



Top Stories

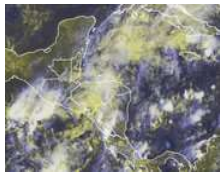
Red Cross reveals it told U.S. officials about Koran disrespect on multiple occasions



The International Committee of the Red Cross rarely discloses publicly the contents of the confidential reports

which it gives to governments, however, on Wednesday an ICRC spokesman in Washington revealed that it had documented (and reported to the U.S.A.) credible information concerning disrespect of the Koran by Guantanamo personnel. Simon Schorno, the spokesman for the Red Cross, said their concerns were pointed out multiple times to the Pentagon in their confidential reports to the U.S.

Adrian dissipates, producing heavy rains



Hurricane Adrian appeared to have dissipated over Honduras thursday night, but is still providing heavy

rainfall to the region. At 8 a.m. PDT, the center of now Tropical Depression Adrian was dissipating at 15.0° N, 87.5° W; inland over western Honduras. Its is moving toward the northeast at about 17 mph (28 km/h), containing maximum sustained winds of 30 mph (45 km/h), with higher gusts.

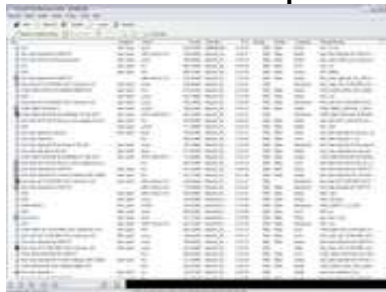
Marburg virus outbreak in Angola claims over 300 lives

The World Health Organization announced Wednesday that an outbreak of viral hemorrhagic fever by way of Marburg virus in Angola has claimed the lives of 311 Angolans. The outburst can be traced back to October 2004. The great majority of cases have originated in the Uige Province, and WHO estimates that 75% of the cases have occurred in children under the age of 5.

Weather



Illegal version of Star Wars III hits the internet hours after world-premiere



Star Wars III: Revenge of the Sith was on filesharing networks hours after the premiere.

Hours after the premiere, files purporting to be computer-viewable copies of the movie Star Wars III: Revenge of the Sith were available on internet filesharing networks.

The film, which is one of the years most eagerly anticipated, has already been downloaded by over 16,000 people from one source alone, the BitTorrent file-sharing network. Some torrent downloaders reported being able to download the movie at "DVD quality" as early as 11pm Eastern on May 18th, an hour before the US premiere.

Although Lucasfilm has not yet commented on the issue, the Motion Picture Association of America has condemned it, telling the media, "There is no better example of how theft dims the magic of the movies for everyone than this report today regarding BitTorrent providing users with illegal copies of 'Revenge of the Sith.'"

FCC requires VoIP providers to have 911 service



Yesterday May 19, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) announced that it will require VoIP providers to route 911 calls to the appropriate local dispatch center. Under this new regulation the dispatch center is also required to be provided with the caller's callback number and location,.

With the exception of Rhode Island, most VoIP's 911 callers are delivered to the administrative offices of a public-safety answering point, instead of connecting directly to a standard 911 dispatcher. The resulting time delay was a consequence of the phone provider's refusal to give VoIP providers access to the 911 infrastructure. To comply with this new regulation the VoIP providers need the cooperation of the traditional phone providers. The FCC has not required the traditional phone providers to assist the VoIP providers with this, but a bill introduced in the House and Senate Wednesday would require them to provide the connection.

"The road to full compliance will not be easy, and the commission will almost certainly be called on to take further steps to bring it about, but we have begun the process," Commissioner Kathleen Q. Abernathy said.

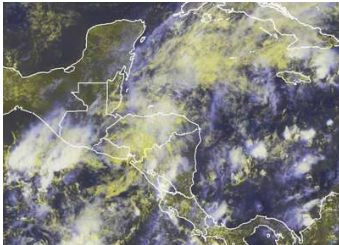
This new regulation comes after the death a 3-month-old in Florida, partulay due to delays in routing the call that was placed over a VoIP service.

"While they seem functionally the same, many [VoIP] callers find that they can't reach local emergency operators," said

FCC Chairman Kevin Martin. "This situation is unacceptable. People have a reasonable expectation that when they dial 911, they are connected to the emergency operator."

This new regulation is expected to become final in 30 to 45 days. When it does, the companies will have 120 days to comply.

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The Salvadoran Comité de Emergencia Nacional (National Emergency Committee) reported that over 15,400 people were evacuated from high risk areas.

Tropical Depression Adrian is expected to produce an additional 4 to 6 inches of rainfall over Honduras over the next 24 hours. The National Hurricane Center has discontinued its public advisories for Adrian unless the storm regenerates.

IDA Ireland opens Shanghai office



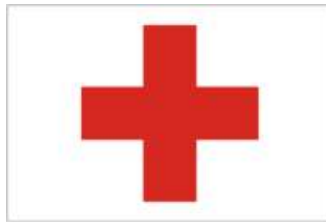
Ireland's highly successful inward investment body, IDA Ireland, has announced that it is to open an office in Shanghai, China. The office will be aimed at attracting Chinese multinationals

to invest in Ireland.

IDA Ireland was founded in 1949 as the Industrial Development Authority, however it underwent serious restructuring in 1994 when it became the Industrial Development Agency (Ireland). Since 1994 it has attracted several billion euro worth of foreign direct investment to Ireland and has attracted big names such as Google, eBay, Amazon.com, Dell and Intel to set up operations in Ireland.

In 2003 IDA supported companies spent €14.7 billion in the Irish economy and directly employed several thousand. It is noted that despite attracting over 500 US multinationals to Ireland, the IDA have to date only attracted one Chinese company, Huawei Technologies.

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Simon Schorno, the spokesman for the Red Cross, said their concerns were pointed out multiple times to the Pentagon in their confidential reports to the U.S. Schorno went on to say he believes the U.S. has taken corrective measures and has heard no more complaints from detainees.

ICRC delegates have had access to Guantanamo since 2002 and they compiled enough corroborated and independent reports from detainees to

report Koran abuses to Guantanamo commanders and Pentagon officials on numerous occasions, Schorno said.

Pentagon spokesman Bryan Whitman said that such allegations were made on "rare occasions" and were uncorroborated.

Schorno disputed the Pentagon's response:

"All information we received were corroborated allegations," he said. "We certainly corroborated mentions of the events by detainees themselves."

Schorno said, "Obviously, it is not just one person telling us something happened and we just fire up. We take it very seriously, and very carefully, and document everything in our confidential reports."

Some Muslim news agencies are still reacting to last week's Newsweek article alleging that Korans had been thrown into Guantanamo toilets. The Jordanian newspaper Al Dustur reported that some TV stations were broadcasting images of the holy Koran torn up by US forces in one of the mosques in Iraq.

Regarding White House reaction to the recent Newsweek article, Reed Brody, special counsel for the New York-based Human Rights Watch said Wednesday:

"If the United States is to repair the public relations damage caused by its mistreatment of detainees, it needs to investigate those who ordered or condoned this abuse, not attack those who have tried to report on it."

Australia tries another tack on Afghan asylum seekers



Satellite image of Nauru in a remote part of the western Pacific. The island, once verdant, has been stripped and converted into a hot desert by mining of phosphate, mainly for Australia.

After locking them up on a remote desert island, calling them Pakistanis, ignoring them, and vilifying them, now that their identities have been confirmed by the Afghanistan government, Australia is preparing to forcibly deport the Tampa Afghan asylum seekers, says refugee advocate Jack Smit. Rescued in 2001 from a sinking, over-crowded boat by the Norwegian freighter MV Tampa, the Australian government told lies that they had "thrown children into the sea", winning itself a new term in office on the fake publicity, and arranged for the people to be incarcerated on Nauru, an island somewhere in the middle of the Pacific, where they have spent the last three-and-a-half years.

After ignoring their cases for an entire year between then and now, according to Mr Smit, the government has at last gotten the outcome it wanted, to send them back to the country they had fled, claiming fear of persecution.

Kabul in 2002 had pleaded with the Australians not to force deportation of Afghan refugees.

"Refugees should not be forced to return to Afghanistan. We understand that they have been rejected because of the changing situation, but we also expect them to be treated with understanding because this country has been at war for 23 years," Afghan Foreign Minister Abdulla Abdulla told The Age in August 2002.

"People left this country because they were afraid," he said. "They should be

allowed to stay (in Australia) until they know it is safe to come back, and that takes a little time. But most of them will want to come home."

This Wednesday's Age though reports "Afghani asylum seekers can be sent home". The Australian Associated Press syndicated story gives details on a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) agreed between the two nations, allowing forceable deportation of the asylum seekers whose bids for refugee status have been refused.

"Currently, on Nauru and in immigration detention in Australia, there are 19 people who have been accepted as Afghan nationals, by the Afghan Government, and a further 37 people whose claims to Afghan nationality are being examined by the Afghan Government," Australian Minister for Immigration, Senator Vanstone, said in a media release this week.

The asylum claimants will be offered financial incentives to return to Afghanistan, and if not accepted, in the MOU, Afghanistan gives the go-ahead for Australia to forcibly deport the people.

Mr Smit, of Project Safecom, also claims in his email to several public mailing lists on Tuesday, "I think there is no doubt that on this occasion the Minister and her agents in the Department of Immigration have again bribed another nation [after bribing Nauru to host the asylum seekers]; in this case the Kabul government, because we can safely assume that the Kabul government is flat broke."

Coincidentally with the MOU, Senator Vanstone, Minister for Immigration announced, "the Australian Government will be providing US\$4 million for a housing project" which is intended to house any returned asylum seekers. This new funding is "separate from the \$110 million of development assistance provided by Australia since September 2001," according to Ms Vanstone's media release.

Questions hang over the Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs (DIMIA) decision-making process this week, with scandal after scandal erupting in recent months. These culminated this week in exposure of one decision maker as an advocate of torture, and the "Tribunal" as a set of individual decision makers, rather than a panel of three, as most would understand the term to imply.

Refugee Review Tribunal member, Mirko Bagaric, of Deakin University, reportedly defends use of torture in an academic paper, which Deakin has said will be published in the The University of San Francisco Law Review in two weeks.

Mr Smit called for refugee cases reviewed by Mr Bagaric, to be reopened.

"Here is a man who, in line with the dangerous structure of the Refugee Review Tribunal, on his own sits in judgment of the lives of refugees - and he thinks that torture is a fine thing to have in society," Mr Smit said in a press release on Wednesday.

"Refugee advocates right around Australia have expressed serious concerns about the views of Mr Mirko Bagaric, and demand that all RRT review cases of asylum claimants refused by Mr Bagaric be re-opened and re-assessed," said Mr Smit in the release, which explained that his refugee advocacy office had been "inundated with phone calls from concerned advocates and supporters."

Smit explained in his press release that, although named a Tribunal, in fact the members made case decisions as individuals, not through a group panel.

Refugee advocates in the past have criticised many aspects of the review process, which evidently is imperfect, given the recently reported case of "accidental" deportation of one Australian, Vivian Solon, to the Phillipines, and that of another Australian, Cornelia Rau, who was interned in the DIMIA detention system

for nearly a year, as well as other less-publicised cases of asylum seekers who may have been wrongly dealt with.

Most such cases are unlikely to be seen by the public for some time, if ever. According to lawyer David Manne, a director of the Refugee and Immigration Legal Centre, applicants feel unable to take legal action against the government until they have permanent Australian residency.

"There could well be a time bomb ticking here [for DIMIA], because there's no doubt that there are quite a number of people who have suffered harm in relation to the system. The question is whether that will give rise to legal compensation," he said, in a recent interview with the ABC 'Law Report'.

DIMIA defends itself in previous statements given to 'The Law Report', saying it "takes seriously its non-refoulement obligations under international human rights treaties to which it is a party, and does not return people to a country if those obligations would be breached."

It claims to use "comprehensive and current country information", in a "robust" process that is "comprehensive, fair and transparent to any person who is entitled to obtain the personal details of applicants."

However, DIMIA concedes, "The scope for monitoring the circumstances of failed asylum seekers to depart Australia is limited and it is not widespread international practice for asylum countries to do this."

It refutes claims of wrongful deportation with: "Most of the claims made about treatment in other countries after departure from Australia cannot be verified."

The Minister expressed confidence in the integrity of the Palmer Inquiry, looking into several recent DIMIA issues including the Cornelia Rau case, and said she was looking forward to its outcome,

according to a media release issued today.



Phosphate being loaded onto ship in Nauru.

Computer giants attack Aussie CSIRO's WLAN patent

Six of the world's largest computer companies are seeking to have a patent held by the Australian Government's Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) revoked. Microsoft, Dell, Hewlett Packard, Intel, Apple and Netgear are taking legal action against the CSIRO to have its U.S. patent broken.

In 1996, the CSIRO developed technology to allow computers to be networked together wirelessly. The technology is now built in to most laptop computers and manufacturers currently pay the CSIRO a licence fee to use it.

According to CSIRO Chief Executive Dr Geoff Garrett, the system enables the speed of Wireless Local Area Network (WLAN) to be increased by a factor of five.

This isn't the first time that the CSIRO has been involved in legal action surrounding this patent: in February 2005, it commenced legal action in the United States against Buffalo Technology, a Japanese-owned company, which had ended negotiations with CSIRO about obtaining a licence.

The Australian Government's research arm has announced that it will fight the legal action to protect its intellectual property, the income of which it uses to fund its research. It has come under increasing pressure following the Australian Government's cutting its funding in 2003, which has only been recently restored.

"As part of our business we create high quality intellectual property and we are prepared to defend it," Garrett said.

"We actively encourage the utilisation of the results of research in industry and communities, both nationally and globally, and any royalty income will be reinvested in further research."

The patent in question is U.S. Patent 5,487,069 Wireless LAN.

The case also raises issues about the recent signing of a Free Trade Agreement between Australia and the United States. Per the agreement, Australia plans to introduce American-style intellectual property law

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