

**Top Stories**

**Iraq ballots to be audited due to voting "anomalies"**



The Independent Electoral Commission of Iraq (IECI) has announced that it will audit the votes cast in this weekends constitutional referendum in Iraq over what it sees as voting "anomalies".

**Russian sabre rattling in the Barents Sea**



Russian authorities have threatened to send warships to protect a trawler caught fishing illegally in disputed waters near Norway.

**Featured story**

**New York Times reporter Judith Miller breaks silence on Plame leak investigation**

New York Times reporter Judith Miller broke her media silence by writing a column the newspaper published on Sunday. Her lengthy story recounted two testimonies, September 30 and October 12, she gave to a U.S. federal grand jury seeking information on the source of the Valerie Plame leak.

**Wikipedia Current Events**

- Conflict in Iraq: Two US Marines and around four Iraqi insurgents are killed in Western Iraq.
- The independent electoral commission in Iraq has issued a statement saying that statistical irregularities in the constitution ratification referendum on October 15, 2005 indicate apparent Electoral fraud.
- William Evan Allen, the last surviving Australian First World War veteran, dies aged 106.

**Wikipedia Current Events**

- The Spinnaker Tower in Portsmouth is formally opened at 9am UTC. Five years overdue and massively over budget, the tower offers the highest public vantage point in the UK. (BBC). However, during the opening, project manager David Greenhalgh became trapped in the tower's external glass lift for over an hour.
- Israeli-Palestinian Conflict: Israel has issued orders to confiscate hundreds of Hectares of Palestinian land for the expansion of Jewish Settlements on the West Bank. According to the Guardian Israel has seized more land since July than it withdrew from in its withdrawal from the Gaza Strip.
- Authorities closed one of two highway tunnels carrying traffic under Baltimore's harbor for nearly two hours and partially shut the other because of a threat to detonate vehicles full of explosives inside the tubes.

**Phone threat closes tunnels, snarls traffic in Baltimore, Maryland**

A phone threat by a person who claimed to have information from overseas led state highway officials to disrupt traffic for 2 hours on Tuesday through both harbor tunnels in Baltimore, Maryland. All north and southbound traffic of the Harbor Tunnel, and all but two lanes of the Fort McHenry Tunnel were stopped before noontime as a precaution, causing traffic backups.

While authorities are unsure of the credibility of the threat, the Maryland Transportation Authority made the closure with the urging of the FBI. Dump trucks were used to block tube entrances and assistance of 80 police were on hand to direct motorists to detours. There were no heavy traffic delays reported on the beltway, the city's alternate route.

Maryland governor Bob Ehrlich held an

afternoon news conference and described a combined effort at federal, state and local levels that were two weeks in planning. The tunnel closures were directed from a command post set up yesterday.

FBI special agent in charge of the operation, Kevin Perkins, said the information they gathered "... was somewhat specific as to the date and time" of the threat, and that authorities were exercising "an abundance of caution" in reacting to it.

There are reports of 4 arrests being made in connection with immigration charges stemming from the investigation. According to a CBS News correspondent Bob Orr, advance information of the threat came from an Egyptian being held in the Netherlands who told U.S. officials of a plot involving a vehicle bomb. Nearly 30 people of Egyptian heritage have been questioned by the FBI through the city.

The investigation seems to have centered on a small market in southeast Baltimore when the threat first emerged. Authorities believe the plot was to drive "explosives-laden vehicles" into the tunnel, although which one of the tunnels remained unspcific.

The recent telephoned threat was believed highly questionable because it came from a person who "offered the information in an attempt to gain favor to get out of some trouble in a related way," the correspondent Orr said. There is so far no direct evidence to verify the threat was real.

**Iraq ballots to be audited due to voting "anomalies"**

The Independent Electoral Commission of Iraq (IECI) has announced that it will audit the votes cast in this weekends constitutional referendum in Iraq over what it sees as voting "anomalies". Adel Alami, chief electoral officer in Iraq, would

not give any details but stated that some provinces figures were either too low or too high when compared to international standards.

A source told the BBC, on condition of anonymity, that the turnout and result levels were causing some concern. Problems with the initial results were said to be found in the southern Shi'ite and northern Kurdish areas of the country.

The official said, "The first controls are now taking place. We are not ruling out technical errors or fraud, but for now it is only a question of anomalies." Six provinces in southern Iraq, inhabited by a Shia majority, voted an overwhelming 90% in favour of the new constitution. Two Sunni majority areas rejected the constitution by over 80%.

According to the source, "When you have more than 90 percent 'yes', computers signal it immediately and there is a manual check. It means the figures must be looked at closely."

The United Nations had stated the voting had gone very well, although some Sunni political leaders have alleged that corrupt voting practices were used to inflate the "yes" vote.

United States President George W. Bush praised Iraqis, both proponents and those in opposition to the charter, saying, "I was pleased to see that the Sunnis have participated in the process. The idea of deciding to go into a ballot box is a positive development."

Condoleezza Rice said that initial information pointed to a likely yes vote, although this statement was met with some surprise by United Nations and Iraqi officials. Karina Parelli, head of the United Nations Election Assistance Team in Iraq said, "Unless Rice is more well-informed than the IECI, thus far there is no way to know the turnout percentages or the results of the voting."

An official from the IECI, Hussein Hindawi, responded, "As far as I know, she does not work at the Independent Electoral Commission of Iraq."

The IECI has made no official statements regarding fraud, and an election official cautioned that it was too early to know whether the numbers were incorrect or even if they would affect the outcome.

Most Shia and Kurdish citizens of Iraq support the new constitution, while the minority Sunni ethnic group fear loss of control over the country.

It is thought that the irregularities may not have affected the outcome as two of the main battleground provinces voted strongly in favour of the constitution. The commission stated that it was re-examining the votes and the final results could be delayed by several days.

### **Russian sabre rattling in the Barents Sea**

In a move widely believed to be a test of resolve for the new Norwegian government and an attempt to influence the bilateral discussions scheduled to take place next week, Russian authorities have threatened to send warships to protect a Russian trawler caught fishing illegally. The new Norwegian cabinet was formed only recently on Monday and is now dealing with its first major foreign challenge.

The Russian trawler, Elektron, had been stopped and boarded by the Norwegian Coast Guard on Saturday morning, in the Barents Sea near the border of an area where fishing rights are disputed. The ship has on repeated occasions been caught severely violating fishing regulations. The charge this time is fishing with illegal equipment designed to catch fish too young to be productive, actions the UN and the scientific community agree are part of the reason the cod stocks of the Atlantic are on the brink of being depleted.

Two Norwegians from the Coast Guard vessel KV Tromsø, an officer and a crew member, were still on board when the Elektron refused to follow the Norwegian Coast Guard's orders to proceed to the Norwegian port of Tromsø. Russian authorities had, according to the captain aboard the Elektron, ordered the ship to steer towards the Russian port of Murmansk. The two

Norwegians are still aboard the vessel, and the situation is seen as a clear violation of good conduct between the two neighbouring nations. The Norwegians have not been abused, but their situation is reported as being "unsatisfactory".

Also, another Russian trawler "Arlashkin" became stalled in the Barents Sea after it's propeller got entangled in the fishing net dropped in front of the vessel from a Norwegian aircraft. The current wheather condition in the area of the stalled trawler is 4-6 meter swell and 25-28 m/s wind. The crew is reported to attempt freeing the entangled propeller.

According to treaties negotiated between Russia and Norway in the 1970's, these fishing areas were left as topics they "agreed to disagree" over. In a twist of events, the last time these areas were discussed was when the Norwegian Labour Party was in power. The negotiations were conducted when the undersecretary to the secretary in charge of fishing was Arne Treholt, who was later convicted spy. Jens Evensen the Labour party politician in charge of the negotiations overall, and it is widely believed that he is responsible for the negotiations giving Norway a less than satisfying outcome in stark contrast to international law and practice. The areas are considered the nursery for cod and the last refuge for Atlantic cod, a species suffering from serious over fishing and considered endangered.

Norwegian officials said in an interview with the Norwegian broadcaster NRK that this was not the first violation of the fishing regulations by this Russian ship, and the official was also quoted as saying we hope to never see the ship in these waters again.

**Today in History**

202 BC: Proconsul Scipio Africanus of the Roman Republic (pictured) defeated Hannibal and the Carthaginians in the Battle of Zama, concluding the Second Punic War.

1469: Ferdinand II of Aragon wedded Isabella of Castile, a marriage that paved the way to the unification of Aragon and Castile into a single country, Spain.

1781: After losing the Battle of Yorktown, British forces led by Lord Charles Cornwallis officially surrendered, ending the American Revolutionary War.

1943: Streptomycin, the first antibiotic remedy for tuberculosis, was first isolated by researchers at Rutgers University.

1987: The Dow Jones Industrial Average fell by 22% on Black Monday, the largest one-day decline in history.

October 19 is Constitution Day in Niue (1974); Mother Teresa Day in Albania

**Quote of the Day**

"Traditionalists are pessimists about the future and optimists about the past." ~ Lewis Mumford

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