



Top Stories

Former teacher in France surrenders after holding 22 hostage in school

A former teacher who held 22 hostages in Colbert de Torcy High School located near Le Mans, France, surrendered without incident. No one was injured and officials say the gun he was carrying was fake.

Gordon Parks, African American filmmaker, dies at 93

Photographer, film director, writer Gordon Parks died Tuesday at his home in New York. He was 93. Parks was a pioneering black artist with an impressive list of honors and accomplishments, including at least 40 honorary doctorate degrees.

Featured story

Largest mass extinction in 65 million years underway, say scientists

Environmental scientists say the planet is undergoing the "largest mass extinction in 65 million years". Leading environmental scientist Professor Norman Myers says the Earth is experiencing its "Sixth Extinction." Scientists forecast that up to five million species will be lost this century.

Wikipedia Current Events

- The notorious Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq is to close and its prisoners to be housed elsewhere, the US military has said.

Wikipedia Current Events

- Astronomers announce that the Cassini-Huygens probe has detected geysers of water on Saturn's moon Enceladus, the first example of naturally-occurring liquid water beyond Earth.
- United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan launches the Central Emergency Response Fund to provide aid to regions of Africa currently facing starvation.
- The Sable-sur-Sarthe hostage crisis in France ends peacefully with no casualties. The gunman had suffered from depression.

Bangkok blast injures two tourists

A small explosive device detonated this afternoon at a police guard post near to the residence of former Prime Minister, General Prem Tinsulanonda in Bangkok. The device injured two tourists, one Canadian and one British.

Prem was Thailand's PM from 1980, dismissing parliament and resigning the position in 1988. He went on to join the country's Privy Council and now chairs it.

The explosion comes against the backdrop of political tension in the country, with all main opposition parties boycotting the April 2nd election called by Thaksin Shinawatra. Protests against the PM now occur daily, with a proposed boycott of goods and services from companies associated with the PM or his

family being put into place.

Former teacher in France surrenders after holding 22 hostage in school

The man who took at least 22 people hostage in Colbert de Torcy High School near Le Mans, France, most of whom were teenagers, surrendered without incident.

Reports indicated 20 of the hostages were students, and two others were adults, possibly school employees. This was higher than initial reports of 18 students and two adults. According to a school receptionist, Bernadette Mercier, the students ranged in age from 17 to 18 years old. The school holds up to 1,500 students. No one was harmed in the incident.

The situation began when the man, aged 33, walked into Colbert de Torcy High School at 1:00 PM GMT, Thursday afternoon and officials say he was suffering from depression. "We knew him, so we simply let him in," Mercier said. "He seemed totally normal."

The hostage-taker was reported to be armed with a gun, which later turned out to be fake.

The man had lost his job as a substitute teacher at the school two years ago. He was quoted as saying he "wants to talk to the press about his employment problems." He's also asked to speak with Francois Fillon, the local mayor and former French education minister. Mr. Fillon was the author of an education reform

program.

Students were allowed to use their mobile phones to communicate with their families according to Jean Luc Prigent, head of security for the Le Mans region which includes the school. A special hotline was set up, along with a crisis center for parents of the students.

A hostage rescue team called the GIGN, was dispatched to the scene, coming by helicopter from Villacoublay Military Airport just west of Paris.

Interior Minister Nicolas Sarkozy said he was paying close attention to the situation.

The school is located in northwestern France in Sablé-sur-Sarthe near the city of Le Mans.

NFL owners agree to CBA extension, 30-2

The owners of the teams of the National Football League agreed Wednesday night at 7:35pm EDT--25 minutes before a final deadline of 8:00pm EDT--to a collective bargaining agreement extension proposal put together by the NFL Players Association. The final vote was 30-2, with Ralph Wilson of the Buffalo Bills and Mike Brown of the Cincinnati Bengals voting no.

Faced with a severely limiting salary cap of \$94.5 million in 2006 and the total loss of the salary cap in 2007, potentially ending the era of parity in the NFL, the owners' final caveat was not with the NFLPA, but with themselves. They were arguing over the continuation of revenue sharing, and how it should proceed through the CBA extension. In the end, owners agreed to a three-tiered revenue sharing system: The top five revenue teams would each pay the

highest share into the revenue sharing pool, teams 6-10 would each pay the middle share, and teams 11-15 would each pay the lowest share. The lower 17 teams would then split the revenue sharing pool.

The CBA extension permits the salary cap to rise to \$102 million for the 2006 season, and \$109 million for 2007. It also extends the maximum proration period for signing bonuses to five years in 2006, then six years in 2007, before returning to five years in 2008.

The owners and the NFLPA have been working on a CBA extension for nearly two years. If the deadline had passed Wednesday night, then the current CBA would have ended after the 2007 season, with the owners fearing a strike and a possible challenge from another professional football league, like the USFL in the mid-1980s. This fear is substantiated by the 2004-05 strike in the NHL, during which an unsuccessful challenge was made by a re-formed World Hockey Association.

Toronto to have socialized city-wide wi-fi access

March 9, 2006

Toronto's public utility, Toronto Hydro Telecom, will make Canada's largest city into a huge wireless hotspot.

"This is both an exciting and very important initiative for the city of Toronto," said Toronto's mayor, David Miller. "It puts us on the leading edge of the telecommunications industry nationwide and globally."

Toronto Hydro Telecom will offer customers free access for the first six months. After that, it will begin to charge for services.

"Wi-Fi technology is the new benchmark for urban living," stated Toronto Hydro president David Dobbin. "It's standard equipment in many electronic devices, from laptops to portable entertainment units."

Private telephone companies are questioning why a public utility needs to compete with the private sector.

Mike Lee of Rogers Communications Inc. questioned why the city of Toronto wanted to enter the internet access business.

"It will not be an easy business," Lee told the National Post. "In this day and age, the focus should be on core operations more than anything. I was surprised to see they are looking to get into this business."

Brian Sharwood, a telecom analyst in Toronto, said the municipality will likely install the wireless transmitters and receivers on its lamp posts as a way to blanket the city, a process known as "wireless mesh networking."

UK vending machines begin selling sex toys

Bars and nightclubs in London, Manchester, and Newcastle, UK, now carry vending machines selling sex toys for about £5. These fuschia-pink Taboo machines are usually located near toilets to render deliberating customers a modicum of privacy. However, some hairdressing salons are giving the machines "center stage". Products available from these unconventional vending machines include mini vibrators, "silicone ticklers", "lust fingers", and bottles of "love liquid" (an edible lubricant).

The Alphabet Bar in London's West End, host to the first sex toy vending machine in the U.K., claims many people visit especially for the machine, and describes it as a "great success". Alan Lucas, the managing director of the company behind this enterprise, Taboooboo, suggests that the success of the machines is due to younger people having a more liberal view of sex toys. He stated, "The most popular product is a vibrating rod ring which is something [the man] wears [on his penis]".

The machines are expected to begin appearing in the U.S. and Italy.

Agriculture's impact on human evolution clarified

University of Chicago, Illinois biologists Dr. Benjamin Voight, Dr. Sridhar Kudaravalli, Dr. Xiaoquan Wen and Dr. Jonathan Pritchard have identified regions of human DNA showing the strongest marks of natural selection within the last 5,000 to 15,000 years.

They found that many recent genetic changes are related to the development of agriculture. In particular, the genes for digestion of milk into adulthood occurred only after some level of domestication of animals. Most mammals drink milk only in infancy.

The work may shed light on the genetic factors involved in various human medical conditions, including high blood pressure and alcoholism.

The Chicago finding also contradicts the tacit assumption of much social science that human evolution "ground to a halt" in the distant past. Even evolutionary psychologists have tempered their

claims based upon this assumption.

The study is based upon DNA changes found in three populations examined by the HapMap project: Africans, East Asians and Europeans.

The study has been published in PLOS-Biology.

Wikinews interviews Gary Fung from isoHunt

As reported on Wikinews, isoHunt, a torrent and IRC search site frequented by a massive number of Internet users everyday has recently been one of the targets of the Motion Picture Association of America's anti-piracy campaign. Originally starting out as an IRC indexing site in January of 2003, isoHunt added torrent search later that year in July and has been steadily growing since. By December, isoHunt had 16,248 torrents available. Today that amount is around 250,000.

isoHunt has survived while many similar sites around it crumbled, yet was operating long before the others had even been thought of. In April of 2005, isoHunt also gained Torrentbox after its administrator gave it to Gary Fung, of isoHunt.

Wikinews interviewed Mr. Fung, the 22 year-old Canadian administrator of the sites.

Why did you start your site?
For fun, and to learn web programming (PHP and Mysql). Also a web search engine for P2P networks has not been done, and would be useful.

I read on your site at the time news of the MPAA's actions hit the news, that you had not been notified, how did you find out?

How did you react?

I found out first from Mike at Slyck.com, who have received letters of the press release, along with other news outlets like CNET. Within a few hours all the news sites posted about it.

Do you feel it is appropriate for the MPAA to publicly announce that they have commenced action against your sites and others before you even receive notification?

Yes, although not surprising. Factually speaking, industry associations like the MPAA often uses the threat of pending lawsuits to intimidate to-be defendants, and it serves their purpose of spreading FUD to the public at large.

Have you ever received a takedown notice from any company in accordance with the DMCA?

At least once a day, often many times a day. I've lost count of how many takedown requests we've received now, it would be at least in the hundreds if not a thousand. We have a thorough copyright policy outlining our stance, compliance and procedures: <http://isohunt.com/dmca-copyright.php>. Some of them come back and actually thank us with satisfaction for our prompt processing. For others, such as indie content producers for TV shows and movies, we actually talk to them about using BitTorrent to aid their distribution. And such partnerships are in the works.

How do you go about dealing with them?

We verify their authenticity, whether identified works are within their copyright, and disable them if found to be aiding in possible copyright infringement.

Do you think the service you provide is any different to that of major search engines such as Google and Yahoo?

No. We are all search engines, only designed for different markets. "Torrents" for example are metadata pointers that describe and link to resources on BitTorrent swarms. Google and isoHunt for example are different only in forms of links and types of data they index. Both serve the purpose of organizing information on open networks on the internet (WWW and P2P), making them useful and searchable.

According to the isoHunt website Gary received official notification of the MPAA's lawsuit on February 28, 2006. Gary admits that he was impressed by the amount of research which was put into the suit. He said "I have to say I am impressed by the depth of their legal research, evidently their lawyers have been watching us for at least a year, since we exchanged letters last year. However, their core accusation is false. We do NOT operate this search engine and other P2P services for the express object of infringing MPAA's copyrights, there are many other torrents of content we index that are not owned by the MPAA, copyrighted or non-copyrighted. We would comply with DMCA takedown requests, given sufficient identification. Which they did not".

North Korea fires missiles during training exercise

North Korea, during military training exercises on Wednesday (March 8) near the border with China, launched two surface-to-air missiles, according to Kyodo News citing two military sources.

The sources, however, dispute where those missiles were

launched. An "Asian security source" stated that the missiles may have been launched in the direction of China by mistake, and landed just inside the North Korean border. A "Western military source", however, claimed that they were launched to the east, in the direction of the Sea of Japan, but still says they landed in North Korean territory.

North Korea surprised the world when it launched a ballistic missile over northern Japan in 1998. Since then, it has conducted many missile tests, including a dense battery of land-to-ship missile tests in 2003 when tensions rose over its possible possession of nuclear weapons. It is believed to be developing a ballistic missile that could reach Alaska, Hawaii, or even the continental United States.

Today in History

241 BC - Rome defeated Carthage in the Battle of the Aegates Islands, ending the First Punic War.

1831 - The French Foreign Legion was established by King Louis-Philippe to support his war in Algeria.

1861 - Toucouleur forces led by El Hadj Umar Tall seized Ségou and conquered the Bambara Empire in presentday Mali.

1906 - More than a thousand coal miners were killed in the Courrières mine disaster in Northern France.

1952 - Forbidden by law to seek re-election, former President Fulgencio Batista staged a coup d'état to resume control in Cuba.

Quote of the Day

"All that separates, whether of race, class, creed, or sex, is inhuman, and must be overcome."
~ Kate Sheppard

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