lead to two goals. Toronto's Pavel Kubina scored on a Leafs power play moments later to cut Buffalo's lead in half. Vanek assisted in the next two Buffalo, first when Ales Kotalik scored 8:59 into the second period, then again when Derek Roy scored on Buffalo's 4th power play of the night at 14:49. Kotalik scored his second of the night on an empty net in the closing minute of the game. Buffalo has their 10th win in 14 games, and Vanek picks up his 22nd point in his last 17 games. Buffalo goaltender Ryan Miller made 34 saves.

Pittsburgh Penguins @ Montreal Canadiens

Ryan Whitney scored 6:46 into the game to put the Penguins up 1-0. Jarkko Ruutu scored an unassisted goal with 1:13 left in the opening period to give Pittsburgh a two goal advantage. Montreal captain Saku Koivu picked up his 12th goal of the year to cut their deficit in

half. Ryan Malone put the Penguins back up by two with a power play goal at 6:59 in the second. Christopher Higgins would get Montreal closer on the Canadiens' second power play. Michael Ryder tied the score 21 seconds into the third period, and Roman Hamrlik gave Montreal their first lead of the game a few minutes later. Evgeni Malkin scored his 35th goal of the year to retie the score 4-4. Sergei Gonchar scored the go-ahead goal for Pittsburgh as they retake the lead 11 minutes through the final period, and take their third win in a row. Malkin and Whitney each had three points for the Penguins.

Columbus Blue Jackets @ Ottawa Senators

Cory Stillman scored in the opening minute of the game to give the Senators an early 1-0 lead. Rick Nash tied the score with his 32nd goal of the season 4:07 into the second period. Andrej Meszaros scored on Ottawa's power play to retake the lead for the Senators. Sergei Fedorov tied it up 5:28 into the third to send it to a shootout. Nash and Nikolai Zherdev each scored on Ottawa's Ray Emery. Pascal Leclaire stopped Daniel Alfredsson and Antoine Vermette. Columbus came from behind to win just their third game in 12.

Boston Bruins @ Florida Panthers

Jay Bouwmeester scored for Florida 2:40 into the game to give the Panthers an early lead. Marco Sturm tied the game early in the second period for Boston. Florida were up by 2 after Steve Montador and Rostislav Olesz each scored goals. Dennis Wideman cut the Florida lead in half on Boston's second power play, but Kamil Kreps put Florida back up by two with a second remaining in the

second period. Zdeno Chara and Phil Kessel tied the score with goals 1:38 apart to send the game to overtime. Sturm scored on Tomas Vokoun for the only shootout goal, as Boston sneaks past the Florida Panthers, who have now lost their third straight.

Vancouver Canucks @ Nashville Predators

Kevin Bieksa made his return to the Canucks lineup tonight against the team he was playing when he suffered a deep gash to his right calf November 1. Mason Raymond put Vancouver ahead first in the closing minute of the opening period. Jason Arnott put Nashville on the board 5:42 into the second period on a 5-on-3 power play. Alexander Edler retook the lead for Vancouver on a Canucks power play 12:49 into the period, his 6th of the year, which was assisted by Raymond and Ryan Shannon. Marek Zidlicky gave Nashville their second power play goal to tie the score 2-2 and send it to a shootout. Raymond scored the only shootout goal on Nashville goalie Chris Mason. Roberto Luongo made 49 saves to keep Vancouver in the game, and stopped all three Nashville attempts in the shootout, as Vancouver picks up their third win in a row.

St. Louis Blues @ Los Angeles Kings

After a scoreless first period, the Kings had a flurry of goals in the second period. First, Anze Kopitar scored on Los Angeles' first power play of the game. Soon after, Alexander Frolov scored a pair of back-to-back goals. Patrick O'Sullivan, after assisting on the first three Kings goals, scored one of his own on Los Angeles' second power play, to give them a four goal lead after two periods. Frolov picked up a hat trick, deflecting a

puck Mike Cammalleri shot, to give the Kings a 5-0 lead 3:31 into the third, which also gave O'Sullivan his 5th point of the night from an assist. Martin Rucinsky ruined Dan Cloutier's shutout attempt by scoring with 4:02 left in the game. Cammalleri had 3 points, assisting on all of Frolov's goals. Chris Beckford-Tseu made his NHL debut, replacing goaltender Manny Legace in the second period after giving up 4 goals in 19 shots. Cloutier, who filled in for the injured Jason LaBarbera, made 32 saves.

Other news

Philadelphia's Simon Gagne was told by concussion doctors that he should take the rest of the season off. Gagne, who has 18 points in 25 games this season, suffered his third concussion in 5 months on February 10 in a 4-3 loss to the Penguins.

Firefox hits 500,000,000 downloads

The Firefox browser has been downloaded 500 million times. The Firefox community is celebrating by raising 500 million grains of rice at FreeRice. That, says Mozilla, is enough to feed 25,000 people for a day.

Obama wins in the Netherlands

U.S. president candidate Barack Obama has won the primary election for the Democratic nomination in the Netherlands. According to Democrats Abroad Obama won 443 votes, against 222 for opponent Hillary Clinton.

Record producer, Teo Macero dies

Teo Macero best known for his work with Miles Davis on many of his albums in the 1960s and 1970s has died. Other artists he worked with included J. J. Johnson, Mahalia Jackson, Johnny Mathis,

Thelonious Monk, Dave Brubeck, Brian Eno, and Radiohead. He was 82

Today in History

1820 – British authorities arrested the conspirators of the Cato Street Conspiracy, an attempt to murder Prime Minister Lord Liverpool and all the British cabinet ministers.

1903 – The Cuban-American Treaty was finalized, allowing the United States to perpetually lease Guantánamo Bay from Cuba for the purposes of operating coaling and naval stations.

1945 – American photographer Joe Rosenthal took the Pulitzer Prize-winning photograph Raising the Flag on Iwo Jima during the Battle of Iwo Jima in World War II, an image that was later reproduced as the U.S. Marine Corps War Memorial.

1947 – The International Organization for Standardization (ISO) was founded. It is responsible for worldwide industrial and commercial ISO standards.

2005 – The controversial French law on colonialism was passed, requiring lycée teachers to teach "the positive role" of French colonialism to their students.

February 23 is Defender of the Fatherland Day in Russia; Mashramani in Guyana; National Day in Brunei.

Quote of the Day

There is but one coward on earth, and that is the coward that dare not know. ~ W. E. B. Du Bois

Word of the Day

didgeridoo n

1. A musical instrument endemic to Australia, consisting of a long hollowed out log, which produces a low, deep drone when blown into.

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