



Top Stories

Berlusconi concedes defeat



According to the Italian news agency Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi, has admitted defeat and is expected to resign on Tuesday. Romano Prodi will take Berlusconi's place as PM.

Mujahideen Shura Council claims responsibility for various attacks in Iraq



The Mujahideen Shura Council Claims Responsibility for a Suicide Bombing Targeting British Soldiers in al-

Basra, Multiple Bombings and Sniper Attacks Targeting American and Iraqi Forces, and a Judge, in al-Ameriya, al-Najaf, al-Mosul and Baghdad.

Wikipedia Current Events

•U.S. relations with Iran continue to deteriorate after US officials called Iran one of the world's most active sponsors of terrorism, as IAEA reveals that Tehran has successfully enriched uranium and is racing ahead with its nuclear programme. Iran says it does not "give a damn" about the verdict from the IAEA director Mohamed ElBaradei and what it might lead to.

Spanish-language version of U.S. anthem stirs controversy

A Spanish-language version of the U.S. national anthem "The Star-Spangled Banner" has sparked controversy amid a developing debate over the status of illegal immigrants.

Produced by British record producer Adam Kidron and due to be released Friday, the recording "Nuestro Himno" (Our Anthem) features recording artists Wyclef Jean, hip-hop star Armando "Pitbull" Perez, and Puerto Rican singers Carlos Ponce and Olga Tanon.

The song uses Spanish lyrics based closely on the English original, says Kidron. However, a remix planned for release in June will include lines critical of U.S. immigration policy.

President George W. Bush declared Friday that the anthem should be sung in English and not Spanish. "I think the national anthem ought to be sung in English, and I think

people who want to be a citizen of this country ought to learn English and they ought to learn to sing the national anthem in English," said Bush.

In response, Kidron said, "The intention of recording 'Nuestro Himno' (Our Anthem) has never been to discourage immigrants from learning English and embracing American culture. We instead view 'Nuestro Himno' as a song that affords those immigrants that have not yet learned the English language the opportunity to fully understand the character of the Star-Spangled Banner, the American flag and the ideals of freedom that they represent."

News of the release of "Nuestro Himno" sparked surprise and outrage on Internet blogs. Columnist Michelle Malkin called the Spanish-language version an attempt to "pander to ethnic grievance-mongers who don't respect American laws or traditions."

The political website The American Street points out that the U.S. Bureau of Education commissioned a Spanish-language translation of the anthem in 1919, which is displayed on the Library of Congress' website.

The melody to "The Star-Spangled Banner" itself was borrowed from English drinking song "To Anacreon in Heaven." Kidron, in noting this, says, "There's no attempt to usurp anything. The intent is to communicate."

Featured story

City of Buffalo, N.Y. fighting lawsuit against hotel proposal



According to Councilmember Joseph Golombek, the City of Buffalo will fight the lawsuit against the hotel. He also said "we did everything

fairly and properly (as well as legally)."

IAEA Iran report leaked

The Director-General of the International Atomic Energy Agency, Mohamed ElBaradei, has issued a new report titled "Implementation of the NPT Safeguards Agreement in the Islamic Republic of Iran" and distributed it to members of the United Nations Security Council and the Agency's member states, but notes that the report is to remain secret, stating that "unless the IAEA Board of Governors and Security Council decide otherwise, the Agency cannot authorise its release to the public."

Iran is presently neither a member of the UN Security Council nor of the IAEA Board of Governors.

As of 20:52, 29 April 2006 (UTC) or earlier, the report was made available on the Internet on the website payvand.com, dated April 28, 2006. It is unknown whether or not the release was authorised by the United Nations Security Council or the IAEA.

Mexico to possibly decriminalize possession of small amounts of drugs

The Congress of Mexico has passed a bill that will decriminalize the possession of small amounts of drugs for personal use. The passage of the bill has drawn criticism from Washington, D.C.

Under the law possession of small amounts of drugs for personal use including marijuana, cocaine, heroin, LSD and ecstasy will no longer be a crime. This will allow Mexican officials to focus on large-scale drug trafficking instead of minor busts.

President Vicente Fox is expected to sign the bill. According, Fox's spokesman, Ruben Aguilar, "This law gives police and prosecutors

better legal tools to combat drug crimes that do so much damage to our youth and children."

Mujahideen Shura Council claims responsibility for various attacks in Iraq

The Mujahideen Shura Council, in seven communiqués issued amongst nearly two dozen between today, April 28, 2006 and yesterday, claims responsibility for a suicide bombing in al-Basra targeting British forces, several bombings and sniper attacks targeting American and Iraqi forces, and the attempted murder of the Iraqi Minister of Interior.

1. On Friday, April 21, 2006, a suicide bomber detonated himself on a gathering of British forces in al-Basra, allegedly destroying three vehicles and killing their occupants.
2. The second message states that the judge of appeals of al-Najaf court was assassinated Tuesday, April 25, and his weapon and car were confiscated.
3. An improvised explosive device (IED) was detonated on the motorcade of the Iraqi Minister of Interior in an attempted assassination in Baghdad. In this third message, the group states: "We ask Allah to help us to get his head the next time".
4. On Wednesday, April 26 an IED was detonated on a "Crusader" armored vehicle in al-Mosul, destroying it and killing its occupants.
5. The fifth communiqué indicates that a rocket was fired at an American Humvee in al-Ameriya on April 24.
6. A "cross soldier" was purported

to have been sniped in al-Ameriya on April 24.

7. The seventh communiqué states that two American soldiers were sniped in al-Ameriya on Saturday, April 22.

The Islamic Army in Iraq Claims Responsibility for Bombings Targeting American Forces

The Islamic Army in Iraq Claims Responsibility for Bombings Targeting American Forces in Areas Around Baghdad, and an Ambush of Iraqi Police in al-Ishaqi

The Islamic Army in Iraq issued six communiqués between April 27, 2006, and yesterday, claiming responsibility for bombings targeting American forces in various areas around Baghdad, including: Jabla, al-Ishaqi, al-Howeija and al-Yusefiya. The group also describes setting up an ambush for interior Iraqi police in al-Ishaqi yesterday, opening fire on the patrol and allegedly killing three "converters".

Sniper's tower attacked in Ramadi

A video released by the Mujahideen Shura Council operating in Iraq shows an attack on an American sniper town in the city of Ramadi.

At the beginning of the clip it says this is revenge on the sniper who killed a young girl and her mother. Apparently the sniper also killed a local civilian on Monday.

The official press release by the group is translated, and quoted below.

In the name of Allah the most Gracious the most Merciful

O' Allah, straighten up our aim

and make us stand firm

All Praise and thanks are Allah's, the Lord of all that exists. And peace be upon our prophet Muhammad, his family and companions in entirety.

Allah is great,

"Honor, power and glory belong to Allah, to his messenger, and to the believers, but the hypocrites know not."

The media committee of Mujahideen Shura council of Iraq

Zarqawi shows face in new video

The first "visual issue" of the Emir of al-Qaeda in Iraq, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, was issued April 25, 2006, by the Mujahideen Shura Council. A thirty-four minute video containing an approximately twenty minute oration by Zarqawi, footage of him leading mujahideen in training on the battlefield and in a war room, and seated amongst local leaders of al-Anbar province. His speech touches upon a variety of topics, including the purportedly victorious and successful state of the mujahideen in Iraq, waging jihad in Iraq while steadying eyes on Jerusalem, and Usama bin Laden's proposed truce with the West. In fact, the video proper opens with an excerpt of a speech by bin Laden urging Muslim youth to jihad. On the refusal of the proposal, he warns U.S. President George W. Bush, his allies of the "Crusaders, Shi'ites and the converters" that they will never enjoy life as long as blood courses through the veins of the mujahideen.

Zarqawi also speaks of the alleged lies of the administration and the true state of the American soldier in Iraq. He states: "Why don't you

tell about the reality of your soldiers and their failure to fight...why don't you tell your people about the soldiers who commit suicide, why don't you tell your people that your soldiers can not have any sleep without taking drugs which makes them like animals... and they are driven by your generals, who are like the Crusaders and evangelists, to the slaughterhouse." He also condemns the Iraqi political process, and those who speak falsely of being one of the mujahideen, trying to convince Muslims that the government is an attempt to apply Shari'a law.

Concerning the Mujahideen Shura Council, which appeared on the Iraqi land following the seeming disappearance of Zarqawi, he admits to "being one of them" and continues to hold title as the Emir of al-Qaeda in Iraq, part of the umbrella for the mujahideen in that state. "They all stretch their hands and stand on the same line," Zarqawi argues. Other portions of the video show Zarqawi inspecting local areas, using a rocket with a range of 50 kilometers, and a final image of him firing an automatic weapon, and stating: "American will go out of Iraq, humiliated, defeated."

A full transcript of the video can be found at http://en.wikinews.org/wiki/Zarqawi_shows_face_in_new_video

Peace activist claims Iran keen to compromise on nuclear issue, Cheney, Rumsfeld allegedly block negotiations

Veteran anti-nuclear activist and journalist Praful Bidwai claims that while Iranian authorities "will not sacrifice [Iran's] rights under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) to engage in peaceful activities, including uranium

enrichment for power generation", they are also "keen to reach a deal or compromise on the nuclear issue" and "are also working diplomatic channels to let it be known that Tehran wants talks which will lead to a peaceful resolution of the nuclear issue."

The alternative news website Raw Story published a story on April 20 that alleged United States vice-president Dick Cheney and Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld have obstructed the progress of diplomatic discussions which could help solve the conflict between the United States and Iran. The conflict involves the alleged plan of attack on Iran led by the United States, and Iran's alleged intention to develop nuclear weapons. Diplomatic relations between the United States and Iran have remained suspended since 1980, following the Iranian hostage crisis.

The website alleges that information from several different unnamed sources claim that expatriate arms dealer Manucher Ghorbanifar, a key figure in the Iran-Contra Affair, has been ordered by US authorities to monitor and report on "any interaction and attempts at negotiations between Iranian officials and US ambassador to Iraq, Zalmay Khalilzad." Raw Story also claims that sources "close to the UN Security Council", a "high ranking intelligence official" and another "intelligence source" attributed the failure of the recent attempts at direct contacts between Khalilzad and Iranian officials as "part of an ongoing attempt by Cheney and Rumsfeld to squash diplomatic activities". The claims of the Internet publication's allegations have not yet been independently verified.

In addition, the Raw Story also claims that US House of Representatives Intelligence Committee Chairman Peter Hoekstra (R-MI) "approved using Ghorbanifar as an intermediary" and "attended at least one meeting in Paris with Curt Weldon (R-PA) and Harold Rhode to meet with Ghorbanifar."

Bidwai states that Dr. Hasan Rowhani, a member of the Supreme National Security Council chosen by Iranian head of state Ayatollah Khamenei, as saying that Iran is prepared to suspend its uranium enrichment for a short time.

On April 18, when asked whether US action against Iran could include a strike using nuclear weapons, U.S. President George W. Bush answered "All options are on the table. We want to solve this issue diplomatically and we're working hard to do so."

Shuttle will launch in July: NASA

NASA says that the Shuttle Discovery will launch in July as planned and that no more safety changes will take place until after July's launch.

Tests that NASA performed on the shuttle have found that there is no way to stop the "ice frost ramps" that fall off the shuttles when they launch.

"The decision was to fly these ice frost ramps as is, knowing that we can expect to have some small foam loss that could pose a risk," said the shuttle's project director, Wayne Hale in a press conference.

"There was a strong concern from several folks that we should wait until we have a good design on those pieces of foam and then

change them as well before we go fly. We considered that very strongly. However, at the end of the day, we came back to the fact that it is more appropriate to make one change at a time to take care of the biggest problem and then work toward the next situation we would like to improve." added Hale.

In February 2003, shuttle Columbia broke up during its return to Earth because 2 foam pieces that fell off the shuttle's fuel tank hit the wing of the shuttle. NASA grounded the fleet until modifications were made to its fuel tank.

In 2005, another piece of foam was seen falling off Discovery, and the fleet was grounded again and the fuel tank had to be redesigned. The redesign removed two pieces of foam from cables that were insulated from wind when the shuttle was taking off.

Hale called the changes the "largest aerodynamic change that we have made since the shuttle first flew."

"We're in a flight test program. When you make a major change, you should fly that major change and if you have to make additional changes then you make them after the flight," said Hale.

The shuttles are expected to be completely retired by 2010, and NASA plans at least 16 more flights to complete the International Space Station.

Maoists in India kill 13 and free 25 hostages

The bodies of 13 tribal villagers were found deep in the forest 22 km from a relief camp in the Indian state of Chhattisgarh. Police said on Saturday that they

were taken hostage at gunpoint along with 27 other natives by Maoist rebels in Dantewada district earlier this week. The Maoists had slit the throats of the victims. India faces the problem of Maoist insurgency in many areas and the local peasants are harassed by both government authorities and the rebels.

Taliban abducts Indian engineer

An Indian engineer working in Afghanistan was kidnapped on Friday evening while travelling from while travelling from Kalat, the capital of Zabul province, to Ghazni, A. Suryanarayana works for a Bahraini telecommunications and construction firm, Al Mayyad. According to the Chinese news agency Xinhua, Yosuf Ahmadi, a spokesman for the Taliban has claimed responsibility.

Later, another spokesman for the Taliban, Qari Mohammad Yousuf threatened to kill Suryanarayana within hours if their demand that all Indian citizens leave Afghanistan within 24 hours is not met. The abducted man's wife has said that she and her three children will commit suicide if anything untoward happens to her husband. A team of Indian experts headed by the Joint Secretary of the Ministry of External Affairs, K.B.S. Katoch, has been dispatched to Afghanistan to facilitate the release of Suryanarayana.

British Home Secretary faces pressure to resign over foreign offender release crisis

British Home Secretary, Charles Clarke, is facing increasing pressure to resign from office over a scandal involving the release of foreign prisoners without subsequent deportation hearings.

It was recently revealed that, since 1999, 1,023 prisoners were released after serving their sentences, but were not subjected to deportation hearings to determine whether they should be allowed to stay in the United Kingdom. Five of the criminals have subsequently re-offended, with crimes involving drugs and violence. "It's clear that the increasing numbers of cases being referred for consideration led to the process falling down," said Clarke, "I do apologise. I have apologised, I continue to do so."

Despite the admission of error on behalf of his department, the Home Secretary faces the very real threat of further crimes committed by the released offenders, and still more pressure to resign. An intense effort is under way by the police and immigration services to track down 63 of the higher-risk released offenders, and more arrests are expected today.

Ayman al-Zawahiri appears in new videotape

Al-Qaeda's second in command Ayman al-Zawahiri has released a new video tape onto the internet.

On the tape, Zawahiri said that the United States and British forces "have achieved nothing but loss, disaster and misfortune."

"Al-Qaeda in Iraq alone has carried out 800 martyrdom operations in three years, besides the victories of the other mujahidin. And this is what has broken the back of America in Iraq," said Zawahiri.

Zawahiri also stated that the President of Pakistan, Pervez Musharraf, needed to be overthrown.

"The West which claims to support democracy ... is encouraging Musharraf to stay in power by any means after he demonstrated his aptitude at killing Muslims. I call on the Pakistani people to stand with Islam against the Zionist-Crusader assault ... and topple this bribe-taking treacherous criminal," said Zawahiri.

"Musharraf is fanning the flames of civil war in Pakistan on behalf of America in Waziristan and Baluchistan. He is inviting the Pakistani army to fight its own people and brothers and turn a blind eye to the Indian threat," added Zawahiri.

The tape is 16 minutes long. On April 23, the leader of al-Qaeda, Osama bin Laden released an audiotape onto the internet. Leader of al-Qaeda in Iraq, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, released a tape just two days after bin Laden's.

U.S. Web host target of denial-of-service attack

The servers of a U.S. Web hosting company that hosts several high-profile weblogs was the target of several denial of service attacks on Friday.

Hosting Matters, a Web host located in Jacksonville, Florida, experienced an abnormal surge in Internet traffic at approximately 10:00 a.m. EDT (1400 UTC). Upstream providers confirmed shortly afterward that one of their servers was the target of a massive denial-of-service attack.

System administrators took steps to isolate the target server from the network. Partial recovery was achieved and minor disruptions were reported after 12 noon EDT.

The host suffered another attack around 8:30 p.m. EDT, which was

resolved shortly before 9:30 p.m.

Glenn Reynolds, whose popular Instapundit blog was one of the sites affected, reports that the attack appears to have originated from computers in Saudi Arabia, though it is not clear whether the perpetrators were also located there. On its emergency operation forum, Hosting Matters would not elaborate as to the target or likely source of the attack, except that it appears to have come from outside U.S. borders. One of their administrators, known only as "Stacy," said, "I sincerely doubt that country's leadership has the least bit of concern for extraditing over something like this."

It is believed, but not confirmed, that the target of the attack was aarons.cc, a weblog that had apparently been hacked in the past. At the time of this writing, the site is still down. Hosting Matters has stated that the target site would not be brought back online in order to avoid further problems.

Hosting Matters hosts several high-traffic blogs, many of which, like Instapundit and Power Line, are generally supportive of the policies of President George W. Bush.

Syndicated columnist Michelle Malkin commented on her weblog, "We are all affected by cyberterrorist tactics, wherever they may originate."

David Allyn of Grouchy's Liberaltopia, one of the few blogs critical of Bush hosted on Hosting Matters and found via Technorati, commented, "Hopefully, they have isolated the fucknozzles that have been attacking the servers. I can only hope that whoever is doing this DoS attack dies a horrible

death that is dragged out for hours."

U.S. members of congress arrested over Sudan protest

Eleven protesters, including five members of Congress, were arrested on charges of disorderly conduct and unlawful assembly. Protesting the ongoing atrocities in the Sudan region, Rep. Tom Lantos, D-Calif., a Holocaust survivor and the founder of the Congressional Human Rights Caucus, said from the steps of the Sudanese embassy, "The slaughter of the people of Darfur must end."

"The Sudanese government has shown total disregard for the wishes of the global, civilized community. I have no optimism as to the actions of the Sudanese government," Lantos said.

Democratic House members James McGovern and John Olver of Massachusetts, Sheila Jackson Lee of Texas and Jim Moran of Virginia were among the others arrested and released after paying \$50 fines after being arrested in front of the Sudanese embassy.

Olver said, "We must hold the Sudanese government accountable for the attacks they have supported on their own citizens in Darfur."

Meanwhile, President Bush met with Darfur advocates this Friday in support of rallies all over the US this weekend against the ongoing genocide in western Sudan.

"The genocide in Sudan is unacceptable... There will be rallies across our country to send a message to the Sudanese government that the genocide must stop. ... I want the Sudanese government to understand the United States of America is serious

about solving this problem," Bush said.

City of Buffalo, N.Y. fighting lawsuit against hotel proposal

Buffalo, New York – Councilmember Joesph Golombek has responded to the lawsuit filed against the city of Buffalo for allegedly 'fast-tracking' a hotel that will be built on the corner of Elmwood and Forest Avenues in Buffalo. The lawsuit, filed by Attorney Arthur J. Giacalone, was filed in New York State Supreme Court on April 21, 2006.

The Elmwood Village Hotel is a 72-room, seven-million-dollar hotel proposed by Savarino Construction Services Corporation and designed by architect Karl Frizlen of the Frizlen Group. Its construction would require the demolition of at least five buildings, currently at 1109-1121 Elmwood, which house several shops and residents. Although the properties are "under contract," it is still not known whether Savarino Construction actually owns the buildings. It is believed that Hans Mobius, a resident of Clarence, New York and former Buffalo mayoral candidate, is still the owner. The hotel is expected to be a franchise of the Wyndham Hotels group. Buffalo's Common Council, Planning Board, Mayor of Buffalo, Byron W. Brown, Savarino Construction Services Corporation, Hans J. Mobius and his son Hans S. Mobius owners of the properties at stake, Pano Georgiadis, owner of Pano's Restaurant on Elmwood, and Cendant Corporation, the parent company of Wyndham Hotels are among those named in the suit.

Councilmember Joesph Golombek said that the Law Department is "fighting the lawsuit because they believe that we did everything fairly and properly (as well as

legally)."

Golombek also stated that the lawsuit "could delay the start of the project" and that if he were "Mr. Savarino I would counter sue for any damages a postponement could bring."

"Except for the lawsuit the city is finished with the project. In my opinion I believe those opposed to the project are simply use to the city procrastinating on projects. This one was passed quickly by comparison. Thus part of their frustration." said Golombek.

"I understand the frustration of some of the people opposed to the project. But, in order for Elmwood to grow and thrive it will need to change. This change is a positive for that community," he added.

Golombek also said that he is looking into "helping the displaced businesses."

At least five businesses, Six Nations Gift Shop, Don Apparel, H.O.D. Tattoo, Skunk Tail Glass Company, and Mondo Video, will be forced to close their doors or relocate. Many of the buildings are also home to residents who will also have to move.

"I have personally contacted adjacent and nearby business associations and property owners to ask about the possibility of helping the displaced businesses. Hopefully the project will go through in a timely fashion and the displaced businesses will be able to relocate," said Golombek.

A preliminary hearing is scheduled to take place at 9:30 a.m. on June 8, 2006 in the Supreme Court building at 50 Delaware Avenue in Buffalo, on the 8th floor, part 31.

Today in History

711 - Umayyad troops led by Tariq ibn-Ziyad landed at Gibraltar, beginning the Moorish invasion of Iberia.

1789 - George Washington took office as the first President of the United States.

1945 - Martin Bormann and Heinz Linge found Adolf Hitler dead in the Führerbunker.

1948 - The Organization of American States was established in Bogotá, Colombia.

1975 - North Vietnamese troops captured Saigon, ending the Vietnam War.

1991 - A powerful tropical cyclone struck Chittagong, killing at least 138,000 people and leaving as many as 10 million homeless in Bangladesh.

April 30 is Walpurgis Night in various European countries; Victory Day in Vietnam.

Quote of the Day

"You know that I write slowly. This is chiefly because I am never satisfied until I have said as much as possible in a few words, and writing briefly takes far more time than writing at length." ~ Carl Friedrich Gauss

Word of the Day

bloviate; *v*

Definition

1. To speak at length in a pompous or boastful manner.

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