



Top Stories

Death of candidate will delay final results for German federal election by weeks

The 43-year old Kerstin Lorenz, of the far right NPD, suffered a stroke during a campaign appearance. An election official said it would be impossible to achieve all changes required before election day.

US FEMA aid site only supports Windows with Internet Explorer

FEMA web site for registration for disaster relief requires specific Microsoft software features which are unavailable on many public web installations.



Featured story

Apple unveils iPod nano

Apple's newest model in the iPod family is the iPod nano, their fourth generation music player.



Wikipedia Current Events

- Hosni Mubarak wins the first multi-candidate presidential election in the history of Egypt with 78 percent of the vote. Ayman Nour is the nearest runner-up with 12 percent.
- News Corporation says it will buy IGN Entertainment for \$650 million. IGN is one of the largest multimedia sites on the internet and also owns the GameSpy Network and AskMen.com
- 103 Croatians were arrested in Malta following supporter disturbances after a 2006 World Cup qualifying football match which Croatia unexpectedly failed to win.

Wikipedia Current Events

- Emergency officials requisition 25,000 body bags as search and rescue operations continue in Louisiana. A spokesman for the state's department of health and hospitals said: "We don't know what to expect ... It means we are prepared."
- Ukraine president Viktor Yushchenko fires Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko and most of his cabinet amid accusations of graft and serious infighting.
- Guy Theunis, a Catholic priest from Belgium, has been arrested on a charge of republishing articles in a magazine that the authorities cite as encouraging genocide in Rwanda.
- Reporters Without Borders accuses Yahoo! of assisting the People's Republic of China government to identify Shi Tao, the journalist sentenced to 10 years jail in April 2004. Shi released on the Internet a government letter which advised the Chinese media not to report on the the 15th anniversary of the Tiananmen Square protests.
- Apple Computer has unveiled a pencil-thin iPod nano digital music player and a long-anticipated cell phone that plays music like an iPod, both aimed at extending its domination of the digital music market.

Katrina survivor searchers prepare for the worst

Workers are scouring New Orleans for any remaining survivors of

Hurricane Katrina, and are vigorously searching for dead bodies. 25,000 body bags have been prepared in advance, in the event that the death toll from Katrina is that high. Temporary warehouses are being set up around the city to deal with corpse storage.

Floodwaters are receding, but leaving a great deal of mud and contaminated water in their wake, filled with high levels of bacteria and viruses.

All survivors are urged to leave the city. Dr. Julie Gerberding, head of the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), said "If you haven't left the city yet, you must do so," and stated that anyone who comes in contact with the nearly toxic water must immediately wash themselves with clean water. If necessary, force will be used to remove all remaining citizens from New Orleans.

There is some good news, however; according to the US Federal Emergency Management Agency, on Tuesday, a number of survivors will arrive in the US state of Minnesota.

Companies are working with FEMA to provide money and support to the victims of Katrina, in order to ease them into a new life.

Afghan-Tajik border control transferred from Russia

Tajikistan will now protect their border unaided by Russia, as Pyandzh unit border guards leave

the area. The guards continued to protect part of the Tajik-Afghan border until September 1, having begun in a 1993 intergovernmental agreement.



Map of Tajikistan showing Afghan border

Russian Border Service deputy Lt. Gen. Viktor Trufanov told Interfax newswire: "The last sector of the Afghan-Tajik border under the control of the Pyandzh unit of Russian border guards was transferred to our Tajik colleagues on September 1 in conformity with the intergovernmental agreement."

This week, expert Russian border guard officers and tacticians have met with the Tajik State Border Committee, in order to assist in the turnover, according to chief of the border command Major-General Nikolai Kasharin.

Since Russia took over border control duties in 1993, China View reports that 40,000 Tajik citizens have been trained by the guards, in anticipation of the handover.

Tajikistan is a prime route for illegal drugs from Afghanistan, which is the world's top opium producer. Drug interdiction and stopping the transport of arms are both high on the list of border guard priorities.

Controversial rapper dethrones Mariah Carey from No. 1

In one of the most shocking

changes in No. 1 in Hot 100 history, rapper Kanye West, who has been in the news this week because of his controversial views on the federal government's reaction to the relief efforts of Hurricane Katrina, gets a surge of radio airplay in the pop mainstream radio markets and tops the Billboard Hot 100 for the second time in his career as a performer.

His "Gold Digger" featuring Jamie Foxx vaults 19-1 on the chart, ending Mariah Carey's 14 non-consecutive week reign with "We Belong Together". "Together" drops to No. 4 on the Hot 100.

The 19-1 rally makes it the fifth biggest gain to No. 1 in Hot 100 history. The song also gains a record 94-2 on Billboard's Pop 100 chart kept out of the No. 1 on that chart by the Pussycat Dolls with "Don't Cha".

Mariah Carey is still No. 2 with "Shake It Off". "Shake" was widely expected to gain to the Hot 100 pole position this week. Mariah Carey was No. 1 all summer with "Together" dethroned only once before by American Idol winner Carrie Underwood with "Inside Your Heaven" on the July 2 chart.

Missy Elliott's "Lose Control" featuring Ciara and Fat Man Scoop gains 5-3 while "Don't Cha" drops to No. 5.

Bow Wow's "Like You" featuring Ciara gains 7-6 trading places with Rhianna's "Pon de Replay". The only other song gaining into the top-10 is Fall Out Boy's "Sugar, We're Going Down" rising 12-8. Bow Wow's "Let Me Hold You" featuring Omarion falls 5-9 and Lifehouse's "You and Me" rounds out the top-10 with a two position dip.

California passes same-sex marriage bill

On Wednesday, the lower house or State Assembly of the State Legislature of the US state of California passed a controversial new bill that would redefine marriage as the union between two people, as opposed to a man and a woman. The California State Senate, the upper house, had already acceded to this.

A critical swing vote came from Tom Umberg (D-Santa Ana) of Orange County, the second largest California county, which is predominantly conservative. He was ushered on by Senator Joe Dunn of the same constituency. The voting predominantly followed party lines, with no Republican supporting the bill and few Democrats opposing it.

A spokeswoman for Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger says he will veto the bill "out of respect for the will of the people" in the approval of Proposition 22, which opposed recognizing out-of-state same-sex marriages

Oil price falls on inventory report



A previous storm, Hurricane Dennis, damaged this oil platform owned by BP (July 12, 2005).

Crude oil prices fell by \$0.32, to \$63.95 a barrel, after a report showed lower than expected losses in oil supplies due to

Hurricane Katrina.

According to a report published by the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE), crude oil stocks declined by 6.5 million, to 315 million barrels. The department also announced that 57% of the production capacity in the Gulf of Mexico is still down, versus 97% the day after the storm.

The DOE said it expected that production would not return to normal until December.

Yesterday, economists warned that one of the impacts of Katrina on the US economy would be a reduction in the number of jobs by up to 400,000. They also said the country's GDP, in the second half of 2005, could be 1% less than expected, due to the surge in oil prices.

The Executive Director of the International Energy Agency (IEA), Claude Mandil, announced a collective action by members of the 26 nation agency. An agreement was reached to supply an additional 60 million barrels to the market over the next 30 days. The biggest contribution of total response comes from North America (52%), then by Europe (30%), and finally the Pacific region (18%). The share of these increases is based upon of the consumption from each of the IEA member areas.

US FEMA aid site only supports Windows with Internet Explorer

The US Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) website for requesting disaster aid, is non-functional for users who are not using the latest version of the Internet Explorer web browser on the Microsoft

Windows operating system. Users with alternative web browsers, such as Netscape, Opera and Firefox, or operating systems other than Windows are effectively screened out of the site, which gives them a message that they need to download Internet Explorer version 6 or call FEMA at 1-800-621-3362 to register.



The error users receive in alternative browsers

Relief workers are setting up many computer kiosks for evacuees to use. These kiosks are built from donated computers, many of which are unable to run Windows and/or Internet Explorer. Most of these kiosks use LiveCD versions of Linux, leaving evacuees unable to fill out aid forms.

A spokesperson for FEMA told MSNBC they were aware of the problem, and were trying to resolve the issue. They were, however, unable to provide an estimate of when the problem would be solved. Mike Quealy, a FEMA spokesperson, said the issue was because the tool was originally designed to be an in-house tool for use by the people working in the call center.

Telling the Opera web browser to spoof its user agent, by identifying itself as Internet Explorer, appears to trick the FEMA website into allowing the user to fill out the form. Firefox users can install the Prefbar extension (<http://prefbar.mozdev.org/>), and use the "User Agent Spoof"

dropdown to achieve the same effect. Other options are to run Windows and Internet Explorer in an emulator such as VirtualPC on the Mac or VMWare on Linux. This option is slow and requires the user to already own or purchase a license for Windows and the emulator software. Purchasing the software can cost several hundred dollars.

UN inquiry finds mismanagement and failure of oversight



UN headquarters.

The Independent Inquiry Committee's report on the overall management and oversight of the UN's Oil-for-Food Programme has concluded that the United Nations requires stronger executive leadership, thorough administrative reform, and more reliable controls and auditing.

The Programme included more than \$103 billion in transactions (over \$64 billion in oil sales and almost \$39 billion for food).

Responsibility for what went wrong with the Programme is assigned to the UN Secretariat, members of the Security Council, its 661 Committee, and the Iraqi regime. In a change from past practice, the Security Council had retained substantial elements of administrative control through its 661 Committee. This caused neither the Secretariat leadership nor the Security Council to be in

overall control.



Kofi Annan, current UN Secretary-General. (Ricardo Stuckert/ABr)

There was reluctance of both the Secretary-General and the Deputy Secretary-General to recognize their own responsibility for the Programme's shortcomings and they failed to ensure that critical evidence was brought to the attention of the Security Council and the 661 Committee. They only made minimal efforts to address sanctions violations with Iraqi officials, and both failed to provide oversight of the Programme's Executive Director, Benon Sevan.



Saddam Hussein, leader of Iraqi regime.

As the Programme expanded and continued, Saddam Hussein found ways and means of turning it to his own advantage, primarily through demands for surcharges and kickbacks from companies doing business with the Programme. For UN agencies, the work went beyond their core competencies of overseeing the distribution of humanitarian goods—from monitoring, planning, and consulting—to infrastructure rebuilding, thus multiplying problems. Nor was there much success in coordinating so large a

program among UN Agencies accustomed to zealously defending their institutional autonomy.

There were Iraqi attempts to pass money to former Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, principally through an Iraqi-American businessman, Samir Vincent, and a Korean lobbyist, Tongsun Park. The Committee has determined that well over \$1 million was paid to Mr. Vincent and Mr. Park. However, the Committee has not found evidence that Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali received or agreed to receive monies from Mr. Park and Mr. Vincent.

The report recommended better oversight and management, financial disclosure by more UN staff, and that UN agencies should return up to \$50 million in excess compensation secured as a result of work performed under Security Council Resolution 1483.

The Committee's Chairman, Paul A Volcker, stated, "The inescapable conclusion from the Committee's work is that the United Nations Organization needs thoroughgoing reform—and it needs it urgently. What is important—what has been recognized by one investigation after another—is that real change must take place, and change over a wide area. Clear benchmarks for measuring progress must be set. The General Assembly should insist, in its forthcoming meeting, that key reforms be put in place no later than the time of its regular meeting in 2006. To settle for less, to permit delay and dilution, would be to invite failure. It would, in reality, further erode public support, undercut effectiveness, and dishonor the ideals upon which the United

Nations is built."

He added, "Before concluding its work, the Committee also intends a more comprehensive listing of firms participating in the Programme, either in the purchase of oil or the sale of humanitarian goods, as well as a more detailed analysis of the manner in which Iraq and its vendors and oil purchasers unlawfully manipulated the Programme."

Google hires Vint Cerf, the "father of the Internet"

Google announced today, September 8, that they hired Vinton Cerf, to serve as the Chief Internet Evangelist. He is often referred to as the "father of the Internet". While working at the US Department of Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) he played an important role in the development of Internet. At DARPA he co-designed the TCP/IP protocol, on which the Internet runs.

Google CEO Eric Schmidt said "Cerf is clearly one of the great technology leaders of our time". Cerf has been awarded the National Medal of Technology and the Premio Principe de Asturias de Investigacion Cientifica. People magazine listed Cerf as one of the "25 Most Intriguing People" in 1994. In early 2005 Cerf was included among the Association for Computing Machinery (ACM) 2004 Turing Award winners, one of the most prestigious computing awards.

He is also working on developing a new set of planet-to-planet communications protocols for NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory. Prior to being hired by Google, Cerf worked for MCI, where he led the development of MCI Mail. MCI

Mail was the first commercial e-mail service to connect to the Internet. Cerf also serves as the Chairman of the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN), a role he plans to continue.

Death of candidate will delay final results for German federal election by weeks

The death of a candidate for the Bundestag could delay the final outcome of the German federal election by several weeks.

The 43-year old Kerstin Lorenz, of the far right NPD, suffered a stroke during a campaign appearance on Monday and slid into a coma. She died on Wednesday in hospital.

The NPD must now nominate a new candidate for the constituency of Dresden I and election officials have to reprint hundreds of thousands of ballot papers. Also, the vote of anyone who already sent in their absentee ballot will be declared invalid, and these voters need new ballots as well. The leading election official for the state of Saxonia, Irene Schneider-Böttcher, said it would be impossible to achieve all that was required within the time remaining before election day, September 18th. She ordered a by-election for a yet-to-be-determined date.

If the election results are extremely close, the outstanding Dresden I by-election result could potentially change the final outcome, which would leave Germany in uncertainty. While Dresden I is only one out of 299 constituencies, it could ultimately decide who will govern the country for the next few years.

The projected majority of the opposition parties FDP and CDU,

which headed the polls for months, is shrinking with current government parties Greens and SPD, along with the Party of the Left, getting closer by the day.

Some constitutional lawyers have also raised concerns if it would be legal to announce any results at all on September 18th. They argue that in the case of a close result, the voters in Dresden would realize that they will be the one to decide the election, which could shift their votes. And on the other side, if the race is already over, they might decide to stay at home.

Aerial photos of Katrina's aftermath available

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration is hosting over 3,000 high-resolution images on their website of the devastation along the Gulf Coast. The images were taken by the NOAA Remote Sensing Division using a Emerge/Applanix Digital Sensor System or DSS from 7,500 feet.

They were mounted on a NOAA Cessna Citation aircraft, a twin engine plane. The plane was the same plane that flew over 'Ground Zero' of the World Trade Center site and the Pentagon, after September 11th, taking 3-D photographs of them.

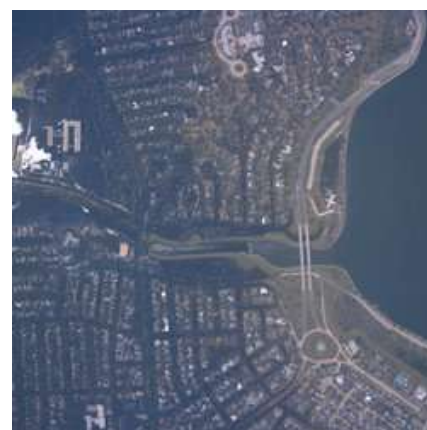
The images from the plane was taken to support the national security and emergency management response requirements. The image will also help current research efforts to help develop standards for aerial digital imagery.

Google Maps also contains some imagery (though limited) at this time when the word New Orleans

or anything within New Orleans is typed in. It can be accessed by clicking the red button labeled Katrina.



Closeup of 17th Street Canal breach in New Orleans



Spanish Fort area of New Orleans, on the southern shore of Lake Pontchartrain (pic is rotated so lake appears on the right).

Samsung to sell dual-standard DVD player



Samsung announced it will market DVD players capable of playing back both Sony's Blu-Ray and Toshiba's HD DVD next-generation optical storage formats, if the two camps refuse to compromise on a single format. Assuming

development is successful, consumers could expect to see such a device on store shelves next year.

Blu-Ray and HD DVD are projected to be the successor formats for current DVDs. Samsung, while leaning towards the Blu-Ray camp, hopes it can cover both bases by distributing a player with dual-compatibility. While this means spending more in development to unify the two technologies and develop a cost-effective production method, dual compatibility may pay off for the company if the formats challenge each other as VHS and Betamax did twenty-five years ago. Despite the support for Blu-Ray, Samsung has also been supportive of a unified standard to avoid such costly competition.

HD DVD offers single layer capacity of 15GB, more than triple the size of standard single layer DVDs, and benefits from similarities with current DVDs, such as cheap production and compatibility with current DVD players. Blu-Ray can hold 23GB on its smallest single layer version, and is reported to have superior durability and interactivity over current DVD-based technology and HD-DVD. HD-DVD is currently promoted by Toshiba, NEC, Sanyo and Microsoft; while Blu-Ray's base of support is the Blu-Ray Disc Association, which is lead by Blu-Ray developers Sony and Philips. It is notable that Sony and Philips, who developed the Blu-Ray format, also competed against the Toshiba-designed SuperDisc DVD standard, which is the standard that is followed today.

The first Blu-Ray and HD DVD products are expected to start appearing in mainstream markets within the next year.

Halliburton's KBR awarded half billion dollar repair contract for Gulf Coast Navy facilities

Halliburton Co.'s subsidiary Kellogg, Brown and Root (KBR) has been awarded a half billion dollar repair contract for U.S. Navy facilities damaged by natural disasters, including Hurricane Katrina. KBR won the competitive-bidding in July 2005.

The Bush administration has been criticized for awarding KBR a five-year, no-bid contract to restore Iraqi oil fields, shortly before the U.S. invaded Iraq in 2003. Congressional Democrats have asked Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld to investigate last month's demotion of Bunnatine Greenhouse after she testified to improprieties in the no-bid procedure and other KBR improprieties. Bunnatine Greenhouse was Chief Contracting Officer of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers since 1997.

Halliburton reported being paid \$10.7 billion for Iraq-related government work during 2003 and 2004. Pentagon auditors have questioned tens of millions of dollars of Halliburton charges.

Blair is first public official to apologize for Hurricane Katrina response

British Prime Minister Tony Blair has apologised to Britons affected by Hurricane Katrina. Many British citizens who were trapped in the New Orleans have complained to the British Foreign Office about the lack of response from their government after the hurricane destabilized almost 200 miles of the United States gulf coast.

Controversy erupts over German Anarchist Pogo Party's campaign ad

The German Anarchist Pogo Party ran a campaign ad (Download here -- NSFW) which, instead of discussing the party's politics, featured various party scenes set to a heavy metal soundtrack. The spot included revellers smashing furniture, pouring beer down each other's throats, and women dancing topless. The spot ends with the proclamation: "My vote for the rubbish".

The ARD refused to air the ad because it "violates the human dignity" and showed only a heavily censored version at an earlier airtime. The Party then sued the station and got an injunction by an appeal court in Münster only minutes before the next ad was due, forcing the ARD to air the spot uncensored, right before their evening news flagship.

The ad has offended a number of people, but has likely gained the party nationwide attention among its younger demographics who could access campaign websites online (appd.de). The Hamburg-based APPD and every other party is entitled by law to free television airtime on Germany's public TV Station ARD and ZDF for its advertisements because it is an officially registered political party competing for the upcoming federal elections. Its next ad is scheduled for Monday night, although broadcasting authorities may again censor the ad.

The party has a membership of approximately 750 -- German newspapers posit that the ads will have little impact on the upcoming election.

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Today in History

1000: King Olaf I of Norway fell overboard during the Battle of Svolder and disappeared in the Baltic Sea.

1513: King James IV of Scotland (pictured right), leading an invasion of England, was killed at the Battle of Flodden Field in Northumberland.

1850: As part of the Compromise of 1850, California was admitted into the United States as a free state.

1971: The Attica Prison riots broke out at the Attica Correctional Facility in Attica, New York, USA
2001: Ahmed Shah Massoud, leader of the Northern Alliance, was assassinated in Afghanistan.

Quote of the Day

"Freedom of choice is more to be treasured than any possession earth can give." ~ David O. McKay

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