



Top Stories

Authenticity of new Abu Ghraib photos confirmed



Pentagon has confirmed the authenticity of the images aired by Australian television network SBS and highlighted its concern at their potential impact.

Thaksin escapes Constitutional Court scrutiny



Thailand's Constitutional Court has rejected a petition submitted by 28 of the country's senators. The petition levelled allegations against the Prime Minister, Thaksin Shinawatra, of having maintained influence over Shin Corporation and been involved in the decision to sell the family's remaining stake in the company to Temasek Holdings, the investment arm of the Singapore Government.

Featured story

Evolution may occur faster than once thought, scientists claim



Two graduate students at Harvard claim to have shown that evolution can happen much faster than previously thought

Wikipedia Current Events

•France accuses Iran of making nuclear weapons.

Wikipedia Current Events

•Camp Delta - UN report condemns the continued existence of Camp Delta, and multiple breaches of Human Rights by the US. . The UN says that prisoners held there should be immediately charged or released. Like many other countries that the UN Human Rights watchdog has heavily criticised, the US has attacked the report as invalid . The UN report is available online as a large 54 page PDF

•US civil liberties groups have called for an inquiry into treatment of Iraqi detainees at Abu Ghraib after new images of apparent abuse were shown.

•Haitian elections, 2006: After allegations of fraud, officials in Haiti have reached an agreement to declare René Prével the winner of that country's election.

•New Zealand all-rounder Chris Cairns, ONZM plays his final international cricket match against the West Indies in a Twenty20 at Auckland's Eden Park.

•Tokelau decides to remain a New Zealand territory after a referendum on self-governance. A 60 percent majority voted in favor of self-governance, but a two-thirds majority was required for the referendum to succeed.

Iranian newspaper website attacked

The website of Hamshahri newspaper was brought down this

week in response to an internet attack. Hamshahri Daily is an Iranian newspaper that sponsored a contest to produce cartoons denying the existence of the Holocaust. Service to the website was restored today, after several days offline.

Hamshahri Daily sponsored the cartoon competition on February 8. The contest followed upon the controversy caused by the twelve cartoons published by the Danish newspaper Jyllands-Posten. Those twelve cartoons sparked outrage and have led to widespread demonstrations and boycotts.

Last year, Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad denied the existence of the Holocaust, saying "They have invented a myth that Jews were massacred and place this above God, religions and the prophets".

The Hamashahri website was the subject of a 'denial-of-service' attack. In a denial-of-service attack, attackers bombard the website with requests for pages until the server overloads.

Hamshahri Daily is owned by the Tehran Municipality, which is allied with President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. Ahmadinejad is the former mayor of Tehran.

UN alleges torture at Guantanamo Bay

In a 40 page report released today, the United Nations special envoys on torture reported their findings regarding the United

States detention facility at Guantanamo Bay on the island of Cuba. The report concludes that certain procedures at the facility, during transport to the facility as well as the practice of rendition constitute torture. Moreover the report states that "Attempts by the United States Administration to redefine "torture" in the framework of the struggle against terrorism in order to allow certain interrogation techniques that would not be permitted under the internationally accepted definition of torture are of utmost concern." and that "The interrogation techniques authorized by the Department of Defense, particularly if used simultaneously, amount to degrading treatment in violation of article 7 of ICCPR and article 16 of the Convention against Torture."

The report recommends that the United States bring the detainees to trial "in accordance with criminal procedure" or "release them without further delay", and that "The United States Government should close the Guantánamo Bay detention facilities without further delay." To avoid further practices amounting to "torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, discrimination on the basis of religion, and violations of the rights to health and freedom of religion" the report recommends that "In particular, all special interrogation techniques authorized by the Department of Defense should immediately be revoked."

In response to the report, White House spokesperson Scott McClellan said that the facility housed "dangerous terrorists". US officials have dismissed most of the claims as "largely without merit" and pointed out that the

authors of the report never visited Guantanamo Bay, despite an invitation of three of the five investigators in November.

In an interview with the German weekly newspaper Die Zeit the United Nation's Special Rapporteur on torture and coauthor of the report Manfred Nowak said that it was the "sole responsibility of the United States that we could not visit Guantanamo". He adds that the United States explicitly barred the UN inspectors from talking to detainees, without which proper investigations are impossible. He pointed out that this "is also the position of the United States when it concerns other contries, like China".

Olympic Biathlon Silver Medalist Stripped for Doping

The International Olympic Committee (IOC) announced that biathlete Olga Pyleva, Russian Federation, has been excluded from the XX Olympic Winter Games after failing an anti-doping test carried out by the IOC. This is the first instance of an athlete being ejected from the 2006 Winter Olympics.

Pyleva, 30, tested positive for Carphedon, a prohibited substance, on 13 February after the women's 15 km Individual, Biathlon event, in which she won the silver medal.

ITAR-TASS News Agency reports that Pyleva tested positive for Cordedon, a stimulant banned by the World Anti Doping Agency (WADA). The substitute, phenotropil, was prescribed by her doctors following an ankle injury according to Nikolai Durmanov, head of the Russian Anti Doping Committee.

The IOC determined that Pyleva

would be disqualified from the 15km Women's Individual Biathlon, would be excluded from the remainder of the XX Olympic Winter Games and would have her Olympic accreditation immediately withdrawn.

The IOC routinely performs pre and post event tests for a broad array of illegal substances. For each individual sport, the top five finishers plus two random finishers are tested. So far the IOC has conducted 400 of the expected 1,200 tests to be done at these games.

Under IOC rules, Olympians that test positive for a banned substance are considered guilty regardless of circumstances.

Martina Glagon of Germany, who finished with a Bronze medal, will be awarded the Silver. Albina Akhatova, Pyleva's Russian teammate will get the Bronze.

Thaksin escapes Constitutional Court scrutiny

In a move that has been greeted with dismay by some groups, Thailand's Constitutional Court has rejected a petition submitted by 28 of the country's senators. The petition levelled allegations against the Prime Minister, Thaksin Shinawatra, of having maintained influence over Shin Corporation and been involved in the decision to sell the family's remaining stake in the company to Temasek Holdings, the investment arm of the Singapore Government.

The court's decision to reject the petition seeking impeachment was reached following an 8-6 vote. The submitting senators were said not to have provided evidence documenting Thaksin's interest in Shin Corp. or how he was involved in the sale. This is despite a

former judge from the Constitutional Court endorsing an opinion shared by some senators and academics that the court was bound by law and precedent to review the allegations.

The president of the Federation for Democracy, Weng Tojitrakarn expressed disappointment at the court's decision not to review the petition, stating that "It's the duty of the court to seek evidences". He pledged that his group would press for the resignation of the eight judges who supported the Prime Minister.

According to Weng an interview with the Prime Minister's son, Panthongtae Shinawatra, reveals Thaksin's involvement in the sale. Panthongtae is said to have claimed the sale was a matter for "puyai", which Weng interprets as meaning Thaksin.

This is not the first time that Thailand's beleaguered PM has faced judgement from the court, nor may it be the last. In 2001 the court acquitted Thaksin by an even closer 8-7 vote. The charge in that case was concealment of assets. A new petition being organised by students of Thammasat University calling for impeachment has reportedly reached 20,000 of the 50,000 required signatures.

Further controversy over the PM's family's involvement in Shin Corp. was revealed in a Thai News Agency report. According to the Secretary-General of the country's Securities and Exchange Commission the PM's son and daughter may face fines for failure to report their shareholding in Shin. Other issues relating to Shin Corp. are also under investigation by the SEC with collection of evidence and documentation expected to be complete within a

week.

Tokelau voters reject self-rule

The people of Tokelau have rejected greater independence from New Zealand in a referendum held this week. 60% of the eligible voters voted "yes" to become an independent state in free association with New Zealand, but this failed to reach the two thirds support required to take effect. The turnout for the referendum was high, reaching almost 95% of registered voters.

Tokelau, a 12 square-kilometre archipelago with a population of 1,500, consists of three islands that do not have roads, an airport or a capital. It is a dependent territory of New Zealand, but New Zealand's Prime Minister said Tokelau is already "exercising virtually all the responsibilities of a self governing country". According to the UN and New Zealand, Tokelau would have relied heavily on New Zealand for financial assistance even if independence had been chosen.

France says Iran's nuclear program is a "military cover"

Foreign Minister Philippe Douste-Blazy of France went on French TV and accused Iran of having a "clandestine" nuclear program saying, "no civilian nuclear program can explain the Iranian nuclear program. So it is a clandestine Iranian military nuclear program. The international community has sent a very firm message by saying to the Iranians: 'Come back to reason. Suspend all nuclear activity and the enrichment of uranium and the conversion of uranium', but they are not listening to us. That is the reason why, for the first time for days, the international community is united. It's not just the Europeans -- France, Germany

and the British, it's also Russia and China."

However, on a French radio station the Iranian chief nuclear negotiator Ali Larijani said, "contrary to all the propaganda against us, we are not seeking a nuclear bomb, since we are a signatory to (the nuclear) (NPT). We are a responsible country - it is Western propaganda that keeps on saying that Iran is seeking a bomb, but it is not true. We want to be in this camp of countries that have nuclear energy technology but no nuclear weapons, such as Brazil and Japan"

China has expressed concern. Foreign Ministry spokesman Qin Gang has said that Beijing wants a "peaceful solution by diplomatic means."

Iran resumed small-scale uranium enrichment on Tuesday, after the IAEA reported it to the UN Security Council. Iran had stopped the enrichment process nearly 2 1/2 years ago.

"Now it's up to the Security Council to say what it will do, what means it will use to stop, to manage, to halt this terrible crisis of nuclear proliferation caused by Iran," added Douste-Blazy. During discussion of the crisis of nuclear proliferation less than one year earlier, in the month-long 2005 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, several representatives of non-aligned states complained about the violation of Article VI of the NPT by the official nuclear weapons states, including France, who allegedly have not yet made significant moves towards nuclear disarmament as required under Article VI, and about nuclear

proliferation to previously non-nuclear weapons states, such as Germany, under nuclear sharing arrangements.

Europe restricts poultry as bird flu spreads to eight European nations

Authorities across Europe have issued restrictions on commercial poultry farms, following the outbreak of bird flu in eight previously unaffected nations. The virus has been found in migratory birds much earlier than had been expected.

Tests have confirmed that wild swans in Greece, Bulgaria, Italy, Austria and Germany had died from the deadly H5N1 strain of the virus. Other suspected cases of the virus have been detected in Slovenia, Croatia and Denmark.

European health officials had expected wild birds migrating from Africa to Europe in spring to carry the disease into Western Europe. It is thought that swans were migrating from Russia and Ukraine to the Black Sea driven by unusually cold weather.

Globally, 91 people have died after contracting the virus from close contact with diseased birds, but the greatest concern for European authorities is that an outbreak will occur among domesticated fowl, destroying local poultry industries. The H5N1 strain of bird flu is highly contagious, and lethal to birds. A single outbreak can kill tens of thousands of birds, and all birds must be culled across a wide region to prevent the spread of the disease.

No domesticated poultry or humans are thought to be infected in Western Europe at this time. Authorities continue to conduct intensive checks.

A number of countries across Europe, including Denmark, Sweden and the Netherlands have required that domesticated fowl be kept indoors. In Germany and Hungary, two mile protection zones have been placed around the locations where dead swans, with all poultry required to be kept indoors and the shipping of meat outside the zones prohibited.

The European Union has toughened its bans on poultry products and now bans the importation of untreated bird feathers into its 25 member nations. The EU also hopes to test 60,000 wild birds and 300,000 domestic birds as part of its bird flu surveillance program.

In France, the government asked citizens to keep domesticated fowl indoors throughout the country. Domesticated ducks will be vaccinated.

Authenticity of new Abu Ghraib photos confirmed

The Australian has reported today that the Pentagon has confirmed the authenticity of the images aired by Australian television network SBS. Contradicting claims made by some media outlets, SBS Dateline's executive producer Mike Carey claimed on Thursday that the program's researchers have found cases of Abu Ghraib prisoner abuse that have not been dealt with by US authorities. He described the new images available to SBS as a "quantum leap" compared to the previously broadcast pictures.

Carey announced that next week's program will show more abuse pictures, but he noted that some images featuring prisoners in sexually humiliating acts will not be broadcast, as they were deemed too graphic. Next week's

program will also include interviews with a US soldier that has been convicted of prisoner abuse and another former soldier who witnessed the crimes.

The Washington Post has noted, as suggested by SBS, that several news outlets including themselves have "not published a substantial number of photographs they are holding." The Washington Post further explains that "Newspapers that have held these images have been constrained, in large part, by the sheer graphic nature of them, especially the nudity."

The Washington Post also cites SBS's ability to circumvent "the U.S. government's efforts to keep Abu Ghraib images out of the public eye" as another reason why the images were not first published by other media outlets.

The U.S. internet news site Salon has now published some of their own previously held back pictures and confirmed that they possess "files and other electronic documents from an internal Army investigation into the Abu Ghraib prisoner-abuse scandal", which include the originally published pictures, as well as the ones published by SBS.

Salon notes that some of the files from the Criminal Investigation Command refer to CIA agents that interrogated prisoners at Abu Ghraib, but that no CIA officers have been prosecuted "despite the death of at least one Iraqi during a CIA interrogation there", underscoring the claim made by SBS that some of the pictures document previously unprosecuted abuse.

The US government expressed concerns about the new abuse pictures being published. John

Bellinger of the State Department told BBC, "We felt that it was an invasion of the privacy of the detainees themselves to have these photographs come out... (and that the publication could also) fan the flames around the world and cause potentially further violence".

Repeal of ministerial control of RU486 bill passes Australian House of Representatives

The Australian House of Representatives have considered the bill regarding whether the Australian Health Minister Tony Abbott, or the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) regulate the abortifacient mifepristone (RU486), and has passed the bill unamended.

Earlier today, the Prime Minister John Howard (Australian Liberal Party, Bennelong) has spoken on the amendments earlier proposed by Jackie Kelly (Liberal, Lindsay) and Andrew Laming (Liberal, Bowman), speaking in favour of the Laming amendments and reiterating his support for Abbott, stating that he is the "best friend that Medicare ever had", Abbott's usual phrase he states in Question Time in support of the Government's handling of Medicare.

Howard's counterpart, the Leader of the Opposition, Kim Beazley (Australian Labor Party, Brand), spoke in support of the bill in its unamended form, noting that it is "simply commonsense that the minister does not have the scientific capacity" to evaluate the drug, and reiterating that the bill is "not really about Tony Abbott". More controversially he however said that those with certain personal views such as Tony Abbott's conservative Catholic faith should not hold certain

offices in Government, which drew criticism from the Government later in the debate noting that an earlier Labor Prime Minister of Australia John Curtin's pacificism was a strong wartime leader.

Later, the Kelly amendments were put to the vote and were lost on the voices and in subsequent division with 49 agreeing to the amendments and 96 disagreeing. The vote on whether the bill should be read a second time 95 for to 50 against. In the consideration in detail stage, the Laming amendments were debated, but the vote on these amendments were lost with 56 supporting the amendments and 90 against them.

The bill as unamended was agreed to and passed the third reading on the voices, without having to resort to a vote.

Reactions from Australian bloggers Larvatus Prodeo (LP) blooger "Kate" welcomed the decision, but warned that the abortion issue was far from settled. "Personally, I think this is not only a good thing for women in Australia, but also demonstrates democratic processes at work. Now we can commence stouthing about whether or not the TGA should allow the drug into the country," she said.

One commenter on LP, Paul Norton, suggested that division over the issue would deepen in the next few years, and that people opposed to legalised abortion would become more vocal. "I expect that the loud minority will become louder over the next couple of years, and more authoritarian and fanatical in their attempts to twist legislators' and candidates' arms, until State and Federal election results show that

their loudness is directly proportional to their minority status amongst Australians."

Photo essay: Valentine's Day at the U.S. Viet Nam War Memorial



The Vietnam Veterans Memorial with the Washington Monument in the background on Valentine's Day Night. Credit: Andrew Selman

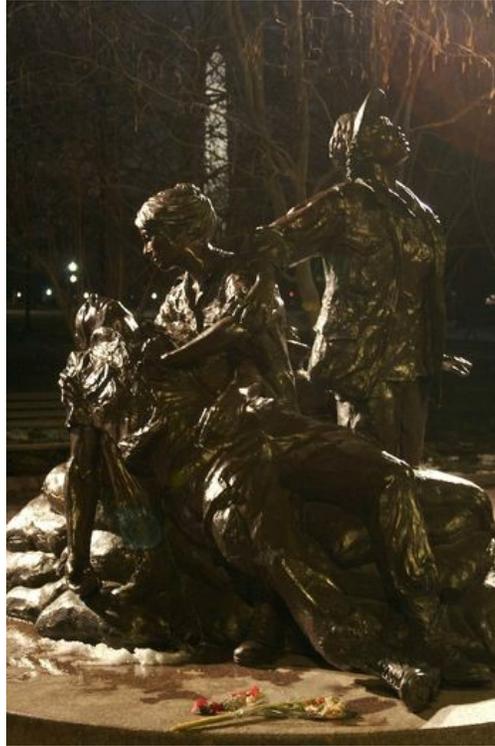
The Vietnam Veterans Memorial is the most visited monument in the Washington, D.C. at close to 4 million visitors a year. Conceived as a symbol of a never ending reminder of our connection to the veterans of Vietnam, the wall holds strong memories for everyone who visits the wall.

There are nephews like David Quatrone of New Jersey who came to find his Green Beret Uncle Ferdinand Quatrone who served six tours of duty.

There was Alan Earls of Missouri who came to find his Aunt's younger brother who perished during the Tet Offensive.



The Vietnam Veterans Memorial with the Lincoln Memorial in the background on Valentine's Day Night. Credit: Andrew Selman



Flowers adorn the base of the Vietnam Nurses Memorial in Washington, D.C. on Valentine's Day Night, 2006. Credit: Andrew Selman

There was even 11 year old Gema from Miami, Florida who came to see the wall and connect herself to her schoolwork, "I wanted to see the wall to understand what they were teaching us. I want to write an article about it."

Stephen Birks of Fort Long Beach, Florida came to find Larry Rabren who dated his sister when Stephen was just 14.

Each has a story to tell and to remember this Valentine's Day night.

Today in History

1801 - The U.S. House of Representatives elected Thomas Jefferson as President and Aaron Burr as Vice President of the United States, resolving an electoral tie in the 1800 presidential election.

1854 - Britain recognized the independence of the Orange Free State in the present-day Free State Province, South Africa.

1895 - The ballet Swan Lake was first performed at full length with music by Tchaikovsky in Saint Petersburg, Russia.

1959 - Vanguard 2, the first weather satellite, was launched to measure cloud-cover distribution.

1979 - About 120,000 troops of the People's Liberation Army of China crossed into northern Vietnam, starting the Sino-Vietnamese War.

February 17 is Tanis Dena

Quote of the Day

"Some people want it to happen, some wish it would happen, others make it happen." ~ Michael Jordan

About Wikinews

We are a group of volunteer journalists whose mission is to create a diverse community where citizens from around the globe (including **you**) can collaborate to report the news on a wide variety of current events. By making our content perpetually available for free redistribution and use, we hope to contribute to a global digital commons.

Got news and no computer? Call the Wikinews Hotline

+1-866-653-4265
(toll-free in the U.S.)
+1-202-742-5918
(outside the U.S.)

License

This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution License. Articles published in this Print edition were created by Wikinewsies.

To view a copy of this license, visit:
<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.5/>
or send a letter to
Creative Commons
543 Howard Street, 5th Floor
San Francisco, California, 94105, USA

Audio Wikinews

Audio Wikinews is a free non point-of-view news radio program recorded daily.

<http://en.wikinews.org/wiki/Wikinews:Audio>

About Wikinews Print Edition

For more information about Wikinews Print Edition visit:
<http://en.wikinews.org/wiki/Wikinews:Print>