



Deadline to release Muslim prisoners passes, Gaza-held journalists released August 27, 2006

A midnight deadline to release Muslim prisoners has passed and two Fox News journalists have been released.

The two journalists, American Steve Centanni, 60, a reporter for Fox News and New Zealander Olaf Wiig, 36, Centanni's cameraman were kidnapped from their press vehicle on August 14. Ten days later, the two journalists appeared in a video allegedly made by the kidnappers. In it, the journalists said that they were being treated well.

According to Mr Centanni, the pair were ordered to convert to Islam at gunpoint. He told Fox News: "I have the highest respect for Islam... but it was something we felt we had to do because they had the guns and we didn't know what the hell was going on."

In a press conference earlier today, the two told of their joy at being released. They also urged journalists not to be deterred from reporting in Gaza. "I hope that this never scares a single journalist away from coming to Gaza to cover the story because the Palestinian people are very beautiful and kind-hearted," Mr Centanni said. "The world needs to know more about them. Don't be discouraged," he added.

Holy Jihad Brigades, a previously

unknown group, claims responsibility for the kidnappings. They were demanding the release of all Muslim prisoners being held in the United States. In exchange they promised they would release the journalists, but the United States immediately rejected the offer. "I want to clarify that the efforts are not negotiations, but we want to get to positive results which is their release and that is all. We will continue our efforts and contacts to secure the release of the kidnapped journalists. We can confirm that they are safe and sound but we cannot give fuller details for the time being because we want our efforts to be crowned with success," said Abu Hilal, spokesman for the Interior Ministry.

Yesterday, Ghazi Hamad, a Hamas government spokesmen said: "I hope that we can hear good news within the coming two days."

Anita McNaught, the wife of Wiig, recently appeared on TV calling for the release of the journalists.

The two journalists were dropped off at Gaza City's Beach Hotel, several hours after a video showed them delivering an anti-Western speech.

TV3 banned from New Zealand Parliament for three days August 28, 2006

House Speaker Margaret Wilson told New Zealand television station, TV3,

owned by Canwest, they are banned from recording New Zealand Parliament for three days.

The ban comes after they showed footage of the New Zealand First Member of Parliament (MP) Ron Mark repeatedly pulling his middle finger at National MP Tau Henare on August 1.

TV3's ban will come into force tomorrow.

The Parliament's media rules state that only the Speaker or an MP who is standing and speaking can be recorded. TV3 broke this rule as Mark was sitting during his gestures.

"The rules are arcane. We were only showing what would have been observed by members of the public if they had been sitting in the public gallery on that day," said the Director of News and Current Affairs for TV3, Mark Jennings. "Politicians behaving badly is a news story, and the public have a right to see what is really going on in the debating Chamber."

"We will accept our punishment and get on with our job, but it is time politicians took responsibility for their behaviour and stopped shooting the messenger," Jennings said.

"That argument was not accepted last year, and I do not accept it now", Ms Wilson says referring to a breach of the rules last year.

"In addition, this time TV3 repeated

the shots in question even though it knew they were in breach of the rules. This was clearly a premeditated breach."

New Zealand police want bus driver to pay reparation August 29, 2006

Christchurch, New Zealand Redbus bus driver Micheal Sean Ohiomhair, 57-year-old, is being sought for NZ\$9000 by the New Zealand Police for wasting time and resources after he filed a false statement that a woman had attacked him. The police had put 100 hours into the hunt for the attacker.

The Christchurch District Court found out today that the injuries he sustained were self-inflicted. Ohiomhair changed his plead to guilty to the charges of making a false statement after originally pleading not guilty. Serina Bailey, defence council, said "57-year-old Ohiomhair had originally pleaded not guilty because there were medical and psychological issues I wished to raise". Her client has now consulted mental health services for on-going psychological matters.

Police and ambulance personnel were called to the scene on May 10 at 2045 (NZST), when Ohiomhair told the police that a woman had attacked him while he was at a bus stop in Hornby, Christchurch. The ambulance staff treated him at the scene for injuries he sustained to his forearm and the left side of his head.

The police and police dogs then searched the area but failed to find the alleged woman attacker. After reconfirming what happened the police told him that it appeared his reconfirmation appeared incorrect, he then left the station but later appeared back at the station and confessed to making it up.

This incident followed an original incident when a different bus driver was attacked by teenage girls.

Ohiomhair will appear back in court, after he was remanded on bail, on September 15 for a probation report, a reparation report and sentencing.

Mark Berryman, Police prosecutor Sergeant, said "He said he received information from a family member two hours before, which caused him to become stressed and confused," the information he had received was relating to an incident that happened 25 years ago.

New Zealand police to trial tasers from Friday August 30, 2006

Yesterday New Zealand Police officers were showcasing their new tasers, model X26, and at the same time, trialling them on their own officers. This Friday 180 police officers, between Auckland and Wellington, will start trialling them for 12 months.

Policeman, Constable Mike Smith, who had the new taser trialled on him said, "My whole body was completely incapacitated from my feet to my head. My legs felt like concrete. I wouldn't do it again."

The police will not carry the tasers with them everywhere but only to call outs where they can expect violent encounters.

The tasers will replace pepper spray, as it is more effective and the offender is able to recover quicker. Only the armed offenders squad carry guns.

The particular model the police will use is the X26 model. This model delivers 50,000 volts of electricity but counters this high voltage with a very low amperage of .0036 amps, police

say that this is safe. The taser works by firing two metal spurs at the target and transmits a charge of five seconds which paralyses the victim long enough to get the offender in handcuffs. The taser has a range of six metres, and is able to penetrate through both skin and clothes.

The New Zealand Green Party and civil rights lawyers are protesting against the use of tasers, saying that "It risks lives and could be misused."

The superintendent, John Rivers, said that a report that had been commissioned after Steve Wallace was fatally shot in 2001 said that tasers were "A less lethal option."

John Rivers said Tuesday, "The use of tasers was in the interest of public safety. He said they give police more tactical options when dealing with violent offenders. Very [sic] person who is shot with a taser gun during the trial will receive an examination by a doctor afterwards. British research had found that of the 400 times police there had drawn the weapon at least 60 per cent have resulted with the police not firing the device."

Most injuries were not caused by the taser itself but by the falling to the ground that is caused by the taser, according to an independent medical research group run by Peter Robinson. "No coroner or medical officer has found a situation where the Taser was the cause of death," Robinson said.

Rebel leader, 56 inmates escape from East Timorese jail August 30, 2006

East Timorese rebel leader Alfredo Reinado and other 56 inmates escaped last night from Dili's mail jail.

Australian and Portuguese forces initiated a massive manhunt for the escapees, which with their escape,

created a new crisis for international security forces in East Timor.

Australian SAS troopers using Black Hawk helicopters and night-vision goggles were involved in the search.

GNR's liaison officer, Lieutenant Cabrita told the Portuguese Rádio Renascença news agency that the prisoners took advantage of the relieve of guard to escape. "The evasion happened during the relieve of the forces that were serving in the jail's security, having the escapees used vehicles for their escape".

Later Australian police liaison officers confirmed the escape of the rebel leader. "It is understood 57 prisoners are currently unaccounted for, one of those being Mr Alfredo Reinado," an Australian police spokesman said.

Alfredo Reinado is a former East Timorese Army officer who deserted and led a rebel group during the unrest in May, being blamed for some of the country's violence during the security crisis. Him and other 14 soldiers of his rebel group were arrested on July by Australian troops for illegal possession of firearms after an GNR patrol found them with pistols, hundreds of ammunition and grenades in a house during a routine operation.

Of the other 56 prisoners unaccounted for, 16 are believed to be former Timorese police and soldiers accused of crimes committed during East Timor's security crisis, and five prisoners convicted for homicide.

According to Becora's prison warden Carlos Sarmiento, the inmates had escaped by breaking down several walls on the prison's east wing.

The East Timorese Justice Minister, Domingos Sarmiento, blamed the international security forces for the jailbreak and told the Lusa news agency that the New Zealand forces in

charge of the security of the prison's exterior left the prison without informing the Timorese government.

"There was an agreement in which the forces of New Zealand would be in charge of the outside security of the prison, but about a week ago they left the location and didn't inform us", Domingos Sarmiento said.

Domingos Sarmiento said that he contacted the Australian-led forces so that the security outside the prison could be restored, but was told that the forces' removal from the prison were due to the necessity of deploying troops in other points of the city.

The Minister recognized that the absence of police and military forces on the prison's outside and the fact that the guard were unarmed contributed to facilitate the escape of the prisoners. Also recognizing that the use of weapons by the guards would improve the security in the jail, he noticed that the internal regulation doesn't allow that use.

Bull kills New Zealand man August 31, 2006

Peter William Raeburn Hunter, a 61-year-old stock agent from Hastings, New Zealand, died early yesterday morning from a rampaging friesian bull. The bull first flung recently married Hunter in the air and then gored him at Stortford Lodge saleyards in Hastings.

Hunter had tried to escape into another yard but the bull rammed him against the yard rails. He then fell to the ground but the bull didn't stop attacking him until another agent came to his aid and hit the animal on the nose with a stick.

Bruce Campbell, yards manager, said: "The agent was behind an alleyway gate which the bull lifted off its

hinges. It was awful and has given us all a real shake-up."

Hunter was then transported to Hawke's Bay hospital but died before he got to the hospital.

The bull has now been shipped to Palmerston North on a truck to be slaughtered after the police declined the request to shoot the bull dead at the lodge. Acting Sergeant Andy Clinton said: "It calmed down and they had no problems loading it on the truck."

It was the first death at the lodge in the 103 years that it has been operating.

Friesian bulls are not normally dangerous.

"Peter was very much a valued member of the local team," Elders Livestock, managing director, Stuart Chapman said. "It's a freak accident, an absolute tragedy."

Super high speed internet launched in New Zealand September 1, 2006

The Prime Minister of New Zealand, Helen Clark, yesterday unveiled Kiwi Advanced Research and Education Network (KAREN). It is super high speed Internet that is capable of transmitting data with speeds of up to ten gigabits per second, 10,000 times faster than the current speed of broadband, and 200,000 times faster than dial-up.

The New Zealand Government put NZ\$43 million (\$28.1 million USD) into the Crown company: Research and Education Advanced Network of New Zealand (REANNZ) organization, responsible for the running of KAREN.

KAREN will link universities and research institutions in Auckland, Hamilton, Palmerston North,

Wellington, Christchurch, Dunedin, Hawkes Bay, Nelson and Rotorua and then to the rest of the world via a TelstraClear fibre optic cable.

The network will allow geologists/geophysicists to access U.S. data on fault lines, 3D modellers the ability to collaborate on international mapping projects and students will be able to participate in interactive video lectures with experts, anywhere in the world.

The technology so far is limited to just universities and research institutions but Minister for Education Steve Maharey said: "The network will be extended over time to include other institutions, including schools, libraries and museums." It is also limited to just one university in the South Island, it is located in the HIT Lab NZ at the University of Canterbury.

Clark said: "The link is crucial in order to attract and retain scientists, because it allows a greater level of real time collaboration between scientists based in New Zealand, and their colleagues around the world."

The Telecommunications' Users Association of New Zealand chief executive, Ernie Newman, said: "Karen was a 'great initiative' for the science community, and that would have wider benefits for the country."

Dr. Mark Billinhurst, HIT Lab director, said: "The network meant the country was now legitimately part of the international research community."

South Africa end All Blacks' 15-game winning streak September 2, 2006

South Africa have defeated the All Blacks (New Zealand) in a rugby union Tri Nations match at the Royal Bafokeng Stadium in Rustenburg,

South Africa. The final score was a one-point victory, 21 to 20, ending the All Blacks' 15 game winning streak. For the Springboks, it ended a five-match losing streak. The All Blacks performed the controversial Kapo O Pango haka before the match. It was the final match for the All Blacks, who had already won the trophy two weeks ago. The final match of the series will take place at Ellis Park in Johannesburg next week, when the Springboks play Australia.

The first opportunity for points came in the 6th minute when New Zealand were penalised. South Africa opted to kick at goal, and even though there was some breeze at the ground, André Pretorius slotted it through the posts, giving South Africa a three point lead. However the All Blacks were able to even the scores in the 10th minute, with Dan Carter kicking a penalty goal after the Springboks were penalised for off-side near their line. Pretorius' boot was accurate once again, when he successfully kicked another penalty goal in the 17th minute, giving South Africa the lead once again, six points to three. The first try of the match was scored in the 20th minute, when Carter crossed the line and after converting his own try, the All Blacks led 10 to six. However the Springboks bounced back within minutes, with wing Bryan Habana intercepting a New Zealand pass, and racing down to score under the posts. Pretorius converted from in front, and South Africa were back in front, leading 13 to 10. The All Blacks were unable to level the scores in the 27th minute, with Carter missing a penalty goal. The All Blacks' were denied a try in the 37th minute when the television match official deemed one of the New Zealanders to have been an obstruction. Carter was able to level the scores on the stroke of half time with a penalty kick.

Pretorius attempted to put South Africa back in front, attempting two drop goals, though both missed. A line-out turnover soon led to Pedrie Wannenburg getting over the try line to score South Africa's second try. Pretorius' conversion was away to the left, however, South Africa were now leading 18 to 13, with over 20 minutes remaining in the game. Joe Rokocoko scored a try for the All Blacks in the 66th minute, and Carter converted the try from the touchline to give the All Blacks a 2 point lead, the score now 20-18 with 14 minutes remaining. Pretorius attempted another drop kick with nine minutes remaining, though it missed, and the All Blacks remained in front. The Springboks were back in front, by one point, 21 to 20, when Pretorius landed a penalty kick with two minutes remaining in the match. A New Zealand knock-on in the 79th minute led to a South African scrum. The scrum needed to be set a number of times, sending the clock into overtime. However the ball got out and the whistle was blown, sending the crowd and players into celebration.

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