



Top Stories

Condoleezza Rice labelled "war criminal" by Australian demonstrators

Iraqi anti-war sympathizers heckle Secretary Rice during an address, leading to evictions and arrests.

No charges over election spending for New Zealand Labour party

Labour won't be prosecuted over its election spending, even though police did find a prima facie case.

Featured story

Photoessay: The Idiotarod: When Good Shopping Carts Go Bad

Zany race in Washington D.C. raises money for food and charity.

<http://en.wikinews.org/wiki/Featured>

Wikipedia Current Events

- Hamas announces the formation of its new cabinet to govern the territory under the control of the Palestinian Authority.
- 2006 labor protests in France: In Paris, and other major French cities, hundreds of thousands of people march in protest of the Contrat de première embauche (First Employment Contract), a labor law set to take effect in April that gives employers the right to fire workers under the age of 26 in the first two years of their employment without justification.

Thousands in San Francisco protest US wars

Thousands of protesters gathered at San Francisco's Civic Center to protest US wars and foreign policy in Iraq, the Phillipines, Cuba and other places. Domestic issues were also included in the speeches and signs. The protesters then marched through downtown San Francisco on a pre-planned route. They passed Glide Memorial Methodist Church to protest President Bush's cutting of programs like Glide's that provide food for needy people. The march also passed by the Hilton Hotel, where protesters were calling for a boycott in response to the hotel workers union's difficulty in obtaining a new contract.

Pro-Israel counter-protesters gathered across the street from the war protesters, although their number was much smaller.

California Green Party candidate Todd Chretien suggested that there were ten to twenty thousand war protesters present.

Prosecution to proceed with alternate witnesses in Moussaoui trial

The judge in the U.S. federal death penalty trial against Zacarias Moussaoui ruled on Friday that prosecutors can seek replacement witnesses for seven Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) employees whose testimony was tainted, and therefore disallowed because of pre-trial coaching by a Transportation Security Administration (TSA) lawyer.

The 18-member jury (6 alternates) were sent home for a week while the court dealt with the revelation that government aviation security witness had been contacted prior to the trial by TSA lawyer Carla J. Martin, to help prepare their testimony in the case.

Martin, aged 51, is accused of misconduct by sending prosecution witnesses e-mail that included trial transcripts of another related case along with observations of her own that pertained to the Moussaoui case, including suggestions and talking points. She was recently suspended with pay by the TSA and retained Roscoe Howard to act as legal council in the face of legal actions that might arise against her.

Judge Leonie M. Brinkema initially ruled to prevent testimony from any aviation employees, but reversed her decision after the prosecution argued they would have little case left if their testimony remained inadmissible. FAA employee testimony is expected to take the form of what measures would have been taken by the agency to prevent against the September 11, 2001 airliner attacks in New York City and Washington D.C. if Moussaoui had warned officials of the plan prior to the strikes.

The connection to the Carla Martin involvement in the case was discovered in a separate trial involving liability law suits against two U.S. airline companies for

losses as a result of the attacks. Family member lawyers of flight attendants drew attention to contacts by Martin to persons involved in the case.

The jury will return Monday for the trial's resumption.

A U.S. federal public defender appointed to Moussaoui argued for the jury to spare his life during opening statements on Monday, March 6, in the trial that will determine his fate — either life in prison or death by lethal injection.

Defense attorney Edward B. MacMahon said that Moussaoui "aspires to martyrdom," and called on jurors to deny the Al-Qaeda operative his wish to die. A wish that would result in him becoming "a smiling face on a recruiting poster for Osama bin Laden," MacMahon said.

Moussaoui is believed by some to be the missing member in the team of 19 other attackers that carried out the suicide airliner strikes in New York City and Washington D.C. Arrested in Minnesota on immigration charges three weeks prior to the attacks, Moussaoui could have warned officials of the pending attacks, but failed to do so, argued Assistant U.S. Attorney Rob Spencer for the prosecution in opening statements.

The second day of the trial both Moussaoui and juror's attention was riveted as a federal prosecutor read a radio transmission account of the exchange between a flight attendant on Flight 11 and ground controllers.

"We are flying low. We are flying very very low. We are flying way too low," Amy Sweeney told controllers, according to an

Associated Press report. The plane crashed into the north tower of the World Trade Center at 8:44 a.m. after she said, "Oh my God, we are way too low!"

Moussaoui has claimed that he had no involvement with the 9/11 attacks when he pleaded guilty to: conspiracy to commit acts of terrorism transcending national boundaries
conspiracy to commit aircraft piracy
conspiracy to destroy aircraft
conspiracy to use weapons of mass destruction
conspiracy to murder United States employees
conspiracy to destroy property

He said that he was to play a role in another future attack on the White House using an aircraft. Four of the conspiracy charges each carry a maximum penalty of death.

Family members of the nearly 3,000 killed in the attacks were able to watch the Alexandria, Virginia courtroom proceedings by closed-circuit television in six U.S. cities: New York, Boston, Central Islip, N.Y., Newark, N.J., and Philadelphia.

Moussaoui has a history of disrupting previous trial proceedings with outbursts. He has disavowed his lawyers, and mostly ignored his mother who was present during the opening days of the trial because she had spoken to his defense lawyers.

Upon leaving the Tuesday, March 7 court session for a recess, Moussaoui pumped his right fist in the air and shouted, "Allah Akbar! God curse America! Bless Osama bin Laden!"

The outbursts have been timed to

occur outside the earshot of Judge Brinkema and the jury as those persons filed out of the courtroom for recesses.

Moussaoui pleaded guilty in April last year to the conspiracy charges. Evidence linking him to the plot was discovered when his duffel bags were searched after the attacks.

Putin promises to continue energy production increases

Russian president Vladimir Putin promised on Thursday that Russia will continue to increase energy production and making nuclear energy more accessible.

"Russian companies are already realizing projects that have strategic importance for a real strengthening of global energy security," Putin said. Putin, president of the G8 this year, has placed emphasis on energy security in a time where many nations are hit by rising energy prices and fears of supply issues.

Putin spoke of the development of the Shtokman field, which contains 3 trillion cubic meters of gas, oil and gas pipelines such as the ones under the Baltic Sea, and a pipeline from eastern Siberia to the Pacific. The country has more than doubled oil exports from 3 million barrels a day to 7 million barrels a day. Putin's remarks addressed concerns the current pipeline capacity will not be able to keep pace with demand, saying the projects are "the first in a series that world markets would benefit from soon." Putin also said that the Duma will soon pass laws to clarify the role of foreign investment in future projects.

Some have been wary of the Russian government's growing role in the country's energy market.

Gazprom, a Russian energy company that the government has the majority stake in, cut supplies to Ukraine in January affecting supply in several European countries. 25 percent to a third of the EU's gas supply comes from Russia, much of it by way of the Ukraine.

After the meeting on Thursday US energy secretary Samuel Bodman said "We are hopeful of a very substantial rebirth of the global nuclear industry."

China enters the low-cost laptop competition

Longmeng, which means Dragon Dream in Mandarin, is the name of a low-cost laptop computer. It was developed by the Institute of Computing Technology (ICT) under the Chinese Academy of Sciences. There are conflicting reports about the price: Bloomberg reported the laptop would be priced at 1,500 yuan (about USD 187 or EUR 153), while People's Daily and Shanghai Daily reported a lower price of 1,000 yuan (about USD 125 or EUR 102). The lower price would make the laptop competitive with the One Laptop Per Child project initiated by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). Aliens are coming you fools

The Longmeng has a Godson II processor, which is equivalent in processing power to the Pentium III. It is actually a computer, a DVD player and a video game player, using the Linux operating system. It is the size of a textbook, 14 x 17 cm. (5 1/2 x 6 3/4 in.) and weighs about half a kilogram (1.1 pounds).

The new laptop was announced by Zhang Fuxin, an ICT engineer. According to Fuxin, the purpose of

this project is to provide everyone with a personal computer.

The laptop is marketed by the Menglan Group from the eastern city of Changshu in the province of Jiangsu. They plan to sell 100,000 of the low-cost laptops in 2006. The Longmeng is intended for low-income groups as well as rural-area students.

No charges over election spending for New Zealand Labour party

Labour won't be prosecuted over its election spending, even though police did find a prima facie case.

Acting police Deputy Commissioner, Roger Carson, said yesterday, that police did find a prima facie case that; Labour had breached section 221 of the Electoral Act. Section 221 prohibits advertising promoting a party unless the secretary of the party gives written authorisation.

Over the alleged case of overspending on the taxpayer-funded pledge cards, police say that there was insufficient evidence to show that an offence under section 214b of the Electoral Act had been committed. Section 214b sets the maximum amount of that parties may spend on election expenses.

Police will be sending Labour a warning saying that the party risks prosecution if a similar complaint is received in the future.

The New Zealand Electoral Commission referred the Labour Party to the police, in February for allegedly overspending NZ\$418,603 in last year's general election.

Australian DFAT director knew of trucking company involved in alleged Iraqi kickbacks

The Cole inquiry was told on Friday by a former director of the Middle East branch of the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) that she had heard the name "Alia" during her time at DFAT. Alia is the Jordanian trucking company used by the Australian Wheat Board (AWB) and alleged to have been paying kickbacks to Saddam Hussein's Iraqi regime.

Previously, Alexander Downer, Australia's foreign minister, insisted that nobody in DFAT knew about Alia until it was named in the United Nations report on kickbacks paid to Iraq under the oil-for-food program.

Jill Courtney, a former director at DFAT, told the Cole Inquiry that she heard of Alia some time in 2000.

In a statement provided to the inquiry, Ms Courtney states "When I saw the name 'Alia' in newspaper reports of the Cole Inquiry over the last few weeks in relation to the Jordanian trucking company used by AWB I recognised the name and I now believe that it was a name that I had heard in that context during the time I worked in the Middle East branch in 2000 and 2001."

Ms Courtney told the inquiry that she had heard or read about Alia as a Jordanian trucking company which was being used by the AWB during her time at as a director of the Middle East branch at DFAT. Ms Courtney said that she could not recall how she came by the information.

Ms Courtney was asked by John Agius SC (counsel assisting the inquiry), "Is there any possibility that you saw it or heard of it as a Jordanian trucking company, and

that what you have done when you read about it in the newspaper, in the context of this inquiry, is to learn then that it was being used by AWB, and that you have fused the two matters together?" She replied, "No."

Second Gold for NZ: Commonwealth Games

New Zealand has won their third consecutive gold medal in Rugby sevens after beating England last night 29-21.

New Zealand qualified for the final game after defeating Australia in the semi-finals 21-19.

The members of the winning New Zealand seven's team were: Soseni Anisi, Joshua Blackie, Tamati Ellison, Nigel Hunt, Tafai Ioasa, Cory Jane, Tenerau Latimer, Liam Messam, Lote Raikabula, Amasio Raoma, Alando Soakai and Onosai Tololima-Auva'a

Meanwhile, Fiji beat Australia 24-17. In the bronze medal play-off.

Also last night Hayden Roulston won silver for New Zealand, in the Track Cycling - Men's Points Race.

Today in History

1279 - The Song Dynasty in Imperial China ended with a Mongolian victory in the Battle of Yamen.

1687 - The search for the mouth of the Mississippi River led by French explorer Robert Cavalier de La Salle ended with a mutiny and his murder in presentday Texas.

1915 - The planet Pluto was photographed for the first time, 15 years before it was eventually discovered by Clyde Tombaugh at the Lowell Observatory.

1932 - The Sydney Harbour Bridge, a major landmark in Sydney, Australia, was formally opened.

1982 - Argentine forces led by Alfredo Astiz occupied South Georgia, precipitating the Falklands War against the United Kingdom.

March 19 is Saint Joseph's Day in Catholicism and Father's Day in various countries

Quote of the Day

Who save the madman dares to cry: "'Tis I am right, you all are wrong"?

"You all are right, you all are wrong," we hear the careless Soofi say,

"For each believes his glimm'ering lamp to be the gorgeous light of day."

~ Sir Richard Francis Burton ~

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