



Top Stories

Russian jet with 170 aboard crashes in Ukraine

A Russian passenger jet is confirmed as having crashed in Ukraine and reports say that there are no survivors.

JonBenet Ramsey murder suspect back in America

John Mark Carr, the man who says he killed six-year-old JonBenét Ramsey ten years ago, has arrived in the US after being extradited from Bangkok in Thailand.

Featured story

Australia to detain Burmese boatpeople on Nauru

Eight Burmese boatpeople, who are seeking refugee status in Australia will be sent to the immigration processing facility in Nauru island by the Australian authorities.

Wikipedia Current Events

- Justin Gatlin agrees to an eight-year ban from track and field for a positive drug test. He forfeits the world record he equalled in May.

- Cabinet Secretary Shinzo Abe announces that if elected president of the Liberal Democratic Party, and thus Prime Minister of Japan, he will propose an amendment to the pacifist Constitution of Japan allowing Japanese troops to be sent overseas. Abe currently leads in polls over candidates Taro Aso

Wikipedia Current Events

and Sadakazu Tanigaki by about 30%.

- Nominations have been called for the first Nunatsiavut Assembly General Election. The election will be held on October 3, 2006. The land claims agreement of January 22, 2005 provided for the establishment of a Nunatsiavut Government to represent not only the residents (Inuit and non-Inuit) of the land claims area, but also Labrador Inuit living throughout Canada. Although Nunatsiavut will remain part of Newfoundland and Labrador, the Nunatsiavut government will have authority over health, education, and justice in the land claim area.

- A Pulkovo Airlines Flight 612, a Tupolev Tu-154 plane carrying 160 passengers and 10 crew from southern Russia to Saint Petersburg, crashes in eastern Ukraine.

- Muslim observance of Isra and Mi'raj, where Muslims believe this day was that Muhammad was taken to heaven, in one night, through the "seven skies", by God.

- The Iranian Navy has attacked and seized control of a Romanian oil rig in the Persian Gulf. Iran took control of the radio room at 7 AM local time. "The Iranians fired at the rig's crane with machine guns," Tăbănescu said. "They are in control now and we can't contact the rig." There were 26 workers onboard.

Wikipedia Current Events

- The National Center for Education Statistics releases a report today showing that charter schools had lower mean scores in reading and especially math compared to public schools.

Men charged in US and Canada over plot to arm Tamil Tigers

Numerous men have been charged in Canada and the United States with various crimes. Some are accused of plotting to buy surface-to-air missiles and AK-47 rifles that would have been sent to the Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka. Eight people, including three Canadian citizens, were charged in Brooklyn, New York yesterday with various offences. At the same time the Royal Canadian Mounted Police arrested a 26 year old in Ontario in relation to the plot. He faces extradition to the United States.

Charges against the nine include fundraising and money laundering through US bank accounts and charitable organizations for the Liberation Tigers of Talim Eelam, or Tamil Tigers, who have been fighting the Sri Lankan military in a civil war since 1983.

Two of the men allegedly tried to bribe undercover US State Department officials with \$1 million in order to remove the Tigers from the official list of terrorist organizations which bars the group from raising money, obtaining weapons or lobbying. A more extensive investigation ensued involving the Federal

Bureau of Investigation's Joint Terrorism Task Force.

The RCMP was brought in when the FBI learned of a Canadian allegedly being involved. Ultimately, the three Canadians arrested in the United States are accused of travelling to New York to purchase the military equipment including 50 to 100 SAM missiles, assault rifles, truck mounted missiles, aerial vehicles for jamming radio transmissions and radar, submarine design software as well as flight lessons and military training.

The charges in the complaints are merely allegations, and the defendants are presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.

Lech Walesa quits Solidarity

It has been revealed that Lech Walesa has quit the Solidarity movement he founded 26 years ago. The trade union movement and political party was founded in 1980 to combat Poland's Communist government. "I have given up my membership last year because Solidarity and I have gone separate ways," said Walesa who served as Poland's first post-Communist president from 1990 to 1995.

Walesa, 62, is boycotting Solidarity's 26th anniversary celebration this month as he does not want to appear with current President Lech Kaczynski and his twin brother, Prime Minister Jaroslaw Kaczynski with whose policies he disagrees. "His approach is to first destroy and then think about what to build," Walesa said of the president. Last August, he said of the union "This is no longer my union. This is a different era, different people, different problems."

It was revealed today that Walesa has not formally been a member of Solidarity since the beginning of this year.

"He has not been paying membership fees since the end of last year," a leading Solidarity member, Jerzy Borowczak, told the AFP news agency.

Walesa says he left Solidarity after the union ignored his criticism of its support of the Law and Justice Party led by the Kaczynskis.

"When my arguments were not reaching them, I gave instructions to terminate my membership," Walesa said. "It is not over the Kaczynskis, but that was the last straw."

The Solidarity movement played the leading role in bringing down the Communist state and came to power with Walesa serving as President of Poland from 1990 to 1995.

Romanian oil company claims Iranian troops have seized one of its rigs

An oil platform in the Persian Gulf, owned by the Grup Servicii Petroliere of Romania, has allegedly been boarded by Iranian troops after being fired at by a helicopter. Romanian officials have not "heard anything" from the workers on the platform "since then [the attack].", according to a company statement.

"We were called by one of our employees at 9.15 a.m. local time (0615 GMT), who told us a military helicopter opened fire against the Orizont rig, and by 9.45 Iranian troops got on board. Since then, we haven't heard anything from them," said Radu Petrescu, a spokesman for Servicii Petroliere.

The rig is the subject of a legal dispute and an Iranian court had ordered it to remain in Iranian waters, according to the Oriental Oil Company, which had chartered the drilling rig. Iran has accused the Romanians of "hijacking" a neighbouring rig.

According to a representative of GSP, Lulu Tabanesku, "Iranian [troops] used machine guns" and that Iran is "in control of the rig. We cannot contact the rig."

There were at least 26 workers on the 13,000-ton platform when it came under fire. There is no word on whether there are any casualties.

The Foreign Minister of Romania is scheduled to have a meeting to discuss the attack with Iranian officials on Wednesday, but so far Iran has yet to release an official statement regarding the attack. Romanian president Traian Băsescu was unable to reach Iran's president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad on Tuesday, the day of the rig's seizure. August 22 is an Iranian National holiday.

Violence in Congo after first round election results are announced

There have been three days of violent clashes in Kinshasa between supporters of Jean-Pierre Bemba and incumbent Democratic Republic of the Congo President Joseph Kabila following the release of results from the first round of Congo's elections. The two presidential candidates will face each other in a run off election October 29th after the first round of votes, July 30th, failed to produce a victor. The results were announced on Sunday with Kabila received 45% of the vote, short of the absolute majority required to avoid a run-off, while Bemba

gained 20% and Antoine Gizenga won 13%. Bemba's support is concentrated in the western provinces of the country while Kabila's support is concentrated in the east.

Bemba's supporters claim that Kabila's presidential guard is attacking Bemba's house. Most downtown streets are deserted and shops closed as people stay in their homes to avoid the sporadic fighting which left five people dead on Sunday.

Kabila's rivals, including Bemba, claim there was widespread fraud in the elections.

400 European Union peacekeepers from the Netherlands and Germany currently stationed in neighbouring Gabon are flying into the capital to quell the fighting. Spanish EU troops and 17,000 United Nations peacekeepers are already in the capital.

The June 30 election was the first democratic vote to be held in the Congo since it gained independence in 1960 and occurs following the official end of five years of conflict.

Scottish Socialist Party to split as Sheridan launches new party

The crisis in the Scottish left has intensified as former Scottish Socialist Party leader Tommy Sheridan has announced his intention to launch a new left wing party.

Sheridan, currently an SSP Member of the Scottish Parliament, was forced to resign as leader after the News of the World accused him of frequenting sex clubs. Sheridan successfully sued the newspaper last month, and was awarded £200,000 in

damages. Eleven leading members of the SSP, including 3 MSPs supported the newspaper's allegations against him and testified against Sheridan in court.

Sheridan had intended to attempt to reclaim the leadership of the SSP but has instead decided to found a "new party of the left" leaving what he described as the "colossal train wreck of the SSP" which is divided between two factions, the pro-Sheridan "SSP Majority" and the anti-Sheridan "United Left".

Colin Fox, the current SSP leader, has urged Sheridan to abandon his plans. "I disagree with Tommy that the SSP has 'reached its historical limits'. The SSP has huge potential still ahead of it.

Hundreds of thousands of people wish to see it survive and thrive and take the socialist project which it uniquely promotes, still further forward...There is no basis for two socialist parties in Scotland with indistinguishable political programmes," said Fox in a statement.

Two major platforms within the SSP, the International Socialists (CWI) and the Socialist Worker Platform (IST) support Sheridan's call as does the SSP's South of Scotland regional committee.

Sheridan claims that several leading Scottish celebrities including actors and directors Peter Mullan, David McKay and Martin McCardie, support his call for a new party.

"I predict hundreds, maybe thousands, of ordinary, everyday workers will fight for equality and justice. The war is with inequality, not with fellow socialists. And Scotland is big enough for more than one socialist party," said

Sheridan.

"The atmosphere a faction in the SSP has created is poisonous and unacceptable. It's obvious that those who are involved with the faction, which has hijacked the SSP and all its apparatus, have hatred for me as their motivating factor. The SSP have been bastardised, they're now a grotesque caricature of what we had hoped. It's time for them to fight among themselves. It's time to make a clean break. The new party will share some of the political ideology of the old SSP and the internal regime will be one of tolerance, friendship and genuine solidarity," said Sheridan in an interview with a Scottish newspaper.

The SSP executive has issued a statement declaring that Sheridan is "on the road to oblivion" accusing him of engaging in an "act of political irresponsibility which can only delight the enemies of socialism in Scotland." The statement continues "Tommy Sheridan has decided to run away from the SSP and wreak as much damage as he can in the process."

Sheridan replied to the statement saying "I can't win either way. If I stay I am a problem according to my SSP colleagues who say they will not work with me again, but if I go I am splitting the socialist cause. Frankly, the SSP has been distorted by the faction which has hijacked its apparatus and the internal regime is now longer conducive to building a socialist party". He added there is an "unstoppable momentum building up" for the creation of a new party.

Sheridan and his supporters plan to hold a meeting on September 3, 2006 to plan the new party. The

SSP, meanwhile, will hold an event the day before to rally its support.

The SSP currently has six MSPs in the Scottish Parliament, two of whom, Sheridan and Rosemary Byrne are supporting the new party.

Russian jet with 170 aboard crashes in Ukraine

A Russian plane has crashed in the Ukraine killing all 170 passengers on board, according to the Russian Emergency Situations Ministry. The Tu-154 passenger jet owned by St. Petersburg-based Pulkovo Airlines flight number 612 had a roster that included at least 45 children and 11 crew members onboard. It crashed in eastern Ukraine at approximately 2:30 p.m. near the Russian border. A distress signal is reported to have gone off moments before the crash. The plane was on its way to St. Petersburg from Anapa. Wreckage and many bodies have been found.

Ukrainian officials are reporting at least 160 people onboard with at least 10 crew members on hand.

According to Russian officials, terrorism did not play a role in the crash and that the aircraft may have encountered heavy turbulence which caused the plane to go down. The plane then caught fire after hitting the ground and breaking into several pieces.

Other reports say that the plane was "hit by lightning."

"The plane most likely was hit by lightning. There was no damage on the ground. After it fell, it broke apart and burst into flames," said Irina Andriyanova, a spokeswoman for the Russian Emergency Situations Ministry.

Reports say that there are no survivors and at least 30 bodies have been recovered.

New Zealand man sentenced to life in prison for murder

James Junior Lawrie, 26-year-old has been sentenced to life in prison at the Auckland High Court, a minimum of 16 years after he killed the Uptown Mini Mart owner, 58-year-old Bhagubhai Vaghela on 19 June, 2005.

Vaghela was found dead at the scene by ambulance officers.

Lawrie had entered the store planning on stealing phone cards from the New North Road shop, instead he shot Vaghela in the chest at point-blank range when he activated the alarm and Lawrie panicked.

Lawrie had pleaded guilty to the charges laid against even though he could not remember most of the incident. The court was told today by the prosecutor Ross Burns that he had smoked one kilogram of methamphetamine (P) two months prior, which is worth NZ\$1 million. The P had fuelled six previous aggravated robberies in the attempt to gain more money for his P habit.

Lawrie has had 32 previous convictions of which nine were relating to violence.

Roger Chambers, Lawrie's lawyer, said: "Lawrie's late expression of remorse is genuine, in spite of a pre-sentencing report that said he had no recognition of the trauma he had caused to his victims. He pleaded guilty to some pretty horrendous crimes - and knew that any expression of remorse was likely to be laughed at. For Lawrie, prison is home."

Burns said "Mr Vaghela had come to New Zealand to enjoy a well-deserved and planned retirement. He was a kind, considerate and gentle man who put his family first." His wife had now gone back to India where she has been ill, while the rest of the family struggle with the death. "His son had said: 'This world is a far worse place without my father being here'," the court was told by Burns.

Lawrie had shown no remorse, Burns said.

Bomb scare on China-Australia flight

Australian media have reports that a passenger on board a plane from China to Australia discovered a note warning that a bomb would explode on the China Southern Airlines flight from Guangzhou to Sydney. The note was apparently found one hour into the journey, AAP reports.

The note forced the pilot to take emergency action and return to Guangzhou. Australian passenger Jason Harper said: "They dumped all the fuel. Then all the lights went out. But no-one knew what was happening. Then we landed and there about 20 police cars and fire engines and stuff everywhere."

Authorities have confirmed Flight CZ325 from Guangzhou in China was turned around about an hour into the flight.

China Southern Airlines refused to release full details, but said a note was found, which "did reflect something of a dangerous item on board the plane... adequate to cause the tech crew to turn around and return to Guangzhou," reports The Sunday Times.

National Nine News said passengers were forced to leave the plane and were interviewed by authorities for two hours. They were later allowed back on board and resumed their journey.

Sydney Airport said the plane was now due to land at 3pm (Australian time) today. It was not known this morning how many people were on board the plane. A spokesperson for China Southern Airlines would only say it was "fairly full".

Today in History

1305 - After a show trial, William Wallace, leader of the Scottish resistance against England, was executed in Smithfield Market, London.

1866 - Prussia defeated Austria in the Austro-Prussian War, and dissolved the German Confederation.

1939 - The Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, a non-aggression treaty between the Soviet Union and the German Third Reich, was signed in Moscow.

1944 - King Michael dismissed the pro-Nazi government of General Ion Antonescu, putting Romania on the side of the Allies for the remainder of World War II.

1989 - Baltic way: Approximately two million people joined their hands to form an over 600 km long human chain across the Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian Soviet republics during the Singing Revolution.

Quote of the Day

"I have brought you to the ring, now see if you can dance."
~ William Wallace

Word of the Day

incombustible; adj

1. Not capable of catching fire and burning.

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