



Top Stories

Offices of President Mahmoud Abbas's Fatah party hit by Israeli airstrikes

Offices of President Mahmoud Abbas's Fatah party were hit by an Israeli airstrike, Palestinian and Israeli sources say.

U.S. military tribunals in Guantanamo Bay require Congressional authorization

The United States Supreme Court has ruled that the military commissions set up in the Guantanamo Bay detainment camps in Cuba, to try terrorist suspects are not authorized by the Congress's Joint Resolution authorizing military action in Afghanistan, and that the President does not have the legal authority to establish military commissions absent express authorization from Congress.

Featured story

Film project aims to raise £1 million to make a Creative Commons-licensed film

Matt Hanson aims to raise £1 million to fund the production of a feature-length film which would be distributed freely via the internet under a Creative Commons licence, all funded through 50,000 people each donating £25 to the project, which he's called 'A Swarm of Angels'.

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- The United States House of Representatives votes to end a

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25-year ban on off-shore drilling.

- Former Governor of the U.S. state of Alabama Don Siegelman is convicted of bribery and conspiracy.
- The Dow Jones Industrial Average closes up over 215 points as a result of the United States Federal Reserve saying that it would consider the overall economy, and direction of inflation, in setting the interest rate. The Federal Reserve raised interest rates for the 17th consecutive time to 5.25% due to ongoing concerns about inflation.
- A suicide bomber attacks funeral of a Shiite soldier in Kirkuk, Iraq, killing four and wounding 27.
- The Supreme Court of the United States rules in Hamdan v. Rumsfeld that the Bush Administration has no authority to try detained prisoners held in Guantanamo Bay by military tribunal, and that the proceedings violate the Geneva Convention as well as the US constitution.
- British House of Commons by-elections for the constituencies of Blaenau Gwent and Bromley and Chislehurst are held to fill vacant parliamentary seats.
- Israeli government puts off an offensive to the northern Gaza Strip, and freezes military operations in the southern Gaza strip, to allow further time for diplomatic negotiations. There have been no Palestinian

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casualties in two days of Israeli operations in the Gaza Strip and West Bank.

Portugal receives this Thursday Russian aerial firefighting airplane

Portugal receives this Thursday night (June 29) the Russian airplane Beriev 200 that the Portuguese Government rented for two months. The objective is to test the aircraft during the fire season, giving the Ministry of Internal Administration information to decide about the order of this aircraft type.

The correspondent agreement firmed by the Portuguese vice-Minister of Internal Administration, Fernando Rosa Andrade, and the director of the Russian company Beriev, Victor Kobzev, will cost the Portuguese Government €1,234,000 (USD\$1,552,802) for the two months of renting for the aircraft and maintenance. The objective is to test the aircraft in real firefighting situations during this summer's fire season, these tests will then provide information for the Ministry of Internal Administration, so that this can make a final decision about the purchase of this aircraft type.

With the double of capacity for the transport of water and fire retardants of other aerial firefighting aircraft that usually operate in Portugal, mainly the Canadair, the Beriev airplane will operate in the entire country,

independently of its base. Being the capacity of the Beriev Be-200 and Canadair CL-415 respectively 12,000 L/h and 6,160 L/h.

However, is necessary to observe the Beriev 200 in action in the fires, by what, "as of June 1, the aircraft will enter in operational tests in real environment, during 60 days", Gil Martins, operations commander of the National Center of Rescue Operations, told RÃudio de RenascenÃ§a News Agency.

"The Beriev is an amphibious aircraft of the same type as the Canadair, that transports a dozen tons of fire retardants, the double than an Canadair aircraft", Martins added.

The aircraft arrives Thursday night at Monte Real Air Base, were he will stay until August 31, and will be visited tomorrow (July 1) by the Minister of Internal Administration, AntÃnio Costa.

The minister plan is to purchase four heavy aircraft for fighting forest and ground fires, which however, will only be available in 2008. In addition to the order of airplanes the Government as purchased six medium and four light helicopters, in two separate public contests, in which the deal for the six medium helicopters caused the dispute of an multimillionaire war between the three competing companies in the courts.

The international public contest launched by the Portuguese Government in November 2005, for the acquisition of six medium helicopters counted with five companies: Heliportugal, Helisul, Helibravo, Eurocopter and the Polish PZL. With the decision made by a jury of seven members, in April the Cabinet decided to

purchase to Heliportugal six Kamov 32 helicopters, in the value of 42.1 million euro, scheduled to arrive June 1.

Early this month the Polish company PZL interposed an action for a provisional legal remedy to the Supreme Administrative Court. In June 21 the Portuguese company Helisul made a plea for the decision of the Cabinet in April 27.

With about 3.2 million hectares of forest in 1995, Portugal lost, in only ten years, about fifth of its forest, registering, in 2005, only 2.5 million hectares.

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- Six Qassam rockets are launched from the northern Gaza Strip against Israeli towns. The Israel Defense Forces fire over 400 artillery shells at unpopulated areas in the Gaza Strip, to suppress further rocket attacks.

- Russia asks Israel to avoid harming Palestinian civilians in any offensive in the Gaza Strip and urges militants to free the abducted Israeli soldier.

- The body of Israeli student Eliyahu Asheri is found buried in a field near Ramallah with a head shot. Asheri, 18, was kidnapped and killed on Sunday night by a Palestinian militant group.

- Israeli air strike leaves a senior Islamic Jihad militant in Gaza lightly wounded.

- The body of Noam Moskovich, an Alzheimer's patient who was claimed to be abducted by Palestinian militants, is found in Rishon LeZion. Police ruled out both criminal and terrorist motives.

- Israeli soldiers arrest 62 Hamas

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members in the West Bank, including 8 ministers and 20 lawmakers in the Palestinian Authority, raising concern at concurrent G8 summit. Israeli officials announce that further arrests are expected, and that the suspects will face standard criminal proceedings.

- The Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades, the militant wing of Mahmoud Abbas's Fatah party, claims it has launched a chemical-tipped missile at Israel, and claims to have at least twenty biological weapons.

- Kuwait holds a Parliamentary election, the country's first with universal suffrage.

- The cabinet Balkenende II of the Netherlands resigns after a row between the coalition partners about the citizenship of former MP Ayaan Hirsi Ali.

Campaigning begins for groundbreaking Congo elections

Over 200 parties are gearing up to begin a month of campaigning across the Democratic Republic of Congo, ahead of voting at the end of July.

At midnight on June 29, canvassing can officially begin across the country, in the first open elections since the country gained independence in 1961. Polls were originally due to take place last year but were delayed twice by the interim government.

The international community is taking a keen interest in events, many with a hopeful belief that the elections will end nearly a decade of violence in the country. The South African government announced earlier today that they

hoped the ballot would mark the culmination of over ten years of peace efforts by the people of the DRC.

However some are concerned that despite the presence of the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) the campaigning would still not be fair. More than 200 parties are plying for votes, but only a few have enough money to target the mass media. The current President, Joseph Kabila has a monopoly on the state media, according to the BBC, and in over a third of constituencies, there is only one candidate.

The UN mission in the country, Monuc, has been monitoring the peace during the transitional period since war officially ended 3 years ago. In a statement today they said they demanded that the electoral campaign takes place in a calm, serene and constructive spirit.

A key area will be the fragile eastern parts of the country still recovering from the long war with Rwanda. Yesterday three people died in the eastern town of Goma as the roof of an aircraft hanger collapsed under the weight of hundreds of Kabila supporters who had gathered to see the interim president, and likely winner of next months polls.

Voting itself is due to begin on July 29.

Ahern, Blair restate deadline on devolution

Irish Taoiseach Bertie Ahern and British Prime Minister Tony Blair have stated that the November 24 deadline for formation of a devolved, power-sharing government is final and that it is the last chance for parties to restore devolution in Northern

Ireland. The two prime ministers met in Belfast at Stormont today with the major parties about the deadline.

Blair stated he would shut down the Northern Ireland Assembly, cut the salary and benefits of all 108 members and forge a stronger direct rule with the Republic of Ireland. He also stated that both government were not willing to continue talks past the deadline and would instead work on developing joint policies in Northern Ireland.

Blair who is under pressure to resign by next year is seeking a more permanent peace settlement before he leaves office.

"This is the last chance for this generation, really, to make this process work," Blair said. "We've come a long way, but we need to get the rest of the way now."

Ahern said that he wanted to see the institutions active as soon as possible. He added, "The reality of this is that if we don't do this by November 24 then we lose a huge opportunity."

The two prime ministers have also published a in-depth timeline stating what negotiators must accomplish to establish a joint power-sharing administration, one of the main goals of the Good Friday Agreement signed in 1998, by the deadline.

The administration would be led by the two main parties, the Democratic Unionist Party led by Ian Paisley and Sinn Fein, led by Gerry Adams.

The parties gave their opinions over the visit by the prime ministers.

The deputy leader of the Democratic Unionist Party, Peter Robinson, said their party stressed the need for the assembly to meet. He added, "If negotiations are going to begin in the autumn, then the assembly is going to have to meet between now and then. We can not move on to the next stage unless we move in the sequence of scoping the issues, debating the issues and then negotiating the issues." Robinson is referring to the fact that the Assembly will go on a summer recess soon.

Sinn Fein leader Gerry Adams hoped the process could move on. "The two governments sought to reassure us of their total commitment to the November 24 deadline and their commitment to making this process work. "We now want them to match that verbal commitment with action in the time ahead," stated Adams.

Yesterday, Sinn Fein announced that the party is thinking of withdrawing from the Northern Ireland Assembly in autumn, after launching an internal review. The review could shift the party's focus from a devolution deal to the next election if the deal is unlikely by the November 24 deadline.

The leader of the Ulster Unionist Party, Sir Reg Empey, said that anyone who has no intention of meeting the November 24 deadline should "have the guts to say so". Empey added, "We want to see devolution restored if the conditions are right at the time and we will spare no effort to see that is achieved."

David Ford, the leader of the Alliance Party said that his party is sharing the frustration of the people of Northern Ireland. He added, "Alliance is prepared to

work its socks off until November to get an assembly restored but we need the governments to play their part as well."

The leader of the Social Democratic and Labour Party, Mark Durkan, said ahead of his meeting with the two "The taoiseach and the prime minister shouldn't have to be here today trying to make sense out of a lot of the nonsense that is coming from some of the parties. I hope the two premiers are clear in their message today that they want to see the parties here get on with it, because that is what the public want to see."

On May 15, the parties took their seats in the first session of the Northern Ireland Assembly since October 2002. The assembly had been suspended since 2002 over allegations of a republican spy ring. Direct rule from London has been in place since then.

A Preparation for Government Committee has been formed consisting of the various major parties, but progress has been slow. Especially since the DUP will not cooperate with Sinn Fein until the Irish Republican Army completely disbands. Last year, the IRA decommissioned their weaponry.

Blair and Ahern plan to return to Northern Ireland in October after the publication of a report on paramilitary activity.

Meanwhile, before meeting with the parties, the two prime ministers ventured to Ballymena, County Antrim to meet with cross-community students. The meeting is in response to murder of Michael McIlveen, a 15-year-old Catholic boy by a loyalist/unionist mob in County Antrim.

Internet crusade to save old trillium logo

The Ontario Liberal Party created a new Ontario trillium logo. It was \$219,000 dollars. Many people and the PC Party of Ontario call it a waste of time and money. They replaced the logo with a version of the flower similar to the party's trademark.

Now the Progressive Conservatives have started a new website. The website is a petition to save the old trillium logo. The website just started yesterday. PC leader John Tory had lots of interviews today.

"You just don't arbitrarily tamper with it under cover of darkness," PC Leader John Tory said yesterday, launching the website savethetrillium.ca. "It survived more or less intact through seven governments under all parties until Dalton McGuinty and his partisan pork barrellers got their hands on it." said, John Tory. He also said "it is wasting time and money fiddling with marketing and logos while gun violence and energy problems go unattended". Tory calls it a useless use of funds and an inappropriate change because the new logo too closely resembles the flower seen in the Liberal Party banner.

The logo was introduced in 1964. It has undergone minor redesigns, but always remained a stylized T-shaped trillium. The latest version, designed by Toronto advertising agency Bensimon Byrne, is more angular and has no border.

"It's awful," Keith Rushton, a professor of design at the Ontario College of Art and Design. "It was a drastic change. It's a very aggressive, hostile logo."

The Liberals have defended the logo revamp saying "it was time to

modernize the symbol in order to attract new business to the province".

For now, the Torys will leave it to the Canadian public.

U.S. military tribunals in Guantanamo Bay require Congressional authorization

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The court also found the trials to be in violation of the Geneva conventions, to which the United States is a party.

The case, titled *Hamdan v. Rumsfeld*, focused on an Yemeni citizen who is alleged to have been a bodyguard and driver for Osama bin Laden and was captured in Afghanistan in November 2001 and held at Guantanamo since June 2002.

On November 13, 2001 President Bush issued a Military Order declaring that military commissions would try foreign terrorist suspects for alleged war crimes. These military commissions would differ from traditional courts of law in that: they would allow hearsay evidence; would be allowed to consider classified evidence during closed sessions, without providing the suspect a chance to hear the evidence or defend himself against it; and they would be allowed to use evidence coerced through

torture.

The court denied the government's assertion that it lacks authority to review decisions by the D.C. Circuit Court because the Detainee Treatment Act of 2005 only strips the Supreme Court of appellate jurisdiction over cases filed after its enactment.

Turning to the merits of the petitioner, it found that the crime Hamdan is charged with - conspiracy - is not a crime that violates the law of war and thus should not be tried by a military commission.

The court conceded that Congress has the prerogative to establish commissions such as the one desired by the Bush administration but found that it has not yet done so.

The Supreme Court ruled 5-3 with Associate Justices Breyer, Ginsburg, Stevens, Souter and Kennedy in the majority; Alito, Thomas, Scalia dissented and Chief Justice Roberts recused (he had earlier sided with the government on the appellate level).

Nine other detainees face charges before the military commissions. Department of Defense spokesmen had previously announced that they planned to charge an additional 60 of the 460 detainees remaining at Guantanamo before military commissions.

Lt. Cmdr Charles Swift, Hamdan's military counsel who filed the request, said: "All we wanted was a fair trial and we thank the Supreme Court. Yes it is a rebuke for the process. [...] It means we can't be scared out of who we are."

President George W. Bush said that his administration "will work with Congress" to address the issue and added that "we're in a war on terror, that these people were picked up off of a battlefield, and I will protect the people and at the same time conform with the findings of the Supreme Court".

Senator Patrick Leahy (D-VT) said that "for five years, the Bush-Cheney administration has violated fundamental American values, tarnished our standing in the world and hindered the partnerships we need with our allies. This arrogance and incompetence have delayed and weakened the handling of the war on terror, not because of any coherent strategic view it had, but because of its stubborn unilateralism and dangerous theory of unfettered power".

Senator John Warner (R-VA) said he doesn't regard the decision as "a blow" but rather as "an interpretation of the law".

Zapatero announces peace talks with Basque separatists, ETA

The Government is going to initiate talks with ETA" said Spanish President Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero in a televised speech to Parliament, Thursday.

The historic announcement meant Mr Zapatero's Socialist-led government were set to begin peace talks with the Basque separatist group ETA for the first time in Spain's history.

"The process is going to be long, tough and difficult. We'll handle it with determination and prudence, with unity and loyalty and always with respect to the memory of the victims," said Mr Zapatero.

At a news conference Mr Zapatero said the proposed talks would discuss the dismantling of ETA's organisation and the 500 ETA prisoners in Spanish jails but not Basque independence. "Democracy will not pay any political price to achieve peace," Mr Zapatero said.

The Spanish opposition Popular Party did not give their full support for Mr Zapatero's peace bid. They particularly objected to talks with Batasuna, the political front of ETA. "Any normal person understands you can't negotiate with someone whose negotiating weapon is as powerful and hard to argue with as a pistol," said Popular Party leader Mariano Rajoy.

ETA had been fighting a terrorist war since Franco's era until it announced a permanent ceasefire March 22, 2006. The group was responsible for 817 deaths over its 38-year campaign while staking its claim for territory in northern Spain and south-western France.

ETA says the motivation for talks is so the Basque people get to decide their own future.

Their request last week came after three months of ceasefire. Though ETA had not killed since 2003 it had continued to explode bombs and extort money from businesses.

It is thought a six-year police crackdown on militants and opinion polls that suggested not all Basques wanted independence made violence a counter-productive strategy for ETA. Violence also had become associated with September 11, 2001 and the 2004 Madrid bombings.

Google launches online payment service

Google has today launched its foray into the world online payment processing with Google Checkout. This is considered by many to be a rival to the payment giant PayPal, owned by eBay. This service is currently only available to U.S. residents.

Google has created the service in a similar way to PayPal. There are two types of Google Checkout account, Buyer and Seller. Only a Seller account can receive payments through the service, a Buyer account can only make payments. This is tied in very closely with the Google Adwords service - adverts selling items can now display a small shopping cart icon - which indicates that the advertiser accepts Google Checkout as a method of payment.

The selling rate is also closely tied in with the Google AdWords service. Other online payment services generally charge a set percentage per transaction, whereas Google Checkout credits you with a certain amount of "free transactions" when you purchase Google AdWords (For every US \$1 spent on AdWords, US \$10 in sales can be processed at no charge) - or a rate of 2% plus US \$0.20 if the Seller is not a Google Adwords subscriber. There are no charges associated with Buyer Accounts.

Currently, Google Checkout only accepts Visa, MasterCard, American Express, and Discover Credit Cards for inclusion on a buyer's or seller's account. They also offer a special deal for users of a Citicard credit card - US \$5 (or 1000 ThankYousm Points) for signing up. Google has announced its' intentions to "to make the service available to merchants internationally" in the near future.

35 South Park complaints not upheld, New Zealand

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South Africa's "speed king" dies during record attempt

Verneukpan, South Africa â South Africa's speed king, Johan Jacobs, was involved in a fatal crash yesterday at a speed of more than 500 km/h. Jacobs (aged 40), who originates from Pretoria, was busy conducting a test run before an attempt at the land-speed record.

His friends and family observed in horror as his jet-powered car, after covering a mere 700 m, flipped over and disintegrated. Paramedics rushed to the scene and tried in vain to revive him.

On October 28, 2005, Jacobs effortlessly improved upon the then current South African land speed record of 288 km/h, raising it to 504,5 km/h (average speed of two runs in both directions.)

Today in History

1864 - U.S. National Parks: Abraham Lincoln granted Yosemite Valley to California for "public ... recreation".

1905 - Albert Einstein published the article "On the Electrodynamics of Moving Bodies" and introduced the theory of special relativity.

1908 - The Tunguska impact event occurred in Siberia.

1934 - Adolf Hitler violently purged his political rivals on the Night of the Long Knives.

1971 - The Soyuz 11 spacecraft depressurised during reentry, killing cosmonauts Vladislav Volkov, Georgi Dobrovolski and Viktor Patsayev.

June 30 is Independence Day in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (1960)

Quote of the Day

"Great spirits have always encountered violent opposition from mediocre minds. The mediocre mind is incapable of

understanding the man who refuses to bow blindly to conventional prejudices and chooses instead to express his opinions courageously and honestly."

~ Albert Einstein

Word of the Day

mondegreen; n

1. A form of error arising from mishearing a spoken or sung phrase.

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