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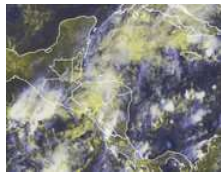
Red Cross reveals it told U.S. officials about Koran disrespect on multiple occasions



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



Cuban dissidents hold rare public meeting



Cuba

A public meeting by Cuban dissidents was held in a rare celebration of Cuba's Independence Day on Friday. Although Cuban President Fidel Castro had expelled and refused entry to several European observers before the meeting started, police did not crack down on the peaceful protests by nearly 200 people. Called the "Assembly to Promote Civil Society", the meeting was to promote peaceful change and lay groundwork to introduce democracy in Cuba.

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Panoramic picture of Havana, Cuba

The meeting was planned by several leading Cuban dissidents and former prisoners including Martha Beatriz Roque Cabello, René Gómez Manzano and Félix Bonne Carcassés. Controversy accompanied the event, and many dissidents did not attend because invitations to some Miami, Florida groups

were thought to promote violent reform.

Castro expressed disapproval of the event, complaining of opposition groups that are bankrolled by the United States. Previous meetings, planned as long ago as Concilio Cubano in 1996, were cancelled due to government crackdowns, arrests, and the shooting down of two planes.

Fidel Castro, speaking to CNN about the rally said, "Those who attack us don't represent more than a fraction of 1 percent. ... You [the foreign news media] have helped create them."

This is the 103rd anniversary of Cuba's independence, a day that was observed with celebration until Castro took over in 1959 and introduced the rule of authoritarian Communism.

U.S. President George W. Bush sent his greetings to those celebrating Cuban Independence in an videotaped message. Bush said, "As we observe Cuba's independence today, we look forward to the day when Cuba is free, and my Administration supports efforts to hasten that day's coming. The tide of freedom is spreading across the globe, and it will reach Cuban shores."

The U.S. Senate also passed a resolution on Tuesday "extending its support and solidarity to the participants of the historic meeting", and calling for "the international community to support the assembly and its mission to bring democracy and human rights to Cuba."

The planned two-day meeting is being held openly in a garden belonging to one of the organizers on the outskirts of Havana. While ostensibly no Cuban government officers monitored the event, "government spies do regularly infiltrate dissident meetings," CNN claimed.

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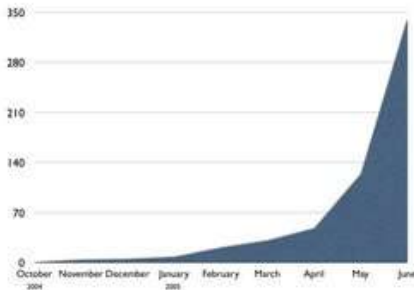


Marburg virus

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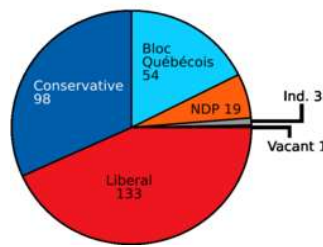
From the WHO: 'Marburg virus disease has no vaccine or curative treatment, and can be rapidly fatal. In the present outbreak, most deaths have occurred between 3 to 7 days following the onset of symptoms. Past outbreaks indicate that close contact with bodily fluids of infected people, as may occur in health care settings or during burial practices, increases the risk of infection.'

This is the largest recoded outbreak of Marburg viral hemorrhagic fever in history.



Speaker breaks tie by voting for Canadian budget

Composition of 38th Parliament of Canada as of May 19, 2005



Peter Milliken, Speaker of the House of Commons of Canada, broke the tie on the vote on the second reading of the Canadian budget amendment, C-48, by voting in favour of the government, most likely averting a spring election, CBC Newsworld reported.

The amendment to the budget adds \$4.6 billion in social spending and delays of tax cuts.

The outcome of the second reading vote on the main budget bill, C-43, was less dramatic as Conservative Leader Stephen Harper said that his party would support it.

The vote for the amendment was tied at 152-152 until the Speaker's intervention, who only votes in the case of the tie. He stated his vote for the bill was in order to continue Parliamentary debate leading up to a third reading. It is the first time in post-Confederation Canada that the Speaker has had to break a tie on a non-confidence motion.

The Liberal party together with the NDP had 150 votes, including former Conservative MP Belinda Stronach who crossed the floor only days prior. (One Liberal MP agreed to sit out of the vote as a courtesy to Conservative MP Darrel Stinson, whose cancer surgery prevented him from attending the vote.) The Conservatives together with the Bloc Québécois had 151 votes, so the votes depended crucially on the three Independent candidates: Chuck Cadman and Carolyn Parrish who voted for the amendment, and David Kilgour who voted against, forcing a tie.

The budget and the budget amendment were confidence motions, meaning that the government would have fallen and an election would have been called if either one failed.

During the vote, the website of CBC, a major Canadian television network, was unavailable.

Today in History

- 1674 - John Sobieski was elected by the szlachta to be King of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.
- 1881 - The American Red Cross was established by Clara Barton.
- 1894 - The Manchester Ship Canal was officially opened, linking the city of Manchester to the Irish Sea.
- 1927 - Aboard the Spirit of St. Louis, Charles Lindbergh completed the first solo non-stop transatlantic flight.
- 1991 - Former Indian prime minister Rajiv Gandhi was assassinated by a female suicide bomber.

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