



Protests spread in Afghanistan



Seven were killed and over 76 injured in the first three days of anti-US protests in Afghanistan. Protests were sparked by reports that US guards in Guantanamo Bay desecrated the Koran. According to the local population, four policemen and soldiers were killed in province Ghazni, south-west of Kabul.

Uzbekistan protesters under fire after prison break



Protesters in Andijan, Uzbekistan have been fired on by government troops after taking over the Mayor's office and releasing prisoners. VOA news is reporting 9 dead, 34 injured, 10 police officers held as hostages, and some 2,000 prisoners released.

U.S. Senator calls for nationwide investigation into Army recruitment tactics



U.S. Senator Wayne Allard, in a letter to Army Secretary Francis Harvey, said that the secretary of the Army should launch a nationwide investigation into reports that some Army recruiters engaged in

questionable recruiting tactics. In the letter Allard wrote that "according to these reports, the rules weren't just bent, they were broken and tossed away."

Weather:



Serbia and Montenegro football: Partizan secures League title

After equalizing with Zeta (1:1), the leader of Serbia and Montenegro, Partizan Belgrade, secured the first place in the First Federal League. The second placed Red Star lost against Budućnost and is now 8 points behind - too much to tie in the remaining two rounds.

All results of the 28th round are:

- Borac - Čukarički 1:1
- Hajduk Belgrade - Sutjeska 3:2
- Zeta - Partizan 1:1
- Zemun - Hajduk Rodić 1:0
- Vojvodina - Smederevo 2:0
- OFK Beograd - Radnički JP 3:2
- Red Star - Budućnost 1:2
- Železnik - Obilić 4:3

Kosovo's independence unacceptable for Serbian PM



On Democratic Party of Serbia's main committee meeting held today, the Prime Minister Vojislav Koštunica said that he

will not agree to Kosovo's independence and that the solution for Kosovo is wide autonomy. "When I say autonomy, that's more than autonomy Kosovo had prior to 1999, but it is still just autonomy and not independence," Koštunica said.

After the war in 1999, Kosovo was put under UNMIK's administration, but it still officially remains a province in Serbia. The province's Albanian majority wants full independence from Serbia.

Koštunica said that Kosovo needs a solution acceptable by both parties and that an imposed solution will "jeopardize difficultly achieved stability in Serbia and the region."

He also reaffirmed his stance on participation of Serbs in Kosovo's institutions: "For now, there is no room for Serbian representatives in institutions of Kosovo." The Serbian government had advised Serbs in Kosovo not to vote in the local parliamentary elections held last October. Koštunica said that the degree of participation depends on advancement in protection of human rights of the Serbs remaining in the province.

Mexican President Defends Immigration



President of Mexico Vicente Fox spoke out on Friday in defense of Mexican workers headed North, claiming that recent United States actions to halt illegal immigration are a step back from bilateral relations. Fox said that the anti-immigration movement building in America is not "the road we should be

building between friends and partners."

The issue has heated up severley in the past year. U.S. Senators John McCain and Edward Kennedy have proposed a bill that would allow illegal immigrants to obtain legal jobs and provide the option of becoming a US citizen.

U.S. Defense Secretary announces closures and expansions of military bases



Defense Department senior advisers on Base Realignment and Closure

United States Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld announced the closure of 33 major military facilities in 22 states around the US. When word of the plans to shuffle facilities, thus closing some and expanding others, many community leaders shuddered.

Many military cities like San Antonio, Texas for example, a town built on the back of military establishments, feared economic effects. If the city's bases where closed, the city and local businesses would be crippled, as could be the effect for some communities. In this example, however, the city of San Antonio will prosper with the expansion of Ft. Sam Houston, despite the closure of two air bases.

Groton, Connecticut, on the other hand will face the closure of a submarine base. Senator Joseph Lieberman (D-Conn) claimed the closure was "cruel and unusual punishment" as his state would lose 7,133 military jobs as well as 1,041 civilian jobs. As is evident, many communities around the nation are losing, while others win as a result of today's re-shuffle.

Al Jazeera announces English-language channel for 2006

Arab news channel Al Jazeera announced today that it plans to open an English-

language channel at the beginning of 2006. It has already named a management team: Nigel Parsons will head operations at the company's Doha headquarters, Sue Philips, a former employee of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, will be in charge of the European coverage from Al Jazeera's London office, Trish Carter, formerly of Television New Zealand will head the Asian desk in Kuala Lumpur, and Will Stebbins, formerly with Associated Press Television News, will head the North-American operations.

Al Jazeera has been expanding recently. It opened a channel last month that covers news events without a presenter or commentary. It also has a sports channel and plans to create a children's channel.

Leukemia cases at California elementary school receive no Federal investigation



Within the past three years, five boys who have attended Franklin Elementary School in Santa Ana, California have been found to have the same type of leukemia. Two of them have died.

"Why so many children, and why only in this area?" said Lazara Bustos, a mother of three schoolchildren who Franklin. "I wonder if my child will be next," said Bustos, whose son, Diego, was a close friend of Manuel Hernandez, 12, who died of acute lymphocytic leukemia in October.

Another child, Reynaldo "Rey" Almaraz, 9, died in April. To help pay for Rey's funeral, several parents in the dense, working-class community held a fundraiser by selling nachos. Parents are wondering, "Why are our boys dying?"

Tammy Sanchez, a teacher at Franklin, has been searching for answers. Recently, she sat in her empty classroom and cried.

"Our kids deal with too much death. I'm concerned about them," she said. "As a teacher, this isn't what I'm supposed to see. I'm supposed to see success, students growing up – not attend their funerals."



Franklin Elementary School in Santa Ana, California.

In the basement at 71-year-old Franklin Elementary, exposed gas and water pipes meander their way along the ceiling. The former library is full of old dusty desks and chairs. For years, teachers and students alike have complained that the moldy, stale air in the basement makes them feel queasy.

Researchers claim that the leukemia cases are within the acceptable range for that area.

When the schoolchildren at Franklin began getting leukemia, many teachers and staff members pondered: "Could there be something toxic in the basement? What about outside the school, in the soil?"

Sanchez addressed the Santa Ana Unified school board in April. Her friend, Dr. John Hoefs of University of California, Irvine (UCI) learned about the leukemia patients through his church. He in turn sought the help of one of his friends, Costa Mesa business owner Jeff Russell, to conduct soil tests around Franklin. Russell claimed the soil has a concentration of pesticides but he could not elaborate, saying he isn't finished collecting samples. Hoefs and Russell said they "hope health experts thoroughly study the Franklin cases, despite what the statistics say". "You wonder, if this were occurring in the Bel Air area – where more resources are available – if people would just be satisfied with a few statistics," Hoefs said. "It's a very troublesome problem." Franklin is in the impoverished Santa Ana neighborhood of Heniger Park, and over 90% of the

students receive free or reduced lunch from the state.

A large portion of Santa Ana is composed of undocumented immigrants, making it difficult to collect census data. For those people which the census was able to count, 19.8% of the population is below the poverty line with 24.1% of children living below the poverty line. The per capita income for the city is \$12,152, with an average income of \$21,637 for females, as compared to \$24,692 for females in Compton, California. Santa Ana was also rated the "Hardship Capital of the United States" by The Rockefeller Institute of Government.

Isaac Jimenez, 10, prefers not to talk about his leukemia. "We never really talk about the disease because it makes me ill – because there are no answers," he said.

Russian football club signs two Portugal internationals

Dinamo Moscow came into agreement with FC Porto on a deal bringing two stars of Portugal's national team, Maniche and Costinha into the Russian club. Their transfer cost was 16 and 4 million euros respectively, making this the most expensive transfer deal in Russian football. The head of Dinamo's board of directors, Alexey Fedorychev, is among the wealthiest Russian businessmen and he is responsible for making the money available to the club. Another Dinamo transfer target is the Greek footballer Seitaridis, also playing for Porto, but this deal has not yet been confirmed.

Meanwhile, in a Russian Premier League match today with Amkar Perm Dinamo Moscow suffered its fourth defeat in a row 1-2, dropping to 9th place. Amkar (one of the poorest teams in Premier League) on the other hand, won the second match in a row. Despite conceding an early goal, Amkar was able to fight back, score from a penalty and secure a slender lead to win the away game.

Despite numerous signings between seasons and hiring a new coach, Oleg

Romantsev, Dinamo's performance is far from the best. Last season saw them at 14th place (out of 16), barely avoiding relegation, and the start of a new season isn't promising either. It is yet to be seen, whether the new signings will help the club join the ranks of the top RPL teams, such as Lokomotiv Moscow and CSKA Moscow.

Bikers begin descent on South Carolina resort for rallies



The Harley-Davidson dealer on Kings Hwy is an early focal point for the rally.

Myrtle Beach, SC – This weekend is the kick-off for two motorcycle rallies held annually in the U.S. eastern seacoast town of Myrtle Beach. Enthusiasts this year are expected to meet or exceed the 170,000 bikers that arrived last year in droves to the small resort town of 23,000. Festivities span two weeks, and extend again this year into the Memorial Day.

Leading off is the week-long Harley rally, which then will be followed in the next week by BikeFest. In and around town, both day and night are punctured by the sounds of bike engines gunned and revved at stop lights and in parkings lots, while groups of cycle riders dominate the streets.

"By Friday night, the front parking lot will be a full line of motorcycles to the corner," said motel owner Ranjan Patel. The Super 8 motel takes up half a block at its location in the heart of the downtown motel strip. "Both sides [of Ocean Blvd] are nothing but bikes." Both she and her co-owner husband agree, the influx of bikers dwarf in size the numbers of tourists who visit during regular summer months for ocean-side and family amusement park attractions.

The highly accesorised bikes, decked with chome and polished to show it,

flashed the townscape. Choppers made a showing, but road hogs dominated the ridership, often going twosome. Many rally goers arrived on the scene with SUV's or big pickup trucks towing cargo trailers loaded with cycles.

Growth in the sheer size of the two rallies led police to make changes in the handling of traffic flow. During BikeFest last year, the mostly black crowd that came in on the heels of the largely white Harley rally the week earlier, were faced with confusion when the two-lane Ocean Blvd was made one-way.

A branch of the NAACP in Conway, the next town over from Myrtle Beach, allegeded discrimination by Horry County and Myrtle Beach Police. They claimed authorities and police used an overwhelming and aggressive police presence, combined with a restrictive one-way traffic pattern, to intimidate and discourage the participants in the rally.

An injunction was issued earlier this week by U.S. District Judge Terry Wooten, who ruled that bikers at both rallies be treated the same. Myrtle Beach city lawyers immediately filed an appeal to the ruling at the Fourth U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, saying "the trial court erroneously determined that the plaintiffs would likely succeed on the merits; that is, that the city of Myrtle Beach intentionally treats Memorial Day weekend tourists differently from others similarly situated because of their race."

A plan to submit an opposition to the notice has already been announced by Michael Navarre, an attorney for Steptoe & Johnson, who represents the NAACP civil rights group. "We certainly don't think the judge has ruled erroneously," Navarre said, according to "The Sun News".

Traffic control and safety measures were in full swing Friday morning on US-17. Both directions of the 4-lane divided highway south of Myrtle Beach had traffic cones and parking barriers set up to control traffic. Large flashing road

signs on each side of the highway warned cars to use the passing lane. The warning sign flashed a message that the right lane was for motorcycle use only. Police monitored the pull-offs near a Harley dealer's lot where popular attractions were set-up in the immediate vicinity.



U.S. Senator calls for nationwide investigation into Army recruitment tactics



U.S. Senator Wayne Allard (R-Colorado), in a letter to Army Secretary Francis Harvey, said that the secretary of the Army should launch a nationwide investigation into reports that some Army recruiters engaged in questionable recruiting tactics. In the letter Allard wrote that "according to these reports, the rules weren't just bent, they were broken and tossed away."

One of the reports the Senator is referring to is the attempted recruitment of David McSwane, a 17 year old editor of a high school newspaper in Golden, Colorado. Posing as a high school dropout, with a drug problem that he was "unable to kick", he recorded, on audio tape, conversations allegedly showing that the recruiters told him how to obtain a phony diploma on the Internet and what medication to buy to cover up the drug problem. A friend of McSwane's also video-taped a recruiter taking McSwain to a store to buy a "detox" medication to help him pass the army physical. David says he was told by the recruiter to buy the product.

A voice on the audio tape is heard saying; "You just have to follow instructions to a tee. It has got like a 150 percent guarantee that you will pass. You know, I've seen it work before."

"If I were a soldier out on the front line, I wouldn't want someone next to me who my life could be depending on going through withdrawal or having a drug addiction or just being someone I can't trust. I just don't think that's something we need on our front lines," David McSwane said on CNN. His mother, concerned that people may think he was being unpatriotic by setting up the "sting" operation said: "He's probably one of the most patriotic kids I know. He was in the Young Marines for almost a year and earned a couple awards."

Major General Michael Rochelle, the general in charge of recruiting for the U.S. Army responded to the allegations and tapes; "I was disappointed by it. I was very disappointed by it." He is shutting down recruiting offices for 1 day to review their procedures.

Jim Massey, a former Marine recruiter, expanded the accusations by saying the same fraudulent recruitment practices existed in the US Marine Corp; "This isn't just an isolated incident. This is a widespread epidemic! I would say 98 percent [of the recruits Massey enlisted] were frauded into the military."

The Army has suspended two recruiters in Golden, Colorado.

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