



Top Stories

ACLU commemorates anniversary of US Supreme Court decision on student free speech

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Wedding next year for Sweden's crown princess

On February 24th the Swedish Royal Court announced that the Crown Princess Victoria was to be married in 2010 to her boyfriend and former fitness trainer Daniel Westling. Victoria, 31, and Daniel, 35, have been in an relationship for 7 years.



Credit:Henrik Sendelbach CC-BY-SA 2.5

Former Serbian president Milutinovic acquitted of war crimes

Milan Milutinovic, the former president of Serbia, has been cleared of charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity by a United Nations war crimes tribunal in Kosovo.



Wikipedia Current Events

Carpatair Flight 128 – a Saab 2000 bound for Timișoara, Romania, from Chișinău, Moldova, and carrying 51 people – makes an emergency landing at Traian Vuia International Airport without its forward landing gear.

- American Radio Personality, Paul Harvey, dies at age 90.
- Burma's government announces it will allow to return Rohingyas who have fled to neighboring countries only if they identify themselves as Bengalis.
- Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao holds the first online discussion with Internet users before the National People's Congress's annual plenary session.
- The Standing Committee of China's NPC approves the Food Safety Law, which will enhance supervision and strengthen quality standards.
- California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger declares a state of emergency, due to severe drought.
- Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe vows to continue his policy of distributing land from white to black farmers.
- Colombia's military kills ten and captures eight Revolutionary Armed Forces members in Cundinamarca.
- A gene linked to a genetic motor neurone disease is discovered.
- Bangladesh's Army finds more mass graves where Bangladesh

Wikipedia Current Events

Rifles mutinied in Dhaka.
•The Holy See claims that the Roman Catholic Church's number of priests is slowly rising.

Bangladesh mutiny leaves scores of officers dead

On Wednesday, members of the Bangladesh Rifles (BDR), a paramilitary force charged with border security for Bangladesh, staged a mutiny taking over 100 of their officers as hostages. They took control of the primary barracks in the Pilkhana area of the Dhaka District.

According to one mutineer, who spoke to the BBC, the troops were unhappy with the officers and felt that they were being exploited. Rank-and-file BDR members are paid about US\$70 (£49) per month, substantially lower than the officers and on par with a low-ranking clerk.

"Our families might suffer because of what we have done, but they have been exploiting us for more than 200 years," the unidentified man said.

The BDR has 67,000 men stationed at 42 camps across the country, including 40,000 stationed at border camps. Clashes were reported at as many as twelve different camps.

In the ensuing standoff, the Bangladesh Army and the Rapid Action Battalion were called in to show the resolve of the

government. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina declared an amnesty for the mutineers if they would stand down.

When the BDR mutineers laid down arms or fled, troops moved in and discovered a mass grave containing at least 58 officers at the Dhaka facility, including the head of the BDR, Major General Shakil Ahmed. Reports say that as many as 100 were killed. The Press Trust of India reports that the whereabouts of 130 officers have not been determined.

"The bodies were buried underground in a makeshift grave near the hospital in the BDR headquarters compound," Colonel Rezaul Karim of the Rapid Action Battalion told Agence France-Presse. "The dirt had been covered with leaves."

The head of the Bangladesh Army, General Moeen U Ahmed, criticized the government's handling of the mutiny and expressed disapproval of the offer of amnesty. He did, however, say that the Army remains loyal to the government.

"We should not act against one another," said Gen. Moeen U Ahmed.

Prime Minister Hasina backtracked on the amnesty after the mass grave was discovered.

"The people directly involved in the killings will not be pardoned and would not be covered under the general amnesty," she said. "No-one has the right to kill anyone."

"This is probably the biggest incident Bangladesh has had since 1975 and our government — the prime minister — handled this compassionately, pragmatically but decisively to bring the

situation under control," Sajeeb Wazed, son of Sheikh Hasina, told the BBC, referring to the assassination of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in 1975.

Fatal US Army helicopter collision in Iraq blamed on enemy fire

A collision between two United States military helicopters in Iraq that killed four last month has been blamed on enemy fire. The two OH-58 Kiowa Warriors had been on a mission in Kirkuk when they were targeted and struck each other during evasive action, killing all those on board.

The announcement on the involvement of hostile fire, which had previously been ruled out, was made at Fort Drum shortly after a memorial service for the two crews, who had been based there. The Army said that forensic evidence revealed the presence of enemy fire.

"The two OH-58D helicopters were engaged and struck by hostile fire while conducting a reconnaissance mission," said a Fort Drum spokeswoman. The Agence France-Presse was told that the investigation "determined that the two OH-58 helicopters involved in the January 25 incident [sic] in Kirkuk province were engaged and struck by hostile fire," and that "While executing evasive manoeuvres in response to the hostile fire, the two OH-58s collided, resulting in the catastrophic loss of both aircraft and crews," by a US Army spokesman for northern Iraq. There is no indication as in to the precise nature of the attack.

Sunni nationalist extremist group Nakshabandiya had handed out leaflets after the attack saying they had shot the aircraft down

and "would soon show a video," later repeating this claim on their website. The group has ties to Saddam Hussein's fugitive deputy Izzat Ibrahim al-Duri.

The death toll was the highest for US soldiers in a single event for four months in Iraq. The four men were Philip E. Windorski Jr., Matthew Kelley, Joshua Tillery and Benjamin Todd, all Warrant Officers with the 10th Mountain Division's 10th Combat Aviation Brigade. All are survived by their wives and children.

ACLU commemorates anniversary of US Supreme Court decision on student free speech

On Tuesday, the non-profit organization the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) released a video and press release commemorating 40 years since the landmark Supreme Court of the United States decision involving freedom of speech in the case *Tinker v. Des Moines Independent Community School District*. The *Tinker* case was decided on February 24, 1969. The case involved students in Iowa who chose to wear black armbands with peace symbols in protest of the Vietnam War – in violation of a recent school board policy. In their statement, the ACLU compared issues of freedom of speech in the *Tinker* case to a more recent case, *Gillman v. Holmes County School District*, where a school district in Florida forbade students from wearing rainbow symbols in school in support of LGBT rights.

In the *Tinker* case, John and Mary Beth Tinker and another student decided to wear black armbands with peace symbols to school in protest of the Vietnam War. The school district heard of the students' plans and decided to ban

armbands in school. The three students case were represented by the ACLU of Iowa, and in a 7-2 decision the Supreme Court ruled for the plaintiffs.

Supreme Court Justice Abe Fortas wrote in the Opinion of the Court: "It can hardly be argued that either students or teachers shed their constitutional rights...at the schoolhouse gate."

The Gillman case began in September 2007 when according to students at Ponce de Leon High School in Florida, school officials responded improperly to complaints from a lesbian student that she was being harassed by other students. The ACLU contacted the school district on behalf of junior Heather Gillman, inquiring what form of symbols or slogans relating to LGBT rights would be allowed.

The school district responded saying it would not allow any expression of the sort, because it would "likely be disruptive", and said the wearing of these types of symbols by students could signify they were part of a "secret/illegal organization".

The video released by the ACLU includes clips of a deposition given by David Davis, the principal of Ponce de Leon High School in Florida. Davis testified he decided to ban students from wearing rainbow symbols in school because the rainbow is a symbol of "gay pride", and he said it "could hinder the educational process". He also testified that these symbols would immediately cause students viewing them to think of homosexual sex. Heather Gillman commented in the ACLU video "It was kind of scary, kinda, because I didn't know what people would think, but then I figured 'Who

cares what people think, I'm standing up for something I believe in.'"

On May 13, 2008, a federal judge decided in favor of the plaintiff, and permanently enjoined the school district from infringing upon the First Amendment rights of the students. Matt Coles, director of the ACLU's national LGBT Project, stated "Schools need to know censorship is illegal, and students need to know their schools can't get away with it."

In reflecting on the use of the Tinker precedent in the Gillman case, the ACLU cited three instances in which schools "were made to stop illegally censoring students thanks to Tinker v. Des Moines." These include a 2006 incident where a student in Ohio was instructed by school administrators to remove a t-shirt which read "I support gay marriage", and a 2007 incident where a teacher and an assistant principal at a school in Virginia told a student she could not wear a t-shirt with overlapping female gender symbols. In both cases the ACLU represented the students and school officials backed down and apologized for their actions.

In a blog post Tuesday by Mary Beth Tinker at Daily Kos, Tinker reflected on the similarities between her case before the Supreme Court of the United States and the more recent federal case of Heather Gillman. "I'm grateful that the precedent established by the Supreme Court 40 years ago is still protecting students, including LGBT students and their friends," wrote Tinker. She encouraged young people to speak out about issues of concern to them and to freely express their thoughts and views. Tinker is currently a nurse in Washington,

D.C., and travels the United States speaking to students about their First Amendment rights.

Australian Sex Party to run independents in Queensland election

The Australian Sex Party will run candidates in three electorates in the upcoming Queensland state election. However, since the party does not have a sufficient membership base, the candidates will run as independents.

The party will run of a number of platforms including same sex marriage and age of consent. In Queensland the age of consent for homosexuals is 18 while it is 16 for heterosexuals. Every other state in Australia has an age of consent of 16 regardless of sexual orientation.

The party has been met with opposition from the Australian Christian Lobby (ACL). The ACL has challenged the major parties to place Sex Party candidates last on their how-to-vote cards. "The Australian Sex Party exists to represent the interests of businesses who make money from the exploitation and degradation of women," Jim Wallace, ACL managing director, said.

"If Labor, the LNP and the Greens believe women should be respected and are concerned about the enormous damage caused by pornography and prostitution then they should be demonstrating this by having nothing to do with the Sex Party or its affiliated candidates," said Wallace. The Queensland Greens sole Member of Parliament Ronan Lee has indicated that the Greens will wait until nominations close until they decide on preferences.

Obama budget calls for record US deficit

United States President Barack Obama unveiled his administration's 2010 United States federal budget on Thursday. The budget calls for a record US\$3.6 trillion in spending.

The new budget will use a \$1.75 trillion deficit, which would be nearly four times greater than any previous deficit and is \$250 billion larger than what was projected just days ago due to a proposed new spending for another bank bailout.

"We will, each and every one of us, have to compromise on certain things we care about but which we simply cannot afford right now," said President Obama. "What I won't do is sacrifice investments that will make America stronger, more competitive and more prosperous in the 21st century — investments that have been neglected for too long."

House of Representatives minority leader John Boehner was critical of the budget. "We can't tax and spend our way to prosperity," he said. "The era of big government is back, and Democrats are asking you to pay for it."

"Given the economic catastrophe that we face, to go right into the teeth of that hurricane and plan for some ambitious expansion of government that goes beyond the triage element is bold to say the least," Norman J. Ornstein, a political scholar at the American Enterprise Institute, told Reuters.

\$634 billion of the budget is "dedicated [to] financing reforms to our health care system," according to Obama. Analysts reporting for the BBC and Reuters both conclude that, if passed, it

lays a ground-work for a form of universal health care.

Wedding next year for Sweden's crown princess

On February 24th the Swedish Royal Court announced that the Crown Princess Victoria is to be married in 2010 to her boyfriend and former fitness trainer Daniel Westling. KP Victoria, 31, and Daniel, 35, have been in an relationship for seven years. As the wedding is to be held in the summer of 2010, it gives the court 18 months to prepare, contemplate the wedding dress of the Crown Princess, and complete the guest-list – which will include prominent guests from Europe and the world.

According to the Swedish constitution, KP Victoria must ask for the King's approval for the marriage, who then has to call a cabinet council so that the government can give its approval. This was done on Tuesday morning, just before the court announced the engagement.

After the wedding, Daniel will be given the title of Prince Daniel, Duke of Västergötland. Their children will be next in line to the throne after Crown Princess Victoria.

Former Serbian president Milutinovic acquitted of war crimes

Milan Milutinović, the former president of Serbia, has been cleared of charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity by a United Nations war crimes tribunal in Kosovo.

Five other top Serbian officials, however, were found guilty of their charges and given sentences ranging from 15 to 22 years in prison.

Milutinović, aged 66, was the president of Serbia from December 1997 to December 2002, but was widely seen as a figurehead president during the Kosovo conflict in the 1990s. The court concluded that he did not have any direct control over the army, and was released from custody.

"The trial chamber finds you not guilty of counts one to five of the indictment," said Iain Bonomy, the judge at the trial. "In practice, it was Milošević, sometimes termed the 'Supreme Commander', who exercised actual command authority over the [Serb army] during the NATO campaign."

Milutinović and the five other men went on trial in July of 2006 on charges of murdering hundreds and forcibly deporting 800,000 civilians by Serbian forces in 1999 in Kosovo.

Of the five sentenced to prison, former Deputy Prime Minister Nikola Šainović, Yugoslav Army General Nebojša Pavković, and Serbian Police General Sreten Lukić were given sentences of 22 years. Yugoslav Army General Vladimir Lazarević and Chief of the General Staff Dragoljub Ojdanić were each sentenced to 15 years behind bars.

All six men had pleaded not guilty to their charges.

Today in History

1781 – The Articles of Confederation, the first governing constitution of the United States, was ratified, legally uniting what were originally several sovereign and independent states into a new sovereign federation.

1872 – Yellowstone National Park, located primarily in the U.S. state of Wyoming, one of the first

national parks in the world, was established.
 1896 – Ethiopia won the decisive Battle of Adwa over Italy, ending the First Italo-Abyssinian War.
 1919 – Korea under Japanese rule: The Samil Movement began with numerous peaceful protests in Korea, but was brutally suppressed by the Japanese police and army.
 1954 – The 15-megaton hydrogen bomb Castle Bravo was detonated on Bikini Atoll in the Pacific Ocean, resulting in one of the worst cases of radioactive contamination ever caused by nuclear testing.
 March 01 is Independence Day in Bosnia and Herzegovina (1992); Saint David's Day in Wales; Mărțișor in Romania and Moldova; Martenitsa in Bulgaria

Quote of the Day

From the sublime to the ridiculous is but a step.
 ~ Napoleon I of France

Word of the Day

breviary n

1. A book containing prayers, hymns, and so on for everyday use at the canonical hours.

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