



### Top Stories

#### 21 dead in south Thailand attacks

In one of the deadliest days of the south Thailand insurgency, 21 people have died in attacks, including 12 soldiers who were killed by a roadside bombing and ambush on Thursday night in Yala, and seven people who were killed by gunman at a mosque in Songkhla. "This was the biggest single attack yet," a Royal Thai Army spokesman said.

#### Guantanamo detainee commits suicide

34-year old Abdul Rahman al-Amri, a former Saudi army veteran was alleged to have produced videos of the USS Cole bombing and the September 11 attacks, had been detained since 2002.

### Featured story

#### Evan O'Dorney wins 2007 USA Spelling Bee competition

The 13-year-old from California spelt 'Serrefine' (a small surgical forceps) correctly to become United States champion.

### Wikipedia Current Events

- The US Food and Drug Administration warns consumers to discard all toothpaste made in China after discovering diethylene glycol, a poison related to a chemical used in antifreeze.
- The Ukrainian parliament votes to approve a package of legislation clearing the way for a

### Wikipedia Current Events

parliamentary election on 30 September 2007.

- Militants have launched two attacks on the Indian Army in Kashmir resulting in two soldiers being killed and 19 injured.
- Dr. Jack Kevorkian is released from prison after serving 8 years for assisting terminally ill patients with suicide.
- The Palestinian Army of Islam militant group posts a video of the BBC's kidnapped Middle East correspondent Alan Johnston on a website.
- 2007 North Lebanon conflict: Fighting resumes at the Nahr el-Bared camp between the Lebanese Army and Fatah al-Islam.
- Thousands of South African public sector workers go on strike for a 12% pay rise for the second Friday in a row.
- Fiji lifts the state of emergency which was imposed during the 2006 Fijian coup d'état.

#### Iran's Ayatollah Jannati re-affirms anti-US stance

"The Islamic Republic of Iran is an anti-US government. The US is our enemy because we want the rule of justice and eradication of force and oppression in the world," according to Ayatollah Ahmad Jannati who is an intransigent anti-American figure in Iranian politics. Jannati also blamed America for the many atrocities in Iraq and calls for America withdrawal in

light of the fact that elections have been held in Iraq. He believes that the Iraqis "don't need any caretaker."

Ayatollah Jannati is best known for being the secretary of the Guardian Council in Iran. He rose to that post in 1988 after succeeding Grand Ayatollah Yousef Sanei. One of his major tasks is screening all candidates who wish to run for political office. In that capacity he has dis-qualified many candidates for "financial and moral corruption, espionage and security, smuggling, and matters of that kind."

Jannati's remarks came during Friday prayers in Tehran University. With regard to the recent talks with the U.S. over the security problems of Iraq, he said, "talks in Baghdad do not change in the least the anti-American policies of the Islamic Republic."

Just over three months ago, Ayatollah Jannati dared the United States to invade Iran. He said, "We are proud of our martyrdom. One of our people's slogans is: "Martyrdom is our pride." This was the slogan of Ali and Hossein. What are they trying to make us afraid of?...If you dare, invade Iran, and you will see what disaster we will bring upon you."

According to a high-ranking Russian military official, "Currently Iran has our [Russian] air defense missile systems, which are capable of tackling U.S. combat aircraft. Iran also has French and other

countries' [defense] systems." The official made this comment after there were reports that the U.S. would launch air strikes on Iran in April of 2007.

### **Philadelphia breaks 80 year old lease and moves to evict Scouts**

In an unannounced vote, the Philadelphia City Council voted 16-1 to endorse the eviction of, and end their lease held in perpetuity with, the local council of the Boy Scouts in Philadelphia. The Scouts must pay market rent or leave the building. The Cradle of Liberty Council has more than 60,000 members in Philadelphia and Delaware and Montgomery Counties.

In a surprise move, the Philadelphia City Council voted to revoke the lease it signed with the Boy Scouts for the use of the land on the Benjamin Franklin Parkway in 1928 "in perpetuity." This clears the way for the eviction of the Scouts from the building in July 2007, one year after having been given their eviction notice. The vote of the council was needed to confirm Mayor Street's eviction notice.

The on-going dispute between the city and the Scouts is one of the controversies over the issue of avowed homosexuals being leaders in the Boy Scouts. The city of Philadelphia does not allow discrimination against openly gay people, and the Scouts have asserted that under the First Amendment Freedom of assembly they can exclude people who don't meet their membership standards.

In December 1928 the City of Philadelphia gave the Philadelphia Council permission to build a headquarters on city-owned land at 22nd and Spring Streets in

Fairmount Park. The Scouts built their headquarters at their own expense and, complying with the terms of the agreement, immediately turned over the property to the city. In return they remained housed in their building rent free.

The Scouts have a non-discrimination policy, but have refused to include sexual orientation in their non-discrimination charter. This is due to pressure from the Mormon and Catholic churches, two of the largest sponsors of Scouting units. The Scouts require an oath of duty to God and the group's rules prohibit participation by any person who is an avowed homosexual. The policy over the exclusion of openly gay leaders had been challenged in court, but in 2000 the U.S. Supreme Court confirmed that as a private group, the Scouts could set restrictions for their leaders.

Gay activists then turned their sights on arrangements such as that in Berkeley (California) and Philadelphia, where the Scouts had been using public land rent free. In 2003 the council said it would adopt a nondiscrimination policy on homosexuals, but reversed itself within days under pressure from the National Council.

The resolution was introduced unexpectedly by Councilman Darrell L. Clarke and passed, 16-1, with no debate, with only Council Minority Leader Brian J. O'Neill voting against the resolution. "My hope is that the resolution will give a little more leverage to the city and that [the parties] can come up with some kind of compromise," Clarke said. "Honestly, no one wants to see them out of there."

A spokesman for the Cradle of

Liberty Council, said scout officials were disappointed at the council vote and that they were not told in advance. "This is the way it's been done all along," said Jeff Jubelirer. "We feel we haven't been dealt with fairly." The Scouts are caught between a rock and a hard place. If they adopt the non-discrimination policy demanded by the city, they lose their national charter from the Boy Scouts. "The real victims here are the 40,000 kids in Philadelphia who potentially could lose after-school programs at a time when Philadelphia's murder rate is soaring," Jubelirer said.

City Solicitor Romulo Diaz, himself openly gay, said yesterday "The ball is in the [Cradle of Liberty] council's court." Equality Advocates Pennsylvania, which promotes legal equality for sexual minorities and pressed the city on the scouts' lease, yesterday praised the Council vote. "We recognize the value of the Boy Scouts programs to some young people. They, however, should not be able to use taxpayers' dollars to discriminate against others," said executive director Stacey Sobel.

Jubelirer said the Scouts felt "blindsided" by Council's action. "We had no idea this was coming today," he said they learned of the resolution from a lobbyist who was in council chambers when the resolution was introduced. "When the Fairmount Park commission voted to evict us [last July] we didn't get invited to the meeting. There's been a pattern of the city not giving us any information and doing things at the eleventh hour behind our backs." Councilman O'Neill said "This was too big an issue to have no hearing on," he said after the vote. "The Boy Scouts were negotiating in good faith. They were negotiating to be

paid for the improvements they made to the building so they could start again somewhere else. "The local chapter was opposed to the national chapter's discrimination policy. I hate to see a group that agrees with us to be pushed out."

The Boy Scouts can continue to use their building if they agree to pay market value rent. Jubelirer said the city has yet to tell the Cradle of Liberty Council what fair-market-value rent would be. Clarke said he opposes the fair-market-value rent alternative. "You should not be able to stay in a publicly funded facility without signing nondiscriminatory language regardless of whether you pay rent," he said.

Jubelirer said he did not know how scout officials would react and that any decision would likely involve leadership of the scout's National Council. "We walk a fine line between what National wants and what we want to do," Jubelirer said.

In February 2007, Bill Dwyer, the Scout Executive, announced to the board and the staff that the council could not afford to keep up the legal fight to remain at 22nd and Winter, and there was not the community support to force the mayor to change his decision to evict the Scouts.

Preparation began to abandon the building and build a new facility on private land. The new building will be built on along with the Salvation Army's new facilities in North Philadelphia.

### **21 dead in south Thailand attacks**

In one of the deadliest days of the south Thailand insurgency, 21 people have died in attacks, including 12 soldiers who were

killed by a roadside bombing and ambush attack on Thursday night. Elsewhere the same evening, gunmen attacked a mosque and killed seven people, and two other deaths were being reported elsewhere.

"This was the biggest single attack yet," Royal Thai Army spokesman Colonel Akara Tiptrote said of the bombing and ambush on the soldiers. He described the day's death toll of 21 as "shocking."

The attack on the troops came at around 10 p.m. local time (1600 GMT) on Thursday, when a pickup truck carrying 12 Royal Thai Army soldiers was hit by a remote-control bomb planted at the roadside. An unknown number of gunmen then ambushed the truck, and shot each soldier in the head. Eleven soldiers were killed instantly, and the remaining injured soldier died at hospital on Friday.

The soldiers were returning from Pattani, where they had been on crowd-control duty at a protest by around 2,000 Muslim students and local residents, who are calling for the repeal of an emergency decree by the Thai government, and for soldiers to be withdrawn from the southern provinces. The protest continued for a second day on Friday.

In another incident on Thursday night, five people were killed and two injured when gunmen fired at a mosque in Saba Yoi, Songkhla. "The victims were all men in their 20s," Akara was quoted as saying by the Bangkok Post. "They were killed inside the mosque."

The injured two victims of the mosque attack also died in hospital on Friday, and two other deaths from violence were reported in the

southern provinces on Thursday, bringing the day's death toll to 21.

Akara said the mosque attack was an attempt to further destabilize relations between citizens and the central government.

"The insurgents opened fire on the Muslim villagers and put the blame on the authorities," Akara was quoted as saying by the Associated Press. "They want to create an impression that authorities cannot take care of the Muslim people in the area. Worse still, they want people to think the authorities did it to poison the relationship between the government and the local population."

The past year in southern Thailand has seen an escalation in separatist attacks, with almost daily fatal shootings of civilians and frequent ambushes on soldiers. Three weeks ago, seven soldiers were killed in an ambush in Narathiwat.

On Sunday, 12 people were injured and one killed in a series of bombings in the city of Hat Yai. The next day, four people were killed when a bomb-laden motorcycle exploded at a crowded market in Saba Yoi. Six men were arrested on Thursday in connection with Sunday's bombings.

Since early 2004, more than 2,200 people have been killed, mainly in the Muslim-majority southernmost provinces of Yala, Pattani and Narathiwat. Thailand is predominantly a Buddhist country, but in those three provinces, the majority of residents are Muslim.

"The militants have stepped up attacks in order to increase pressure on authorities," Akara was quoted as saying by Agence

France-Presse.

Prime Minister Surayud Chulanont said on Friday there would be no retaliation. "We must be patient ... we have to be firm on the rule of law. We will not do anything to cause more problems and injustice," he said.

Army Chief General Sonthi Boonyaratglin, chairman of the junta's ruling Council for National Security, who is Muslim, said he would visit the south in an effort to calm tensions. His visit would also include meeting with student protest organizers at Pattani's main mosque.

### **US presidential candidate Dodd applauded by League of Conservation**

The League of Conservation Voters (LCV) issued a statement today, congratulating Senator Chris Dodd for his support of environmental issues. Dodd has made a large ad buy in Iowa and New Hampshire for a spot talking about his commitment to the issues. It is the first television ad by a candidate during the campaign to discuss global warming.

LCV President Gene Karpinski stated: "The League of Conservation Voters applauds Senator Chris Dodd for making global warming a focal point of his campaign. Not only has Senator Dodd outlined an ambitious plan to curb global warming - he is also the first presidential candidate ever to release an ad focusing solely on this key issue.

More and more Americans want our next President to address global warming and propose bold solutions to this challenge.

Senator Dodd is helping to remind America that our president has the

power to stop global warming - it's in their hands.

We look forward to seeing the debate on this issue continue to advance in the coming months."

On January 11, 2007, Dodd announced his Presidential candidacy on the now canceled Imus in the Morning radio show. The head of the New Hampshire Democratic party said Dodd told her that he wasn't "going to do the exploratory thing, I'm going to plunge right in."

LCV's mission is to "advocate for sound environmental policies and to elect pro-environmental candidates who will adopt and implement such policies.

Dodd is currently a senator for Connecticut.

### **Hillary Clinton's song contest reaches final round**

U.S. Democratic Party presidential candidate Senator Hillary Clinton has been asking webizens to vote on her official campaign song. Campaign Manager Patti Solis Doyle sent an email today to previous voters, urging them to choose a song in the second and final round of voting.

Clinton, as many of the other candidates, have been using "Web 2.0" applications like YouTube, Flickr, MySpace, Facebook, and blogs to try and engage young voters.

The top five songs in Round One were "Suddenly I See" by KT Tunstall, "Rock This Country!" by Shania Twain, "Beautiful Day" by U2, "Get Ready" by The Temptations, and "I'm a Believer" by Smash Mouth. Five top write-ins were also added to the list of round 2 nominees: "Are You Gonna

Go My Way" by Lenny Kravitz, "Ain't No Stoppin' Us Now" by McFadden & Whitehead, "Every Little Thing She Does Is Magic" by The Police, "You and I" by Celine Dion, and "The Best" by Tina Turner.

Many of the nominated songs are from international artists; Tunstall is Scottish, Twain is Canadian, and U2 are Irish.

### **Guantanamo detainee commits suicide**

Following a number of hunger strikes to protest the conditions in Guantanamo Bay, a detainee at the United States prison camp killed himself on Wednesday.

While US officials initially refused to release the name of the prisoner, whose method of suicide has still not been announced, a Saudi Arabian government team that had been inspecting the detention centre confirmed that 34-year old Abdul Rahman al-Amri, a prisoner held in the maximum security Camp 5, had been found dead in his cell by a guard on routine patrol.

After several months spent fighting in the Tora Bora region, al-Amri surrendered himself to Pakistani police in February 2002, and was turned over to the American military who accused him of being Abu Anas, a filmmaker with close ties to al-Qaeda who had produced films about the bombing of the USS Cole and September 11th attacks.

A nine-year veteran of the Saudi Arabian Army, al-Amri had participated in training exercises with American troops, before he chose to travel to Afghanistan and help the Taliban resist the US-led invasion. At his Combatant Status Review Tribunal, he suggested that

if his goal had simply been to "kill Americans", he had plenty of opportunity while serving on Saudi military bases - but that he had instead felt an honest call to answer a plea for help from a Muslim government.

Since being sent to Guantanamo, al-Amri had participated in multiple hunger strikes, which ended with him being strapped down and fitted with a nasal feeding tube once he fell below 90lbs. His most recent known hunger strike ended in March of this year.

### **Spanish town council electee proposes nudist pool, marijuana field in park**

A former mailman who proposed to paint the town hall pink, turn the local town square into a nudist pool, and to plant a marijuana field in the local park has been elected to the Reus, Spain town council.

Ariel Santamaria promised to show up to the town's council meetings dressed up as Elvis Presley if he was elected and kept his word at the town's first meeting on Thursday.

Before being elected, Santamaria who is a member of the Reus Independent Coordination, had also promised the town's 100,000 residents that he would install a GPS system at the police department that would allow officers to track people who are smoking marijuana and provide them with a light if they need one.

An unnamed media consultant who works for Santamaria set up a website for his campaign and followed Santamaria wherever he went, dressed as a pirate.

### **Evan O'Dorney wins 2007 USA Spelling Bee competition**

13-year-old Evan O'Dorney, from California in the United States, has won the 2007 Scripps National Spelling Bee championship in Washington, D.C.

He spelt the word 'serrefine' correctly to defeat second place Nate Gartke, of Canada, and win the 80th annual bee. Gartke, from Spruce Grove, Alberta, was trying to become the first Canadian to win the championship.

O'Dorney, from Danville, said he knew how to spell the word, which is a noun describing small forceps, immediately after the pronouncer read it out.

The winner received \$US35,000 in prizemoney and a trophy, as well as a scholarship, savings and a set of reference works.

O'Dorney, who finished in a tie for 14th in last years' spelling bee, only stumbled once in 2007's competition, when he had to restart 'schuhplattler', a German word.

The bee, which started with a competition-record 286 entrants on Wednesday, were narrowed down to 59 at the start of the final day. It was then whittled down to 15 finalists, and ten faltered over the next two rounds to leave a final group of five: four Americans and the Canadian Gartke.

Three more were eliminated, on the words 'aniseikonia' (a visual defect), "oberek" (a Polish folk dance), and "cyanophycean" (a kind of algae), leaving O'Dorney and Gartke.

The final pair matched each other with correct spellings for three rounds, until Gartke mistakenly

added a 'h' into 'coryza' (a medical word), eliminating himself and leaving O'Dorney as the champion.

O'Dorney said after his win that spelling is not his favourite subject. "My favourite things to do were math and music, and with the math I really like the way the numbers fit together," he said.

### **Venezuelan protests continue over closure of RCTV**

Protests continue in Venezuela over the Sunday closing of Radio Caracas Television (RCTV), the country's oldest and most popular TV station.

Hugo Chavez's reasons for not renewing the TV station's broadcasting license include RCTV's support of a coup d'état attempt in 2002; after he discovered this, Chavez allowed the station to continue operating for another five years.

Protests began with opposition marches over the weekend. Shortly after the closing of RCTV, large student demonstrations appeared throughout the capital city of Caracas. The protests have continued all week and have spread throughout the country. Most of the student protests have originated from universities who are not aligned with Chavez; he says that the students do not like the public universities that threaten and compete with the non-aligned schools.

Protesters threw rocks at police officers, who have responded with rubber bullets and tear gas. Some protesters were arrested, and many were injured. Most were students.

Spontaneous rallies by government supporters have also appeared, supporting Hugo Chavez's

decision. These protests were not the same size as some of the student protests. The police and national guard have been working to make sure that these opposing groups do not clash together.

Many websites related to the opposition have been down due to either high internet traffic or, theoretically, because CanTV, the Venezuelan telecom, will not allow access to these websites in Venezuela. There is not much evidence for the supposed intervention by CanTV and is not much more than speculation at this point. Nonetheless, many websites and blogs have reported such incidents.

Chavez has repeatedly stated that the protests are organized by opposition forces wishing to destabilize the government much like the coup d'état attempt that took place five years earlier.

Hugo Chávez has also repeatedly threatened the TV station Globovisión, which is the only significant opposition voice on television. Chavez claims that they encouraged his assassination and also helped the effort to unseat him during the 2002 coup d'état attempt.

The closure of RCTV has been condemned in the United States and the European Union. The U.S Senate has passed a resolution expressing "profound concern of the Senate regarding the transgression and freedom of thought and expression that is being carried out in Venezuela."

U.S House Speaker Nancy Pelosi has made this statement about the incident: "President Chavez should know that efforts to suppress the media will not only ultimately fail, but are also a detriment to one of

the pillars of democracy: freedom of expression." Pelosi also said in a statement Wednesday in Washington. "He should reconsider this ill-advised decision."

The press freedom advocacy group Reporters Without Borders called the closure "a serious violation of freedom of expression and a major setback to democracy and pluralism," and urged the international community to rally in defence of press freedom.

Much like the French protests last year, students are using technology to their advantage. Cell phones to communicate and video from the phone is being broadcast on YouTube and other video sharing websites. Videos that have been uploaded to YouTube are considered to be the most graphic, as television stations in Venezuela fear repercussion if they broadcast the footage.

### **Premier Iemma apologises to Indonesian governor over hotel entry incident**

In response to an incident on May 29, 2007, New South Wales Premier Morris Iemma has issued a formal, written apology to Sutiyoso, the Governor of Jakarta who was visiting Sydney as an official guest of the New South Wales Government.

The incident occurred when New South Wales police entered Sutiyoso's harbourside hotel room in Sydney, whilst he was taking a nap, using a master hotel key, failing to knock or announce their presence before entering.

The police were requesting that the governor give evidence at an inquest into the 1975 death of an Australian cameraman Brian Peters in the neighbouring country of East Timor. Peters was killed in

crossfire, along with four fellow Australian-based newspeople, in Balibo, just prior to the Indonesian military's invasion of East Timor. The circumstances around their death have been the centre of allegations regarding a cover-up by Indonesia and Australia, particularly from some of the families of those killed.

The fall-out resulted in the cancellation of the remaining plans of Sutiyoso's official trip in Australia, with him flying home to Indonesia, and created a diplomatic stand-off between the Federal Government of Australia and the Indonesian Government.

The incident would have been 'humiliating' for Sutiyoso and to Indonesians in general, Foreign Affairs Minister Alexander Downer explained. Sutiyoso is a respected man in Indonesian history, and is also considered to be a possible candidate for the 2009 presidential elections. The Sydney incident caused a demonstration by Indonesians outside the Australian Embassy in Jakarta, which lasted into its second day before the apology was given.

Although the apology has relieved some of the diplomatic tension between the two neighbouring countries, Premier Iemma's apology has sparked condemnation by some Australians, most notably the widow of one of the newspeople who was killed in the 1975 incident.

Governor Sutiyoso is a retired Lieutenant General who served in the Indonesian military for three decades, and was involved in Indonesia's occupation of East Timor. It has been alleged at the inquest that Sutiyoso had been a member of 'Team Susi' - one of

the units of the Indonesian military who were involved in the advancement on Balibo on the day in 1975 the five journalists were killed.

Shirley Shackleton, husband to Greg Shackleton who was one of the five killed, said he felt sorry for Morris Iemma being 'forced' to write this apology. "I think it's terribly sad because obviously someone's forced him to do that. He didn't want to, did he?" she said. "I'm sorry he's put in that position because I think it's humiliating for him."

Iemma had previously declined to comment as to whether he was going to issue an apology to the angry governor, saying that the police were not acting under the direction of the New South Wales Government.

The letter from the Premier, in which he apologised for the "distress and inconvenience caused", was in addition to the personal apology given by Bill Farmer, Australia's Ambassador to Indonesia, the day prior.

Sutiyoso has accepted the apologies, and said that it was "already more than I need". He also extended an invitation for Premier Iemma to visit Jakarta in July as a guest of the governor.

The inquest into the events of 1975, which Sutiyoso refused summons to, continues in Sydney. An investigation has also been launched into the police department over the incident.

### **Tanker crash kills driver, spills diesel fuel in Vermont, US**

A tanker truck travelling Northbound on Route 30 with 2,500 gallons of diesel fuel hit a guardrail, veered off the road and

overturned into the West River near Newfane, Vermont. The West River is a tributary of the Connecticut River. The driver was ejected and killed, while the truck's tank ruptured.

The truck came to rest partially submerged on its right side and immediately began leaking its payload. The driver has been identified as 30-year-old Eduard Lashway of Guilford. The vehicle was owned by local company Barrows & Fisher Oil Co. of Brattleboro.

HazMat crews and Brattleboro Fire Department divers worked with booms to try to contain the oil leaking into the river. Route 30 was also closed in both directions. A total of 100 gallons of fuel leaked into the river but was ultimately contained by HazMat teams.

The accident is under investigation.

### **Today in History**

455 - The Vandals entered Rome and began to plunder the city for two weeks.

1924 - U.S. President Calvin Coolidge signed the Indian Citizenship Act into law, granting citizenship to all Native Americans born within the territorial limits of the United States.

1953 - Queen Elizabeth II of the United Kingdom was crowned.

1995 - United States Air Force Captain Scott O'Grady's F-16 was shot down over Bosnia while patrolling the NATO no-fly zone.

2003 - The Mars Express space probe, the first planetary mission of the European Space Agency, was launched.

### **Quote of the Day**

To find themselves utterly alone at night where company is desirable

and expected makes some people fearful; but a case more trying by far to the nerves is to discover some mysterious companionship when intuition, sensation, memory, analogy, testimony, probability, induction — every kind of evidence in the logician's list — have united to persuade consciousness that it is quite in isolation. ~ Thomas Hardy

### **Word of the Day**

ramshackle; adj

1. In disrepair or disorder; poorly maintained.

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