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Top Stories

Wuerl appointed Washington, D.C.'s new bishop



The Holy See has appointed Donald Wuerl, the Bishop of Pittsburgh, as the new spiritual leader for the Washington D.C. branch of the Catholic Church.

Culture of violence reported in central Australian Aboriginal communities



Australian media reports that a recently leaked Northern Territory police briefing paper exposes "shocking" cases of sexual abuse and violence against women and children in remote Australian Aboriginal communities.

Featured story

Barcelona win Champions League



FC Barcelona have won the European Champions League trophy for the 2005-2006 season after defeating Arsenal F.C. 2-1 at the Stade de France in Paris.

Wikipedia Current Events

- Incumbent Prime Minister Laisenia Qarase of Fiji claims victory in the 2006 general elections.
- A gunman opens fire at the Turkish Council of State, the top court in Ankara, Turkey while the court was in session, injuring four judges, and killing one. The shooting represents a rise in tensions between the secular apparatus of state and supporters of Islamic fundamentalism.
- Barcelona win the UEFA Champions League, defeating Arsenal 2-1 in the final. Arsenal goalkeeper Jens Lehmann became the first player ever sent off in a Champions League final. Barcelona's goals were scored by Belletti and Samuel Eto'o; Arsenal's goal was scored by Sol Campbell.

College ice hockey could follow NHL and add second referee

University of Maine men's ice hockey head coach Tim Whitehead has proposed that the National Collegiate Athletic Association adopt the four-official system.

The system, which has two referees and two linesmen, was adopted by the National Hockey League for the 1998/99 season on a trial basis before being fully implemented for 2000/01.

"My rationale for the proposal is to get more calls right," Whitehead told the HockeyRefs.com website. "It's about getting the best system

we can for the game."

Maine competes in Hockey East, one of six Division I conferences. Currently, Division I employs a three-official system of one referee and two assistant referees.

Adding a second referee could result in logistical and financial difficulties for both conferences and schools.

"This would open a lot of opportunities," said Whitehead, who isn't opposed to young, college-age officials doing his games if "they're the best out there."

The NCAA Men's Ice Hockey Rules Committee will vote on the proposal in June

US stocks plummet

US stocks plunged along with other stock markets overseas as a greater than expected rise in consumer prices fueled investors' fears that the Federal Reserve's campaign of raising interest rates is not over. At the close of trading at 4:00 PM EDT, the Dow Jones Industrial Average had fallen 214.28 points, or 1.88%, to 11,205.61. Technology stocks were not safe from the selling as well, as the NASDAQ fell 33.33 points, or 1.50%, to 2,195.80. The NASDAQ has now turned negative for 2006. Broader stock indices also finished much lower. The S&P 500 fell 22 points (1.68%) to 1,270.32. This is the biggest point loss on the Dow in 3 years.

Wikipedia Current Events

- A total of 155 people have been killed in recent wave of violence in São Paulo, Brazil.

The Consumer Price Index (CPI) showed that prices to the consumer increased by a greater-than-expected 0.6% in April. Core CPI, which factors out volatile food and energy prices, swelled by a greater-than-expected 0.3%.

Market breadth was extremely negative with advancers beating out decliners by a 5 to 1 ratio on the New York Stock Exchange. Volume was heavy with 2.95 billion shares changing hands. Of the 30 stocks that make up the Dow Jones Industrials, 29 of them closed down for the day. The only stock in positive territory was Hewlett-Packard, which closed up \$1.05 (+3.38%) to \$32.16/share after reporting quarterly earnings after the close Tuesday.

The selloff comes on the heels of the Dow rising to within 80 points of its all-time closing high of 11,722.98 just last week. That rally was built on hopes that the Federal Reserve was close to ending its interest rate hike campaign. Since that time the Dow has experienced 3 double-digit point losses. Many market analysts and technicians, including Ken Tower from Schwab's CyberTrader, felt that the market was overbought and was due for a short-term correction. Today's inflation report suggests that the Fed will have to tighten interest rates further to combat inflation and slow economic growth to a more sustainable pace. Higher interest rates increase the cost of money, thus discouraging borrowing by businesses and individuals.

European stock markets fell more sharply than those in the US. London's FTSE fell 2.92%, Frankfurt's DAX tumbled 3.4%, and Paris' CAC 40 fell 3.18%.

Verizon says customer phone records were not handed over to the NSA

On May 11, 2006, the USA Today published an article claiming that the United States' National Security Agency (NSA) collected millions of call logs from telecommunications companies in 2001 under a contract the NSA claims to have had with phone companies.

Since the publication, telecommunications giant Verizon has denied that customer phone records were handed over to the NSA in the time frame "from the time of the 9/11 attacks until just four months ago."

"Contrary to the media reports, Verizon was not asked by NSA to provide, nor did Verizon provide, customer phone records from any of these businesses, or any call data from those records. None of these companies -- wireless or wireline -- provided customer records or call data," Verizon said in a statement. This does not address the question whether the long-distance carrier MCI, that Verizon bought in January, handed over records to the NSA, and whether they still continue to do so.

Verizon also says that records from local calls are not tracked. "Phone companies do not even make records of local calls in most cases because the vast majority of customers are not billed per call for local calls."

On Tuesday, BellSouth also denied that it gave their call records to the NSA.

However, USA Today said that they are "confident" about their story and "will look closely into the issues raised by the BellSouth and

Verizon statements. Sources told us that BellSouth and Verizon records are included in the database," said Steve Anderson, spokesman for USA Today. The paper was using anonymous sources that they claim had "direct knowledge of the arrangement." Anderson also stated that they will not "dismiss" the denials made by Verizon or BellSouth "without taking a closer look"

Qwest's former chief executive Joseph P. Nacchio confirmed through his lawyer that the NSA requested Qwest to provide calling data, but that Qwest declined to do so citing a lack of legal process.

Pacific tests tsunami warning systems

There are 30 countries, including New Zealand, participating in a test to see how well countries can respond if a tsunami does happen.

The test started at the Tsunami Warning Centre in Hawaii where a fake 9.2 magnitude earthquake occurred near Chile, starting a tsunami rolling across the Pacific.

A second fake earthquake happened north of the Philippines to test the responses in the Western Pacific.

New Zealand's Civil Defence has recently come under fire for failing to do enough to protect its citizens after international news agencies warned that a tsunami, which never arrived, was expected to hit New Zealand.

The New Zealand Government's emergency management plan has also been criticised for being too unclear and insufficient.

Mundine beats Green in super-middleweight WBA eliminator

Former world champion boxer

Anthony Mundine has beaten long-time rival Danny Green on a unanimous points decision in a non-title World Boxing Association (WBA) super middleweight bout. Mundine, an ex-rugby league star promoted the much anticipated fight which attracted around 40,000 spectators and a national record for a pay-per-view television event.

"Who's the man, who's the man?" Mundine asked the crowd after the fight. Western Australia's Danny Green (the "Machine") was defeated after 12 rounds at the Sydney Football Stadium by "the Man" Mundine. Mundine has improved his overall record to 26 wins and three losses. His victory sets up a world title bout against Denmark's Mikkel Kessler.

After the bout Mundine praised his opponent's tenacity: "I just wanna thank Danny for a great fight... I was starting to get loose man, Danny was starting to put a lot of pressure on me, he's got a good long jab, I had to evade that," said Mundine. "I utilised my speed to catch him and it paid dividends. I was looking for the knockout, I caught him with a few great shots, he can take a great punch. He put up a good performance. He come around, he come prepared - I was the better man tonight Dan, thank you very much. We can do it again maybe, soon."

Green agreed that Mundine fought the better fight. "He just beat me fair and square. I have no excuses at all, I trained unbelievable, my preparation was great... Anthony was the better man tonight," said Green.

The WBA fight consolidated six years of taunts and hyperbole to settle a long-running feud between the men and their supporters.

According to media reports the battle was personal from the outset with Mundine's mother Lyn yelling at her son from ringside to "Knock him out Choc, shut him up my baby".

Sports media commentators reported that the pace remained hectic in the first four rounds as Mundine stood firm and used his jab as Green mixed his trademark "power punches." As the fight wore on, Mundine appeared in greater control and in better condition. However, Mundine did end up on the canvas in the seventh round, after being pushed through the ropes by Green.

Throughout the fight, Green's power punches "missed, missed and missed again". In the final "ferocious" round, Mundine rocked Green with a combination to the head, taunting Green to "Come on." Green attempted plenty of combinations, but Mundine's speed caused problems. After 12 rounds, Judge Pinit Prayadsab from Thailand gave the fight to Mundine 118-11, Korean Michael Lee scored it 116-113 and Australian Derek Milham had it 118-112.

Australian newspapers report that the appreciative crowd included corporate CEOs, former world heavyweight champion Joe Frazier, bikie gangs, peroxide blondes and rugby league players. Referee Terry O'Connor described the event as a fight Australia can be proud of. "They both gave their all, it was a great fight." He described the atmosphere at Aussie Stadium as "fantastic" "It was the greatest fight I have refereed, it was brilliant," O'Connor said.

The "Man v Machine" event fight, promoted by Mundine's Boxa International and the "Green

Machine" promoters is believed to have been the "biggest boxing match in Australian history", grossing an estimated \$20 million. Each boxer is reported to be earning a seven-figure sum, while spectators have paid up to AUD\$1000 for a seat at the bout. Foxtel reported record sales for their exclusive pay-per-view event, claiming that subscriptions outsold the Lennox Lewis v Mike Tyson heavyweight bout. Heavy betting ensued with one punter laying a \$500,000 bet on Mundine to take the honours.

Of his upcoming bout with Denmark's Mikkel Kessler, Mundine said: "It was a close fight last time. I think he's the best fighter out there, but I've shown I can match it with him. I'm ready."

Half of Australian defence force's munitions of no use

An audit conducted by Australia's Auditor general has found AUD\$1 billion worth of munitions (bombs, explosives and ammunition) stockpiled by Australia's defence forces are unusable in their present state. Australia holds AUD\$2 billion worth of munition stock.

Of the AUD\$1 billion considered unsuitable, \$300 million is unrepairable and needs to be disposed of. The unusable munitions are waiting to be detonated at the Woomera weapons range in remote South Australia.

The audit also found that the defence department did not have the knowledge to safely store and maintain bombs and other ammunition.

Following the report being tabled in parliament today, the government has ordered a review

into the process by which munitions are purchased by the country. Speaking to a defence industry conference in Sydney, Australian defence minister, Brendan Nelson said the government would be conducting a three month inquiry into how Australian defence forces purchase munitions and equipment.

At present defence supplies are purchased by the Defence Materials Organisation (DMO) with no firm policy or guidelines from the government.

The federal opposition has siezed upon the audit saying it also mentioned that payments made to contractors prior to supply had not been adequately explained by the DMO.

Senator Mark Bishop, the Opposition defence industry spokesman said that the DMO paid more than \$20 million on a \$26 million contract for missles prior to being supplied. Senator Bishop also said that the DMO "negotiated a series of benefits that never materialised".

Senator Bishop said that the DMO could not justify the payments to the auditor general. "The DMO could not provide documentation to justify these prepayments and the auditor questions the validity of the prepayments," Senator Bishop said.

Rescued Australian miners sign multi-million dollar media deal
The two Australian mine-workers, who were trapped for 14 days underground in a collapsed mine, have signed a media deal reportedly worth AUD\$2 million for their story of survival. Local media reports that the lucrative deal, announced by the Nine Network, is believed to be the "highest ever

paid to secure news talent". A planned TV special will be the outcome of a deal secured by Publishing and Broadcasting Limited (PBL), which owns the Nine Network.

Miners Todd Russell and Brant Webb were entombed nearly a kilometre underground following a cave-in on April 25th at the Beaconsfield Gold Mine in Tasmania. A third miner, Larry Knight, was killed in the rock-fall. The two survivors trapped in a wire cage, survived by drinking water seeping through rocks until rescuers managed to dig a small tunnel to deliver fresh food and water. Their tale has captured the attention of the nation, with media corporations fighting for exclusive rights to the miners' story.

The Nine Network's chief executive Eddie McGuire said under the PBL deal, Woman's Day, the Australian Women's Weekly and the Bulletin magazines would also have access to the men. The Nine Network has announced it would broadcast a two-hour special with entitled "The Great Escape."

Another deal is expected to be brokered with U.S. media. Mr McGuire said the deal would not restrict the pair from selling their story to CNN, the US Today Show and Good Morning America, who have all reportedly made contact with Mr Russell and Mr Webb this week.

Under the PBL deal, Woman's Day, the Australian Women's Weekly and the Bulletin magazines would also have access to the men, Mr McGuire said. Nine says it also wants the footage and photographs taken by the miners during their ordeal. The footage remains in the hands of the mining company.

The men, who were rescued on May 9th, have not spoken publicly about the time they spent trapped underground.

Hawaii to spend \$4.9M on coqui frog eradication

The Hawaii state legislature has appropriated US\$4.9 million to fight the coqui frog and other invasive species.

About \$2.9 million will be used to hire 58 additional inspectors at Hawaii's airports to improve detection of invasive species, an increase of 75% over the current level. The remaining \$2 million will be used specifically for coqui frog eradication using citric acid and hydrated lime.

Much of the money will go to the Big Island of Hawaii, where the coqui frog infestation is most serious. About \$1.8 million will go to the Big Island, with \$150,000 going to Maui and \$50,000 each going to Oahu and Kauai.

Native to the Caribbean, the coqui frog is believed to have entered on plants shipped from Florida or Puerto Rico. Without natural predators, the frogs' population density has grown to the point where it has become a nuisance. It is best known for its loud chirping, which keeps some residents on the Big Island and Maui awake at night.

Ecologists also fear that the coquis could threaten native bird species by eating the insects the birds rely on for food.

Culture of violence reported in central Australian Aboriginal communities

Australian media reports that a recently leaked Northern Territory police briefing paper exposes

"shocking" cases of sexual abuse and violence against women and children in remote Australian Aboriginal communities.

Central Australian Crown prosecutor, Dr Nannette Rogers, detailed a range of "dreadful" cases she had prosecuted. Her paper reveals details of abuse (over a 15-year period), including the rape of a seven-month-old baby, and the sexual assault and drowning of a girl by an 18-year-old man. The report refers to a disturbingly abusive and secretive Indigenous male culture. She says a "web of kinship" has helped to create a "conspiracy of silence" and that Aboriginal communities were suffering from "tragedy fatigue," allowing horrific crimes to appear unremarkable.

"It doesn't augur well for Aboriginal people to be functional human beings with the attributes of turning around and caring for children themselves," she said. "The child grows up seeing violence done to him or her and having violence done to him or her."

Tangentyere Council chief executive William Tilmouth says it is appalling behaviour. "It's a behaviour that's got to stop, it's behaviour that denigrates the family, as well as the women," he said.

Alcohol, Law and Order

Senior Indigenous elder Margaret Kemarre said, "There are more violence and there's no respect for people around here, no respect for elders and no respect for parents, as we see it now, and it's, you know, it's getting more and more," she said. "I think the grog (alcohol) is really taking away all our families. It's really destroying

us." Ms Kemarre says the answer to the problem apart from reducing the amount of alcohol in central Australia, is tougher sentencing by the white justice system.

Jane Lloyd, from Ngaanyatjarra Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Women's Council, said more police are necessary to help restore law and order in remote communities, particularly the remote outstations. "There is a history and tradition of violence, especially in Western Desert cultures. It's become more extreme," Ms Lloyd said.

Australia's Federal Indigenous Affairs Minister Mal Brough, says there are indeed problems with policing. "You go into a community here in the Territory of over 2,500 people and there's not one policeman," he said. Mr Brough says the Federal Government has started working with the NT Government over housing and other matters, but something needs to be done urgently about alcohol.

Northern Territory Chief Minister, Clare Martin, says slow progress is being made. "We are taking much stronger measures on alcohol," she said. "Talking to the Aboriginal community over the last couple of months in Alice Springs, the community is very concerned about the impact of alcohol and have decided that enough is enough - that we have to stand up and take tough measures." She said there was no simple solution to the problems of violence, abuse, and alcoholism plaguing many indigenous communities.

Mick Gooda, of the Cooperative Research Centre for Aboriginal Tropical Health, says dysfunctional Aboriginal communities should be

shut down. "Children are at risk... they should be removed from their families," he said. "We should not shy away from these hard decisions on the basis that we might be creating another stolen generation. I think what we're talking about here is kids being removed from risk situations."

Indigenous Australians communities, past and present

Lyla Coorey, author of a 2005 Federal Parliamentary report on the extent of child sexual abuse in Indigenous communities, say the reasons that child sexual abuse is more prevalent in Aboriginal remote communities are numerous. "We must look at the factors that particularly make Indigenous children vulnerable to ongoing abuse, she told ABC radio. "I think we need to look at all aspects of Indigenous children's lives. And it will become apparent that they are probably singularly the most disadvantaged group of Australians."

"You look at perhaps the social environment that they're growing up in. They're surrounded by neglect, parents who are involved in heavy substance abuse. And I think that in itself is a major issue," said Ms Coorey "And I think if you attempt to examine why that is the case you will find that a number of adults, Indigenous adults, are still suffering and still reeling from their own experiences of child sexual abuse."

Traditional owner Betty Pearce says, "This is not an Aboriginal culture. Twenty years ago, ...had an Aboriginal person done that, he'd have been killed - had he raped a child."

Claims of "paedophile rings"

Indigenous Affairs Minister Mal Brough has alleged on ABC Television that "pedophile rings were working behind a veil of customary law." Mr Brough says he does not want to steamroll the Territory government but that he will do "whatever it takes" to tackle the abuse of Aboriginal children.

NT Chief Minister Clare Martin said Mr Brough had been incredibly irresponsible. "We have no evidence of that," she told Southern Cross Broadcasting. "Two weeks ago Mal Brough had quite a session with our police commissioner, didn't mention (it). He had a long session with me, didn't mention it, (then) goes on national television, can't say where it came from, and under our law it must be reported." If Mr Brough had evidence of pedophile rings, he had an obligation to report it, Ms Martin said.

Opposition Leader Kim Beazley described Mr Brough's claims as libel. "There is nothing in Aboriginal customary law that justifies abuse," he said. "Aboriginal customary law regulates relations between the genders quite strictly and protects people in a situation where they are not yet physiologically adults. The argument that somehow or other these events relate to Aboriginal customary law (is) libel. They don't."

The Northern Territory Police Association says Mr Brough's comments are offensive and ignorant. "Mr Brough claims that our members turn a blind eye to crime in Aboriginal communities," association president Vince Kelly said. "That is the most ridiculous claim I have ever heard from a

federal indigenous affairs minister." Police often did not have the evidence to arrest suspects, Mr Kelly said. "To suggest police turn a blind eye to crime in Aboriginal communities is nothing short of insulting. To suggest our members apply the law differently in Aboriginal communities is ignorant and displays an absolute lack of understanding of the operational realities our members face in isolated Aboriginal communities, often dealing with complex tribal systems," he said.

Australian Greens Senator Bob Brown said that the focus on Aboriginal social breakdown, including rape, paedophilia and destructive drug addiction has to broaden to include white exploitation, profiteering and disdain for Aboriginal culture.

"We are 11 years into Mr Howard's Prime Ministry. His most memorable early contribution to this outrageous situation was to reject what he labelled 'black armband' view of history. The problem is he turned the black armband into blinkers," Senator Brown said. "The Prime Minister should lift this issue to the top his personal agenda. The plight of the First Australians is a national disgrace. Australian must restore health, safety and dignity to Aboriginal Australians."

Department of Defense releases 9/11 video of plane hitting Pentagon

The United States Department of Defense (DOD) is releasing surveillance video showing American Airlines flight 77 hitting the Pentagon on September 11, 2001. The video was taken from a Pentagon Security camera.

On December 15, 2004, a legal advocacy group called Judicial

Watch filed a lawsuit against the DOD in an attempt to have the video released through the Freedom of Information Act.

"We fought hard to obtain this video because we felt that it was very important to complete the public record with respect to the terrorist attacks of September 11," said Judicial Watch President, Tom Fitton.

"Finally, we hope that this video will put to rest the conspiracy theories involving American Airlines Flight 77. As always, our prayers remain with all those who suffered as a result of those murderous attacks," added Fitton.

According to the advocacy group, U.S. officials say they did not release the video earlier because it was part of the investigation into convicted plotter for al-Qaeda, Zacarias Moussaoui.

"Now that the trial of Zacarias Moussaoui is over, we are able to complete your request and provide the video," said chief of the Department of Defense, Office of Freedom of Information, William Kammer.

However; some are not sure what is shown on the video.

Michael Berger, spokesman for 911Truth.org said "In fact, I thought that was underwhelming." and "It doesn't clarify anything — I don't see a plane in that image. We would like to know what happened. Four-and-a-half years later, we still don't have definitive proof that a plane hit that building."

Trawler sinks in Foveaux Strait, three generations killed
After a trawler sank in heavy seas on Saturday, in the Foveaux Strait,

New Zealand, on the way back from muttonbirding. Of the nine people on board, including three generations of one family, only three survive.

Police believe the boat sank in less than a minute.

During the previous ten years, another six incidents occurred in the Strait, costing eight lives.

Maritime New Zealand investigators arrived in Bluff yesterday to begin an inquiry into the cause of the tragedy.

Today in History

1268 - Baibars and his Mamluk forces captured Antioch, capital of the crusader state, the Principality of Antioch.

1896 - "Separate but equal": The U.S. Supreme Court ruled in the landmark case Plessy v. Ferguson, upholding the legality of racial segregation in public transportation.

1944 - World War II: Polish forces under Lieutenant General Władysław Anders captured Monte Cassino and broke the Winter Line, a German defensive line in Italy.

1958 - A supersonic interceptor aircraft, F-104 Starfighter, set a world speed record of 1,404.19 mph.

1980 - Mount St. Helens erupted , killing 57 people in Washington and causing over a billion U.S. dollars in damages.

Quote of the Day

A Book of Verses underneath the Bough,
A Jug of Wine, a Loaf of Bread — and Thou
Beside me singing in the Wilderness —
Oh, Wilderness were Paradise enow!
~ Omar Khayyám ~

Word of the Day

flocculent; *adj*

Definition

1. Resembling tufts of wool.
2. Covered in wool; woolly.

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(toll-free in the U.S.)
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(U.K. / Europe)

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