



### Top Stories



**Former Indonesian president, Suharto in critical condition**

**Lakota Freedom Delegation says spokesman Russell Means 'hijacked' organization**

Wikinews has learned that the Lakota Freedom Delegation, also known as Lakotah Oyate, an organization of activists fighting for the Sioux Indian Nation to withdraw all treaties with the United States, was "hijacked" by its spokesman, Russell Means, an activist for Native American Indians.



### Featured story

tonight's ABC Democratic debate broadcast is "violating [ABC's] obligation to operate in the public interest", by barring Dennis Kucinich. The debate also bars Duncan Hunter, a Republican candidate recently interviewed by Wikinews.

### Wikipedia Current Events

Greece is hit by an earthquake measuring 6.5 on the Richter Scale. The epicenter is 70 km below Leonidio. There are no immediate reports of casualties or serious damage.

•Georgian presidential election, 2008: Georgian Incumbent President Mikhail Saakashvili has been re-elected for a new mandate following a snap poll with nearly 53% of the votes

### Mikheil Saakashvili re-elected President of Georgia

Election officials have declared Mikheil Saakashvili the winner of the Georgian presidential election, which occurred earlier than usual due to anti-government protests in November 2007. He garnered 52.8% of the vote, while the leading opposition candidate Levan Gachechiladze came in second with 27% of the vote.

The election had been a controversial one, with opposition leaders claiming it was unfair and that Saakashvili had rigged the vote in his favor. Allegations of intimidation, media bias, and vote buying were widespread.

In a report, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) called the election "consistent with most O.S.C.E. and Council of Europe commitments and standards for democratic elections", but also noted violations, including people apparently voting more than once at certain polling stations and some ballot boxes not being properly sealed. Giorgi Kandelaki, a spokesman for the Justice Ministry, responded by saying there were "very few violations that could be regarded as serious"

After exit polls showed Saakashvili in the lead on Saturday, he declared an early victory, which prompted thousands of protesters to gather in Tbilisi. Gachechiladze spoke at the rally, saying, "We have won despite pressure, despite intimidation, despite televised terror exerted against us." He said that the opposition will contest the results in court and scheduled another rally on January 8, since Georgia celebrates Christmas on Monday.

Alcee Hastings, United States Congressman and coordinator of OSCE, called for the protesters to regard the election as legitimate and for the government to institute electoral reforms in time for upcoming parliamentary elections. "I perceive this election as a viable expression of free choice of the Georgian people, but the future holds immense challenges," Hastings said.

### Featured story

**Kucinich suggests tonight's Democratic debate unfair, files FCC charges versus ABC**

Late Friday, the "Kucinich for President" campaign filed an emergency complaint with the United States Federal Communications Commission (FCC). They suggest



### **Bush urges US allies in Middle East to support Israeli-Palestinian peace talks**

President Bush travels to the Middle East in the coming week in hopes of urging U.S. allies in the region to support Israeli-Palestinian peace talks

The president's first stop is Israel where he says he will encourage Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas to move forward with peace talks they began in November in the United States.

"This is difficult work. It will require tough decisions on complex questions. But I am optimistic about the prospects. And I will make clear that America is deeply committed to helping both parties realize the historic vision we share: two democratic states, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security," said Mr. Bush.

After Israel, the president visits Kuwait, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt. In his weekly radio address, he says he will urge regional leaders to support Israeli-Palestinian talks and will consult with them on the war against extremists.

The president says America will stay engaged in the region because societies growing in tolerance and hope are less likely to become sources of radicalism and violence.

"We will support democrats and reformers from Beirut and Baghdad to Damascus and Tehran," said Mr. Bush. "We will stand with all those working to build a future of liberty and justice and peace."

Analysts and activists in some

Middle Eastern countries allied with the United States say 2007 was marked by governments backtracking from steps toward democracy.

During his trip, President Bush will meet with U.S. officials from Iraq for an update on the fighting there.

Public opinion polls say a majority of Americans believe the president's decision to invade Iraq was a mistake. And the deployment of more than 100,000 U.S. troops there is a major issue in this year's presidential campaign.

In the Democratic radio address, party chairman Howard Dean urged American voters to put an end to seven years of Republican rule.

"The Republican candidates stand for the past. They support the president's war in Iraq, the president's veto of children's health care, and they support an endless charge-card mentality, which our children and grandchildren will pay the bill for. The Democrats stand for the future of our country, and the message this November will be clear. If you want to get out of Iraq and refocus America's priority to really fight terrorism, vote for a Democrat for president," said Dean.

In this week's first presidential caucus, more than twice as many Democrats turned out as Republicans. Dean says that shows Americans do not want another Bush term. That cannot happen anyway as the constitution prevents the president from seeking a third term.

### **Six die in Alaskan plane crash**

A Piper PA-31 Navajo Chieftain owned and operated by Servant Air has crashed shortly after takeoff from Kodiak Island, Alaska, United States. Six people were killed and four others were rescued.

The flight was a 100 mile scheduled domestic charter flight from Kodiak to Homer. Servant Air are a small local airline that serves Kodiak, which has a population of around 6,000. The airline was founded in 2003 and currently operates seven planes. The plane took off at at 1:48 p.m. local time Saturday and subsequently crashed in a shallow harbour 50 yards from the runway.

Dean Andrew, who was piloting a float plane taxiing on the water nearby, was able to rescue four people from the crashed plane. "Once I got them in they were really cold, and they were just pretty hysterical because they had told me that their family's in that plane," said Andrew, who the International Tribune Herald reports operates his own small air service, although the Seattle Times reported that he flew the plane for Trident Seafoods.

Alaska State Troopers and Kodiak Police divers were called in to retrieve the bodies of four others. A fifth was pulled out the water after attempting to swim 300 yards to shore, but he had already succumbed to the cold.

The passengers were Russian Orthodox Old Believers who had chartered the flight home in order to celebrate Russian Christmas, which is celebrated on Monday. The deceased have been identified as Homer citizens Stefan F. Basargin, 36; Pavel F. Basargin, 30; Zahary F. Martushev, 25; Iosif

F. Martushev, 15; Andrian Reutov, 22 and local pilot Robin Starrett, 50. The survivors, who have not been identified, are all in good condition or out of hospital. Two were flown to Anchorage for treatment and two remained in Kodiak; in both cases one was released and one remains.

Andrew described the moments leading up to the crash: "I heard Servant Air's Navajo taking off, and shortly after he took off, he said, 'I need to return to the airport.' I know the pilot, and I could tell by the tone of his voice that it was probably something serious."

The US National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) has opened a full investigation. NTSB investigator Clint Johnson told reporters it's possible that mechanical problems with the plane caused the accident.

Ted Panamarioff, spokesman for Servant Air, said of Starrett "Very humble, very caring. Very detail oriented. Very precise in the way he did things. He was an excellent family man. Excellent co-worker." He also said that Starrett had served in the Coast Guard, and that those involved were regular customers well known with the small airline. "We're all family and friends here. We knew these customers for several years. This is really, really tragic."

### **Israel to welcome President Bush with 'open arms'**

Israel is gearing up for the visit of U.S. President George Bush this week. But as Robert Berger reports, the high-profile visit comes amid escalating tension between Israel and the Palestinian government in the Gaza Strip.

Prime Minister Ehud Olmert says

Israel will welcome President Bush with "open arms."

Mr. Olmert told the Cabinet the president has shown great friendship toward Israel throughout his term and has been a strategic ally.

He said Israel will discuss security issues with Mr. Bush, including what he described as the ongoing "terror" from the Gaza Strip. Mr. Olmert said a longer-range Palestinian rocket that hit the major Israeli city of Ashkelon last week marked an escalation, and the Israeli army would respond by stepping up raids into Gaza.

In addition, Palestinian officials say Israeli fuel cuts to Gaza will force residents there to live without electricity eight hours a day beginning Sunday. Israeli officials said the cuts are a "stern message" to the Islamic militant group Hamas to halt the rocket attacks.

Israel has tightened sanctions on Hamas since it seized control of Gaza in June, when it routed the Fatah forces of western-backed Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas. He now heads a moderate government in the West Bank.

Officials in the Abbas government have condemned the Israeli fuel cuts and raids into Gaza, saying they are harming the atmosphere in peace talks which resumed last month after a seven year break.

President Abbas and Prime Minister Olmert will meet Tuesday to discuss Gaza and other issues, a day before President Bush arrives for a three-day visit to Israel and the West Bank.

It has been reported that nearly 400,000 US Dollars have been

spent to prepare for the visit.

### **London Knights trade Steve Mason to Kitchener Rangers**

On the morning of January 4, 2008, while at the 2008 World Junior Ice Hockey Championships, 19-year-old goalie Steve Mason received a phone call from Canada informing him that he was traded by the Ontario Hockey League's London Knights to the Kitchener Rangers.

In a press release Friday, Kitchener Rangers Head coach and General Manager Peter DeBoer announced the trade to the Knights. In return for obtaining Mason, the Rangers have sent the Knights, Centre Phil Varone, Defenceman Steve Tarasuk along with 2nd, 3rd and 4th round draft picks in 2011 and a 2nd round pick in 2012.

Mason said that he had an enjoyable time playing for the London Knights, but nonetheless, he believes that he has a bright future playing for the Kitchener Rangers. He also notes that he doesn't want the trade to distract him from playing in the Gold Medal Game, against Team Sweden.

Team Canada won the game in overtime 3-2.

### **Extremist group claims responsibility for killing of American diplomat in Sudan**

A previously unknown militant group has claimed responsibility for killing a United States diplomat in the Sudanese capital of Khartoum on New Year's Day.

The group, calling itself Ansar al-Tawhid (Companions of Monotheism), said its members shot 33-year-old John Granville and his Sudanese driver Abdel Rahman Abbas. The name of the

militant group has been used by many other groups of extremists in other areas of the world.

It was not immediately possible to authenticate the claim, which was posted on a Web site used by Islamists.

Granville was being driven home on New Year's Day when another vehicle cut his car off, and assailants opened fire.

FBI agents and other U.S. investigators have traveled to Sudan to investigate the shooting.

Sudan's foreign ministry has said the shooting was an isolated incident with no political connotations. Sudanese media reports quoted a government official earlier this week as saying there is no evidence the attack was an act of terrorism.

U.S.-Sudanese relations have been tense because of the violence in Sudan's Darfur region. The shooting happened one day after a joint United Nations-African Union force took over peacekeeping duties in Darfur.

### Today in History

1558 – Francis, Duke of Guise retook Calais, England's last continental possession, for France.  
 1610 – Italian astronomer Galileo Galilei first observed three of Jupiter's natural satellites through his telescope: Io, Europa, and Callisto  
 1785 – Frenchman Jean-Pierre Blanchard and American John Jeffries became the first to cross the English Channel by balloon.  
 1924 – The International Hockey Federation, the global governing body for field hockey, was founded in Paris in response to the sport's omission from the 1924 Summer Olympics.

1979 – Phnom Penh, Cambodia fell to the People's Army of Vietnam, effectively ending the Khmer Rouge regime under Pol Pot.  
 January 07 is Christmas (Christianity-Julian calendar).

### Quote of the Day

You cannot begin to preserve any species of animal unless you preserve the habitat in which it dwells. Disturb or destroy that habitat and you will exterminate the species as surely as if you had shot it. So conservation means that you have to preserve forest and grassland, river and lake, even the sea itself. This is not only vital for the preservation of animal life generally, but for the future existence of man himself — a point that seems to escape many people. ~ Gerald Durrell

### Word of the Day

- perspicacious adj
1. Of acute discernment; having keen insight; mentally perceptive.

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+1-866-653-4265  
 (toll-free in the U.S.)  
 +1-202-742-5918  
 (outside the U.S.)  
 +44-871-218-6397  
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