



Top Stories

Astronauts fix thermal blanket on Atlantis

Astronauts on Space Shuttle Atlantis have repaired a 4-inch tear in the shuttle's Thermal Protection System (TPS). At 1 p.m. (eastern time) astronauts began their fourth spacewalk to repair the tear by using staples to seal the torn area.

11th suspect arrested in Laos overthrow plot; indictments handed down

An 11th man has been arrested by U.S. agents in California, and indictments are handed down on charges in a plot to overthrow the government of Laos.

Featured story

Michael Moore's new film 'Sicko' leaked via P2P

A number of reports confirm that Michael Moore's forthcoming documentary has been leaked onto Peer-to-peer networks.

Wikipedia Current Events

- In the U.S., Mike Nifong, facing disbarment for his actions in the 2006 Duke University lacrosse case, agrees to resign his position as district attorney for Durham County, North Carolina.
- Switzerland opens the world's longest rail tunnel on land, the 34-kilometre L[^]tschberg tunnel under the Alps.
- In the UK, seven members of Dhiren Barot's al Qaeda cell have been sentenced to a total of 136

Wikipedia Current Events

- years in prison.
- Indonesia claims that it has captured Jemaah Islamiyah leader Zarkasih.
- A roadside bomb kills at least seven soldiers in Yala Province in southern Thailand.

Thaksin's speech played for demonstrators, ex-Thai PM calls for elections

A videotaped address by Thaksin Shinawatra was played for a crowd of around 15,000 supporters today in Bangkok, with the ousted former prime minister calling for the military-installed government of Thailand to hold elections later this year as promised.

"Please speed up the new elections and turn the country back to democracy," Thaksin said in his message, taped in London, where he has been living in exile since being ousted in a coup last year. "It is time for reconciliation and to move forward with elections. That is the best solution for the country."

"Let the people decide for themselves who should be voted into office and run the country," he said.

Interim Prime Minister Surayud Chulanont has said the elections would likely be held in December, after a constitutional referendum, which might occur in August or September.

Thaksin's address began at around 9 p.m. local time (1400 GMT), and was shown on six screens at the Sanam Luang protest-staging ground. Organizers of the demonstration, the pro-Thaksin satellite television station PTV, also known as the Democratic Alliance against Dictatorship, said they had hoped for a live broadcast via Internet, but switched to a pre-recorded message because they feared the transmission would be blocked by the military-run government. The government had earlier said they would allow Thaksin to make a live address, but only if he would say nothing provocative, and that they would monitor the transmission.

The live-broadcast service of the PTV website could not be accessed before or during the speech, The Nation newspaper reported. Access to several pro-Thaksin websites was blocked by the ministry.

Thaksin railed against the government for its seizure of his bank accounts in Thailand, calling the move "unfair."

"I wouldn't mind if it was just me they were persecuting, but my wife and children have also become victims, which I didn't expect to happen," Thaksin said.

"The government seized my assets because they want to discredit me and to prevent Thai Rak Thai from winning in new elections. That's not democracy," he said, referring to the political party he once led, which was ordered dissolved by a

Constitutional Tribunal over elections violations. "I haven't done anything wrong," he said.

"I repeat that I have already given up politics," he added.

He said he would return to Thailand "to protect my reputation," though he did not specify exactly when he would return.

"I will fight to get my dignity back, and to restore the credibility of Thailand's legal system," he said. "I will fight within the rule of law."

He asked that all Thais unite to mark the 80th birthday of King Bhumibol Adulyadej, Thailand's monarch who has reigned for 60 years.

Thaksin said the coup and the military government have hurt Thailand's economy. The coup "rendered a lack of confidence on the part of the world community in this country's political and economic developments." He said the poor and the business sector would continue to suffer until democracy was restored.

He also blamed the escalation of the south Thailand insurgency on the coup, saying troubles in Thailand's Muslim-majority southern provinces had gotten worse.

The Nation said 10,000 Police estimated that 15,000 people were present at the Sanam Luang rally venue. There was a heavy presence of police as well as military personnel and their vehicles, and some roads were blocked to traffic. There was no report of any untoward incident or violence at the rally venue.

Demonstrations organized by the

Democratic Alliance against Dictatorship have grown in the past two weeks, and a large demonstration and march from Sanam Luang to Royal Thai Army headquarters is expected tomorrow.

The government has said it will deploy 13,000 soldiers for the event, though Premier Surayud said the protests would be allowed, but warned that emergency law would be enforced if things turn violent.

Astronauts fix thermal blanket on Atlantis

Astronauts on NASA's Space Shuttle Atlantis have repaired a 4 inch tear in the shuttle's Thermal Protection System (TPS).

At 1:00 p.m. ET astronauts began their third spacewalk to repair the tear by using medical staples to seal the torn area. Astronauts tucked the material back into place and then stapled up the seams where the material was torn.

But the repair did not go without flaws. Astronauts repairing the tear say that the tear line was "higher than expected," according to radio transmissions heard live on NASA TV. Astronauts also report that the area where the tear was present is "well worn away" and because of that, no staples were able to be placed on the top side of the blanket near the top of the tear, leaving a small "gap" between the seams.

Two rows of staples were placed along the tear to hold the blanket in place.

Atlantis received the 4 inch tear on its TPS on one of the Orbital Maneuvering System pods near the thrusters during take-off on June 8.

Panama: Eleven years of a conflict between PPC and ex-workers of Port Authority

Eleven years ago, a Company (named Panama Ports Company or PPC) gets a concession to manage Panamanian Ports at the gates of Panama Canal, Balboa and Cristobal. They made a contract with Panamanian State to get this concession. This concession began a conflict between ex-workers of these Ports (previously managed by Panamanian State by Port Authority) and PPC.

These Port Authority's ex-workers says PPC violated a law written in 1992. The law states that in any good (land, enterprise or company) of a Panamanian State's property sold, the workers must be offered to buy shares of the land or a company. The contract doesn't state any offer of shares to the ex-workers.

Representatives of ex-workers state that they must receive a pay, because the share were not offered to them.

On the last 3 years, Jose Sanchez (pictured) has set some meetings with PPC representatives. Almost all meeting are suspended, because PPC representatives have not attended to them.

No one in Panama outside the engaged parties knows about the theme. According Mr. Sanchez there is mass media campaign to hide events of this conflict.

Air Independence and Libyan Airlines place orders for Bombardier aircraft valued at \$190 million

Canadian vehicle and equipment manufacturers Bombardier announced on Thursday that Air Independence and Libyan Airlines have placed orders for new aircraft

valued at a total US\$190 million, excluding any optional extras at customer specification.

Air Independence, a European business aviation services company that already operates two Challenger 604 jets and one Challenger 800, have ordered 3 widebody Challenger 605 business jets, with a total value of US\$82 million. In a separate order, Libyan Airlines have ordered 3 Bombardier CRJ900 regional jets with a value of approximately US\$108 million. Air Independence's aircraft will be delivered between October 2009 and February 2010 and will be based in Munich.

Managing director of Air Independence Andrian Feuchter said "Our customers love our current Challenger business jet fleet. Spacious, ultra silent cabins, transcontinental range, versatility and overall travel comfort make this family of aircraft perfect for European charter operation. We expect this satisfaction level will climb even higher once the Challenger 605 jets join the fleet. The cabin feels even more spacious and brighter and the aircraft's impressive new technology features will undoubtedly contribute towards even greater passenger comfort and productivity."

The deal with Libyan Airlines had already been announced on June 6, but the purchaser had not been disclosed at the time. Libyan Airlines currently operate aircraft in Africa, Europe and the Middle East. Libyan Airlines chairman Eng. Tarek Arebi said "This purchase represents the launching of our fleet renewal program. The CRJ900 aircraft was selected because we believe it is the type of regional jet that can meet the

requirement of domestic and regional routes on our network."

In other Bombardier related aviation news, the company has announced that they will display five planes, including the new 76-passenger Bombardier CRJ900 NextGen, at the upcoming Paris Air Show, which will run from June 18 to June 24. The other aircraft will be the Q400 turboprop, and business jets Learjet 45 XR, Challenger 605 and Global 5000.

North Korean funds released

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea has received \$25,000,000 frozen in 2005 as part of the general crackdown on the communist state.

The funds had been frozen in a Macau bank after the United States earlier alleged that the money was gained from activities including money laundering and counterfeiting.

The DPRK had demanded return of the money as a precondition to engaging in the six-party talks. In February, the U.S. agreed to allow North Korea to retrieve their funds.

11th suspect arrested in Laos overthrow plot; indictments handed down

An 11th man was arrested yesterday by U.S. federal agents in Fresno, California, on charges connected to the plot by 10 other men to overthrow the government of Laos.

Later yesterday, the federal grand jury Sacramento handed down indictments for the 11 men, including former Royal Lao Army general and Hmong leader Vang Pao.

Dang Vang, 48, was arrested at his

Fresno home in an early morning raid by agents from the United States Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, or ATF.

Dang Vang, Vang Pao and the others are charged with violating the U.S. Neutrality Act, which outlaws using United States soil to conspire to overthrow a foreign government that has peaceful relations with the U.S.

"Federal law is without equivocation: you cannot conspire to overthrow a foreign government with whom our nation is at peace," U.S. Attorney McGregor Scott said in a statement to reporters.

According to the ATF, Dang Vang put the group's "action plan" to paper, summarizing its plot to blow up government buildings in Laos and assassinate government officials. The plot even had a name: "Operation Popcorn," or "Political Opposition Party's Coup Operation to Rescue a Nation."

In addition to the 77-year-old Vang Pao and Dang Vang, 48, those charged are:

- Harrison Jack, 60, a West Point graduate, retired California National Guard colonel and U.S. Army Ranger in the Vietnam War.
- Lo Cha Thao, 34, of Clovis
- Lo Thao, 53, of Sacramento
- Youa True Vang, 60, of Fresno
- Hue Vang, 39, of Fresno
- Chong Vang Thao, 53, of Fresno
- Seng Vue, 68, of Fresno
- Chue Lo, 59, of Stockton
- Nhia Kao Vang, 48, of Rancho Cordova, California

Most of the men indicted are prominent members of the Hmong immigrant community in California's Central Valley. They

were arrested last week in a sting operation as the group was trying to purchase a rifles, missiles, rocket launchers, mines and explosives from an ATF agent posing as an arms dealer.

In an 88-page criminal complaint, federal prosecutors detailed the plot, which included airlifting the weapons to Thailand, and had an estimated cost of US\$27.9 million. Funds for the operation were raised from donations by the Hmong community and other supporters of Vang Pao from across the U.S.

During the 1960s and '70s, Vang Pao led a covert army of Hmong people, backed by the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, against communist forces in the Laotian Civil War, or "Secret War", which paralleled the U.S. war in Vietnam.

Since the communist takeover of Laos in 1975, according to a March 2007 report by Amnesty International, Hmong people in Laos have taken to hiding in the mountains, on the run from a government that persecutes them for their role in the war.

U.S.-Laos diplomatic relations were strengthened in 1992, and in 2004, President George W. Bush extended normal trade relations to the southeast Asian country.

Khamenei: US and Israeli intel services responsible for Iraqi shrine bombing

Grand Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Iran's highest-ranking religious and political leader, blamed the intelligence services of the United States and Israel for the bombing of the Askari Mosque in Samarra, Iraq. According to him, "The perpetrators of this huge crime, whether they be the remnants of the Saddamist Baath regime or the

reactionary elements of Salafist and Wahhabist groups...there is no doubt that the spy agencies of the occupiers and the Zionists were the brains behind the evil plot."

On 13th of June 2007, Iraqi insurgents blew up the two minarets of the Askari Mosque. The shrine is important because it contains the remains of the Imam Hadi and Imam Askari. The son of Imam Askari is Imam Mahdi. This is especially important in the context of Iran's politics; according to Article 5 of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Khamenei as an Islamic jurist is supposed to lead the "Ummah". Some Muslims object to this. For instance, one Islamic cleric has said that Khamenei "does not have a divine authority or right to determine the fate of other peoples and countries," referring to Muslims outside Iran.

Khamenei urged Sunni scholars to speak out against the sacrilege and Shia Muslims to remain calm. He believes that this bombing of part of a conspiracy to fuel sectarian tensions.

Earlier, Sheikh Mohammad Hussein Fadlallah in Lebanon also made the same charge and said, "Without doubt, the occupiers are providing the grounds for Salafi Takfiri groups and intelligence agencies to pillage the country."

Questions arise about health of North Korean dictator

Pyongyang watchers agree, Kim Jong-Il The Chairman of the Defense Commission of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, and defacto dictator, is having health trouble. Due to the secrecy of the North Korean regime only small bits of information are available. Kim is reported to have difficulty walking

unassisted and is reported to be frail. Due to these symptoms, Kim's obvious obesity, and the fact that a team of German cardiologists has been dispatched to Pyongyang; It is believed Kim is suffering from congestive heart failure. Kim's father Kim Il-Sung died of heart failure in 1994.

Another Jemaah Islamiyah leader captured in Indonesia

Police in Indonesia said today that they have captured the top leader of the Jemaah Islamiyah terrorist organization.

The man, known as Zarkasih, or Mbah, was captured last Saturday in Yogyakarta on Java, the same day another Jemaah Islamiyah leader, Abu Dujana, was captured, also on Java.

Jemaah Islamiyah, believed to be connected to the al-Qaeda terrorist network, is blamed for several acts of terrorism in Indonesia, including the 2002 Bali bombings, the 2003 Marriott Hotel bombing, the 2004 Jakarta embassy bombing and the 2005 Bali bombings.

Police said Zarkasih, 45, confessed to being the head of Jemaah Islamiyah. He is also known as Mbah, which means "grandfather" in Javanese language. Police said he came to prominence as the organization's other leaders were captured or went into hiding.

"I became the emergency head in 2005," Zarkasih said in a videotaped confession, which police played for reporters.

Abu Dujana, 39, was head of Jemaah Islamiyah's military operations, police said. He is believed have directed anti-Christian attacks and beheadings in Poso, Central Sulawesi, and had taken part in the 2003 and 2004

hotel and embassy bombings in Jakarta.

Police said both Zarkasih and Abu Dujana left Indonesia in the 1980s for Afghanistan, where they likely developed links with al-Qaeda.

Seven soldiers killed in southern Thailand ambush

A roadside bombing and ambush attack today in southern Thailand killed seven Royal Thai Army soldiers and left one injured.

Blamed on Muslim insurgents, the attack in Bannang Sata district, Yala, was similar to one on May 31, in which 12 soldiers were killed in one of the deadliest days of the south Thailand insurgency.

Today's attackers took M16 rifles belonging to the dead soldiers. As they retreated, they laid spikes on the roads to stall any pursuers. A helicopter was dispatched to airlift the victims.

The soldiers were part of a unit assigned to protect public school teachers, who are frequent targets of attack. Earlier in the week, four teachers were killed by gunmen and 13 schools burned in arson attacks.

Human Rights Watch issued a report today, saying it believed those responsible for the attacks are separatists.

"Insurgents are terrorizing teachers and schools, which they consider symbols of the Thai state," Brad Adams, Asia director at Human Rights Watch, said in a statement, quoted in the Bangkok Post. "These attacks are grave crimes and cannot be justified by any cause."

In another attack overnight, three local Muslim leaders were killed

and a fourth man in an ambush and shooting attack on their car in Mai Kaen district, Pattani.

Gay marriage amendment to stay off 2008 ballot in Massachusetts, USA

Lawmakers in Massachusetts, located in the United States, have thrown out an amendment that would allow voters to vote for same-sex marriage, or against it in the 2008 general elections.

"Today's vote is not just a victory for marriage equality. It was a victory for equality itself," said Massachusetts Governor Deval Patrick who voted against the amendment.

President of the Massachusetts Family Institute Kristian Mineau, called the decision "disappointing."

Fifty votes were needed to pass the amendment. Two hundred lawmakers sit on the state's session and in January voted for the amendment with 62 votes. In the recent session on Thursday, the amendment only received 45 support votes with 141 opposing the amendment, killing the measure until at least 2010. It would then require opponents of gay marriage to start from scratch, writing new petitions to the lawmakers, and then gaining the support of at least 50 of them, in at least two separate sessions.

Same-sex marriages became legal in Massachusetts in 2004 after the Mass. Supreme Judicial Court ruled in 2003 the ban on gay marriage to be "unconstitutional," and since then nearly 9,000 couples have gotten married there.

Today in History

1745 - King George's War: British colonial forces led by William Pepperrell captured the French

stronghold at Fortress Louisbourg on Cape Breton Island after a six-week siege.

1846 - Pius IX was elected pope, beginning the longest reign of all popes (not counting the Apostle St. Peter).

1963 - Aboard Vostok 6, Soviet cosmonaut Valentina Tereshkova became the first woman in space.

1976 - Apartheid in South Africa: Police in Soweto opened fire on schoolchildren protesting against the imposition of Afrikaans as a medium of instruction in township schools, triggering a series of nationwide demonstrations, strikes, riots and violence.

1999 - Thabo Mbeki was inaugurated President of South Africa.

June 16 is Bloomsday in Dublin, Ireland; Youth Day in South Africa

Quote of the Day

All that you know is at an end.
~ The "Silver Surfer" in Fantastic Four: Rise of the Silver Surfer

Word of the Day

onomasticon; n

1. A book, list, or vocabulary of names, especially of people

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