



Top Stories

Al Jazeera airs new Osama Bin Laden tape



Al Jazeera has aired an audio tape it says is from Al Qaeda leader Osama Bin Laden. In the tape he offers a truce to Iraq and Afghanistan and offers to

"rebuild" their countries. The CIA confirms the voice is Bin Laden's.

Bolivia's Morales announces treason trial for army general



A military scandal involving sending SAM missiles to the United States for destruction will result in a treason trial for former military leader General

Marcelo Antezana. The scandal has also led to the resignation of Defence Minister Gonzalo Mendez.

Featured story

Interview with Brazilian blogger Ricardo Serran Lobo



EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW

Ricardo Serran Lobo is a Brazilian blogger who began writing about his famous

neighbor: the politician Roberto Jefferson, head of the Brazilian Labor Party in the Brazilian Congress of Deputies. Jefferson has become a major figure in the ongoing Brazilian mensalão scandal revolving around corruption and bribery.

Wikipedia Current Events

- Iran warns of a world oil crisis if sanctions are imposed over its nuclear program even as the United States and Europe struggle to get support for UN Security Council action.
- President Jacques Chirac warns that France could respond with nuclear weapons against any State-sponsored terrorism attack.
- Two suicide bombings in the Iraqi capital, Baghdad, leave at least 22 people dead and 26 wounded.
- Italy will conclude its mission in Iraq by the end of the year, in the first clear timetable for Rome to withdraw its troops, the defense minister stated.
- The US' largest independent film festival, the Sundance Film Festival, begins in Salt Lake City and Park City, Utah. This year's entries include documentaries about prominent politicians Al Gore and Ralph Nader.
- At least 15 people are injured when a suicide bomber detonates himself near Tel Aviv's central bus station. It's the first terrorist attack of the year in Israel.
- Isabelle Dinoire, the world's first face transplant recipient, is using her new lips to take up smoking again, which doctors fear could interfere with her healing and raise the risk of tissue rejection.
- Thirty-one people have died during a four-day cold snap in Russia where temperatures have plunged to as low as -42°C

NASA probe bound for Pluto on nine year journey

Earlier today, an Atlas V rocket carrying the New Horizons unmanned spacecraft probe lifted off from Pad 41 at the Cape Canaveral Air Force Station bound for the last unexplored planet in the solar system, Pluto at 11 am EST, after two scrubbed liftoffs the past two days.

The probe will take a nine-year journey to Pluto, the ninth and final planet in the solar system. It is expected to take photos of the planet that are of the highest resolution ever since current photos of Pluto are not of the highest quality, even those taken from Hubble Space Telescope. It will also attempt to characterize the global geology and morphology of planet and study the neutral atmosphere of the planet.

After being sped up to 36,000, it will pass the moon in nine hours. The probe in April will pass by Mars and then head on to Jupiter where it will pass by in February 2007 and continue on. Around July 14, 2015, the probe is expected to flyby Pluto and it's moon Charon, from then on till 2020, the probe could possibly make a flyby of one or more Kuiper Belt objects. (KBOs).

New Horizons is powered by a onboard nuclear electric generator, known as a radioisotope thermoelectric generator, which has been approved by the United States Department of Energy for safety.

Dog falls on car and kills driver in Michigan

A dog fell off a Interstate 96 overpass in Livonia, Michigan killing 81 year-old Charles G. Jetchick.

Jetchick and a passenger, who police would not identify, were transported to St. Mary's Hospital where Jetchick died from his injuries. The passenger suffered only minor injuries.

Police say that the 60 to 70 pound (27-32 kilograms) dog was not thrown off the overpass, but "probably fell by accident while trying to avoid a car," Sgt. Michael A. Shaw of the Michigan State Police said. "We don't know and thats why we are looking for witnesses."

The dog, which fell about 16 feet (5 metres) also died due to its injuries.

Shaw has been with the State Police for 11 years and has never encountered a similar incident. "We've had rocks and other stuff like that fall off of overpasses. This would be the first dog we've had," said Shaw.

Iraq asks United States to release 6 Iraqi female prisoners

The Iraqi government has asked the United States to release 6 of the 8 Iraqi women that are currently prisoners, which Iraq claims is not a bid to get American journalist Jill Carroll freed. A comission reviewing detainee cases has recommended Monday that at least six of them be released.

A Human Rights Ministry official said the call "to free the women was not made in response to demands from Carroll's

kidnappers." He then went on to say, "There was no outside pressure on the commission" to recommend releasing the women. The official spoke on condition of anonymity because he feared reprisal from insurgents.

Abductors holding the journalist have made demands that all female Iraqi prisoners be released or they will kill her.

The U.S. said that they currently have 8 women in security detention. But as of Wednesday night, refused to comment on whether or not the women had been released.

Carroll was kidnapped in January when insurgents ambushed her car and killed her translator. She is 28 years old. The abductors gave a 72 hour dead line and are expected to kill her tomorrow if their demands are not met.

Insurgents in Iraq have recently kidnapped more than 240 foreigners and killed at least 39 of them since the beginning of the war. Some estimates of the number of Iraqis kidnapped place it in the hundreds and possibly even thousands.

Brokerage executive linked to livedoor deals found dead

Hideaki Noguchi, 38, a close aide to Livedoor president Takafumi Horie was found bleeding in a hotel bed with cuts to his wrists on Wednesday in Naha, the capital of the southern prefecture of Okinawa. He was later confirmed dead and the police suspect that he committed suicide. Hideo Sawada, the president of HS Securities, told reporters in Tokyo that Noguchi's family had identified the body

Noguchi was a board member at

Japan M&A Management Co., a unit of H.S. Securities Co. The firm was raided by prosecutors earlier this week in connection with fraudulent practices at Livedoor, according to the Kyodo News agency. He was a graduate of Tokyo's Meiji University, and joined Livedoor in 2000. He had previously worked at Kokusai Securities Co. as an adviser in financing. Livedoor was publicly listed on the Tokyo Stock Exchange in April 2000. Noguchi then set up the investment unit Capitalista Co., which merged with HS Securities.

News of the suicide is being featured in the Japanese media in connection with what is being termed the "Livedoor Shock". The problems at Livedoor have lead to the loss of a third of its \$6.3-billion value in the stock market. Livedoor maintains that its own investigation reveal that it did not violate any securities laws.

Some view the affair as an outcome of the larger struggle between competing business cultures in Japan. Takafumi Horie is part of a new generation of Japanese entrepreneurs with little patience for the customs of a traditionally cautious business culture. Horie has shown an appetite for publicity through his internet blogs and appearances on TV shows while living a rock star lifestyle that includes private jets and actress girlfriends.

Horie is also credited with popularizing stock trading among individual investors. The practice of day trading is relatively new in Japan. The Nikkei index was up about 40% last year, its best performance since 1986.

West Papua refugees sent to Australia's Christmas Island Detention Centre

A group of 43 West Papuan asylum seekers found on Cape York were herded on to an RAAF Hercules and flown to Australia's Christmas Island Detention Centre on Thursday. The Immigration Department says the single men in the group will be detained in the remote facility, and the six women and seven children will be accommodated in staff housing.

The group left the Papuan port town of Merauke on Friday in an outrigger canoe and landed on Tuesday at Janey Creek, north of the Mapoon Aboriginal community on western Cape York, without being detected.

Police, immigration and customs officials prevented the group communicating with media in Weipa, where the group were detained in Queensland's far north. The group was kept under close guard throughout the day, with the media required to remain at least 25m away.

Officials accompanied the asylum seekers on toilet breaks and trips to the Weipa hospital, covering the heads of the new arrivals with blankets or jackets.

Immigration officials will interview the group, assessing their claims for asylum, while at the remote island detention facility on Christmas Island, 2,600km north-west of Perth.

The Department says the Papuans are being transferred as part of the long-standing government policy to process unauthorised arrivals offshore, not because mainland detention centres lack capacity. Immigration Minister Amanda Vanstone said the group

would be treated the same as any other boat arrivals.

John Wing from the University of Sydney's Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies says Indonesian military activity has been increasing in Papua which may encourage more people to seek asylum in Australia.

"This may be a trend that we see developing over the coming year or two as the military operations are stepped up in Papua against the local people. As in other parts of the world, the fighting and the human rights situation becomes too grim in one's homeland, he said, "these people are forced to flee to the place of nearest sanctuary and in this part of the world, for the Papuans, it's Australia."

Mr Wing says he believes a prominent student activist is part of the group of asylum seekers. He says the man has already spent time in jail for attending independence meetings and could be persecuted if he is sent back to Papua.

"Many villages have been burned to the ground; houses, clinics, schools, churches have all been destroyed by arson, by the Indonesian armed forces, and some of these refugees are from that area," he said.

The Indonesian embassy says there is no persecution in Papua.

The 36 adults and seven children are the third boatload of asylum-seekers to land on the Australian mainland in the past four years.

Berlin court issues provisional order against the Wikimedia Foundation

A district court in Berlin has issued

a provisional order against the Wikimedia Foundation, for displaying the true name of a computer hacker on the German Wikipedia. The family of the deceased German hacker known as "Tron" obtained the provisional order in Berlin on December 14. The order was corrected on December 19 because it was at first addressed to Saint Petersburg, Russia instead of Saint Petersburg, Florida.

The hacker Tron became famous when he was the first person to crack the encryption of Pay TV and calling cards. The user died in 1998, at the age of 26, in an apparent suicide. Questions have arisen as to the nature of the hacker's death.

The court has ordered the German Wikipedia to remove all forms of the hacker's complete civil name. The court states that this is justified with the fact that the hacker never worked under his civil name, but instead his Internet alias.

The legality of the order is in question, because the Wikimedia Foundation servers are not located in Germany, but instead in the United States. Whether the Foundation will comply or if the family's attorneys have any means to enforce the decision remains in doubt. The case prompted many German media outlets to publicly display the hacker's real name.

On January 17 the same court also issued a temporary injunction against Wikimedia Deutschland, the German chapter of the Foundation, citing the same reasons. In that injunction, the chapter was ordered to cease redirecting www.wikipedia.de to de.wikipedia.org. Wikimedia Deutschland complied but its

lawyers announced that they will appeal the decision, saying that Tron's civil name was public knowledge for a long time.

Wikinews is owned and operated by the Wikimedia Foundation.

Radical cleric Abu Hamza denies encouraging murder

During his trial today, Muslim cleric Abu Hamza al-Masri, denied the claim that he had incited his followers to commit acts of murder. Instead he claimed that he had asked them to fight abroad. The charges against Abu Hamza include nine counts of soliciting to murder and three of trying to stir up racial hatred. He denies all 15 charges against him.

When questioned by his defense council he was asked if he had incited followers to kill in England. To this Abu Hamza replied "No". Abu Hamza also told the court of his feelings about racism "If you are a scholar you will never distinguish between anyone of any color. Racism is one of the greatest sins. I actually condemned it,"

The cleric also denies that he was in possession of a document which could be considered to help in the preparation of terrorist attacks.

The defense barrister warned the jury to ignore the comments of the press as they may have convicted the defendant before the trial has begun. Comments such as "Captain Hook" and "Hook off Hooky" have been used. Mr. Fitzgerald told them of "exaggeration and misrepresentation by the media".

The cleric faces nine charges under the Offences against the Person Act 1861, plus four charges under the Public Order Act 1986 of "using threatening, abusive or

insulting words or behavior with the intention of stirring up racial hatred". The possession of video and audio recordings with the intent to be used to stir-up racial hatred, and a final charge of the possession of the Encyclopedia of the Afghani Jihad, which, is said to have information "of a kind likely to be useful to a person committing or preparing an act of terrorism".

Al Jazeera airs new Osama Bin Laden tape

The Qatar-based Arabic news channel, Al Jazeera, announced receipt of an audio tape purportedly from Osama Bin Laden. Portions were broadcast in which Bin Laden offers a "a long-term truce" to allow rebuilding of Afghanistan and Iraq while also making threats of "new attacks" against the United States.

An excerpt from the tape says: "Heightened security measures in the United States are not the reason there have been no attacks there since the Sept. 11, 2001, suicide hijackings, because there are operations that need preparations, and you will see them. Based on what I have said, it is better not to fight the Muslims on their land. We do not mind offering you a truce that is fair and long-term. ... So we can build Iraq and Afghanistan ... there is no shame in this solution because it prevents wasting of billions of dollars ... to merchants of war. I would also like to say that the war against America and its allies will not be confined to Iraq. Iraq has become a magnet for attracting and training talented fighters. As for similar operations taking place in America, it's only a matter of time. They are in the planning stages and you will see them in the heart of your land as soon as the planning is complete."

On Al Jazeera's web site they also listed excerpts from the tape: "This message is about the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and how to end those wars. It was not my intention to talk to you about this, because those wars are definitely going our way. But what triggered my desire to talk to you is the continuous deliberate misinformation given by your President [George W.] Bush, when it comes to polls made in your home country which reveal that the majority of your people are willing to withdraw U.S. forces from Iraq."

Other excerpts were also stated: "If your desire for peace, stability and reconciliation was true, here we have given you the answer to your call. I would like to tell you that everything is going to our advantage and the number of your dead is increasing, according to Pentagon figures. The new operations of al-Qaeda has not happened not because we could not penetrate the security measures. It is being prepared and you'll see it in your homeland very soon. We do not mind establishing a long-term truce between us and you."

In a White House press conference today, Scott McClellan said, "We are taking the fight to the enemy and we will find them where ever they are. Terrorists view democracy as a threat. We will not let up or stop until the job is done. We will win this war on terrorism. We do not negotiate with terrorists, we put them out of business. We're working to advance freedom and democracy. We will pursue those who seek to do harm."

The CIA ran voice analyzer tests on the tape against previous tapes

and confirmed that the tape is authentic and that of Bin Laden's voice.

This tape, "it proves two things," says Michael Scheuer, former head of the CIA's Bin Laden unit. "He's not dead. And despite all the things we say about him being isolated and alone, he can clearly dominate the international media when he wants to."

Judith Yaphe, a former CIA Middle East analyst now at the National Defense University in Washington says, "He's saying that whatever measures we've taken, they have not affected him. He's got to reassure people that he's alive and well."

No conditions of the truce offering were present in the portion of the tape broadcast.

Al Jazeera also says that the tape was made during the Muslim holy month, which is December, in 2005.

U.S. officials also say the terror alert level will not be raised as of yet.

The Associated Press is also reporting that there is no unusual amounts of "chatter", which is what U.S. officials term as terrorist talk.

Bin Laden has not been heard from since December 27, 2004 when an audio tape was released.

Two-day bird flu conference draws \$1.9 billion in pledges

In Beijing, China, 1.9 billion US dollars in pledges came from 33 countries and a host of multilateral institutions at the end of a meet co-ordinated by the World Bank. The amount exceeded the organization's estimate of \$1.2

billion to \$1.4 billion in funds required to contain the avian flu over the next three years. In addition to aiding research efforts, the money is expected to help strengthen surveillance and increase the stockpiling of surgical masks and other equipment.

The United States was the largest donor, pledging \$334 million in grants. Japan pledged \$159 million while the European Union pledged \$120 million. The EU member nations promised an additional \$138 million.

China which is home to a third of the entire world's population of birds pledged \$10 million to help other countries with the effort. Jia Youling, China's chief veterinary official defended the relatively small pledge claiming that China was still a developing country and faced a serious challenge from bird flu within its borders. Premier Wen Jiabao personally attended the conference and announced that the country would share more information on outbreaks in the country, including samples that will assist in tracing genetic changes.

Dr. Lee Jong-wook, the director general of the World Health Organization, believes that the Chinese government was fully committed to sharing information openly and freely about bird flu cases. But he cautions that it would be difficult to stay fully informed about every health development in a country as populous as China.

Dr. Lee also expressed his concern about reports that children in Turkey have now become infected with the A(H5N1) avian influenza virus without becoming ill. Some studies suggest that the disease must become less lethal before it

can cause a global epidemic, he noted. There is concern that patients may continue to infect more people by going through their daily routines if the flu symptoms remain mild.

Some scientists note that the avian flu has been known to occur among poultry in southern China since at least 1996. They are encouraged that the avian flu virus has failed to evolve into a form that is transmittable by people in all this time. This could be an indication that this would never happen. But others including officials from the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization disagree claiming that increased contact between infected poultry and people raises the odds that the virus may eventually adapt better for transmission among humans.

Corby's 20 year sentence reinstated

Schappelle Corby has been told by an Indonesian court that her 20 year sentence for allegedly smuggling drugs into Indonesia would be reinstated following an appeal attempt. Her lawyers had previously been successful in reducing her sentence to 15 years.

Indonesian police allege that Corby smuggled 4.1Kg of marijuana hidden in a body board bag into Bali. Corby has maintained that the drugs did not belong to her and must have been placed in her bag between Brisbane, Sydney and Bali.

Australian baggage handlers had been caught using passenger's luggage to distribute illegal drugs.

Judges rejected her appeal last week, reinstating her original sentence at the same time.

The Indonesian supreme court has ordered that the drugs be destroyed, signalling that it is the end of any possible future appeal attempts.

Another twist has emerged in the Corby story with her 18 year old half brother arrested yesterday on charges of producing and possessing a dangerous drug, deprivation of liberty and assault occasioning bodily harm.

Corby's lawyer Hotman Paris Hutapea said that the development had "totally ruined his case". Speaking before discovering Corby's original sentence had been reinstated said he feared the development involving Corby's half brother, James Kisina, would ruin his attempts to free Schapelle.

Corby's Balinese lawyer, Erwin Siregar, disagrees with Mr Paris claiming the arrest could provide evidence to reopen her case if there is any proof or statements that the marijuana she was caught with belonged to her half-brother.

In court today, Kisina claimed that he was seeking to obtain information from known drug dealers in Brisbane which could assist in Corby's appeal.

Stardust comet samples "visible to the naked eye"

Stardust, a NASA space probe, returned with more than scientists bargained for.

"I didn't see anything," said University of Washington astronomer, Don Brownlee, from NASA's Johnson Space Center Tuesday.

But then, technicians flipped over the collection grid and scientists all around let out a huge gasp of

excitement.

"It's better than we could have possibly hoped for," Brownlee said. "It exceeds all expectations. We have a huge number of impacts, and some are quite big and visible to the naked eye. It's a huge success."

In a memo from NASA, scientists said "hundreds of particles" could be seen in the collection tray. "There were two particularly large comet particles that had 'exploded' inside," said the memo.

A lot of the largest particles shattered into little bits of black debris when they landed on the collector. But many other visible particles left tracks as they landed at 13,000 MPH and stopped fully intact. "I remember warning people not to be disappointed if these tracks were very hard to see, but they are absolutely stunning," Brownlee said.

Before they opened the collector, Brownlee admitted that no one really knew whether or not the device had actually caught any particles. "You just don't know if nature is going to cooperate or not. It has been a magic mission."

"The capsule tumbled several times when it landed by parachute in the Utah desert, but the impact didn't crack the aerogel," said Brownlee.

NASA researcher Scott Sandford said the collection effort "succeeded well beyond our wildest hopes. I am not sure if it is good clean-room protocol to hug each other, but there was a lot of it going on for the first 10 minutes or so," he added.

Stardust traveled nearly 3 billion miles and went around the Sun 3

times. Stardust's mission in space lasted 7 years.

Scientists also hope to use Distributed Computing to help with looking over the samples. They will use a VM (Virtual Microscope) which will be developed by the University of California at Berkeley. The developers, computer scientist David Anderson, director of the SETI@home project and physics graduate student, Joshua Von Korff, are expected to design the program which is expected to go public in March.

Interview with Brazilian blogger Ricardo Serran Lobo

Ricardo Serran Lobo is a Brazilian blogger who began writing about his famous neighbor: the politician Roberto Jefferson, head of the Brazilian Labor Party in the Brazilian Congress of Deputies. Jefferson has become a major figure in the ongoing Brazilian mensalão scandal revolving around corruption and bribery.

Vizinho do Jefferson [1] quickly became very popular among Brazilians, describing the routine of Jefferson, while providing information about politics and fresh news about the scandal. Lobo's blog got third place in the Best Of Blogs contest run by Deutsche Welle International.

Lobo gets an intimate look by living in Brasilia, the center of Brazilian politics, near residences of parliamentarians (including Roberto Jefferson), public buildings and the Brazilian Chamber of Deputies. Or, as he says in his blog: "near the eye of the hurricane" since the crisis came out.

At first, Lobo began describing the diary activities of his famous

neighbor deputy Roberto Jefferson. As the crisis moved on, he began to describe the political events regarding it. His writings evolved to not only what is going on with Jefferson, but what is going on in Brazilian Congress, and has interviewed politicians, including Roberto Jefferson himself.

The blog tries to be informative, with a lot of humour (common with Brazilians), and some protests against the bad habits of Brazilian politics in general.

Jefferson's neighbor, the blog, is an example of citizen journalism and it shows that ordinary people can compete with professional media.

Wikinews: Our interviewee is the Brazilian Ricardo Serran Lobo. He is usually known as the Vizinho do Jefferson (Jefferson's neighbor), because of his personal weblog about politics, which became very popular during the "mensalão" crisis in Brasil.

Ricardo Lobo: Good afternoon! My name is Ricardo, I am a publicity man and teacher of web writing, and speaker of the Information Era and Digital Communication, 44.

Wikinews: Are you from Brasília?

Ricardo Lobo: No. I am from São Paulo and from Santa Catarina in my heart.

Wikinews: How long have you been living in Brasília?

Ricardo Lobo: I have been living for five years in Brasília. All these years I have been a neighbor of the ex-deputy Roberto Jefferson.

The blog

Wikinews: What was your aim at starting a blog

Ricardo Lobo: The blog was born without any aim. In fact it was a joke with a college friend of mine

and my cousin. They knew that I lived next door to the deputy [Roberto Jefferson] and they asked me every day about the journalists staying out in front of his door at his building.

Ricardo Lobo: So, I began to write the blog, it was closer to the "making of" a journalistic coverture, describing the confusion and the changes of routine caused by the journalists who staying under my window, waiting for something happens.

Wikinews: Is this your first international interview? What newspapers or magazines have been in contact with you?

Ricardo Lobo: Actually this is the second international interview. At the beginning of the blog, Bloomberg Channel from New York interviewed me too. In Brazil, I have been interviewed by the main vehicles for communication. Only the Rede Globo didn't interview me because of the denouncements that I have made against it: the 2.8 billions reals loan from BNDES [Brazilian Development Bank] and its daily manipulation of information.

Wikinews: Did you expect that your blog would become so famous?

Ricardo Lobo: I wasn't expecting fame. Besides, I was expecting anything. I have laughed a lot because of all the repercussion caused by the blog, however the main subject, as I see, it was the changes in the behaviours of the main personages of this crisis which were caused by the blog. In the media and in the parliamentarians.

Wikinews: Do you receive a lot of emails?

Ricardo Lobo: I've already received many, about 300 emails per day at the peak of the crisis and popularity of the blog. In July, I could sleep only 3 hours by night. I answered everyone. At

present time, there are usually 20 emails by day. I love that. (laughs)

Journalism

Wikinews: Do you know about citizen journalism in Portuguese?

Ricardo Lobo: No. This practice is not common in my country. The blog Vizinho do Jefferson (Jefferson's neighbor) opened a great discussion about this subject, since journalistic occupation is reserved to the ones who have a diploma of journalism. The first unofficial and "outlaw" vehicle [of communication] which really worked with citizen journalism was my blog. It is called "independent press" here.

Wikinews: Is there any threat of working as an "independent press" since you do not have a journalist diploma?

Ricardo Lobo: Yes, the journalist union can sue me anytime.

However I am not taking any job.

Wikinews: You said that your blog caused some repercussions among some people. Can you cite some cases ?

Ricardo Lobo: About this subject, I would like to say too that the journalism elite likes my work and finds it of great importance. Only minor journalists are criticizing me and trying to disturb my work.

Wikinews: Have you read the Portuguese-language Wikinews coverage about the scandal? What do you think about it?

Ricardo Lobo: Unfortunately not. Excuse me, but I have to work on my blog 24 hours by day, getting and checking the information; some other histories are investigative.

Wikinews: You are invited to follow the Wikinews coverture about the crisis. A lot of articles have already been written.

Wikinews: Do you think that the internet has changed something in the relationship between Brazilian people and the press?

Ricardo Lobo: Yes, sure. The blog "Vizinho do Jefferson" brought many readers to online journalism. Everybody wanted to know what the blog was and what the Vizinho's blog was, since the spread about it in traditional media was big. At present time it is usually only the people reading political blogs and anything else. Many blogs have appeared since the "Vizinho do Jefferson" blog, every important journalist from the country has a blog today; however they are just starting.

Wikinews: Do you think that Brazilian media has been controlled by Workers Party sympathizers?

Ricardo Lobo: Very good question. Yes. Several times the Brazilian media has been controlled by Workers Party sympathizers when the party was not in power. At present time, journalists are a little lost and they are not able to talk about the insanity in Lula's government.

Wikinews: The Brazilian press have covered the scandal with a lot of detail. Did it redeem itself?

Ricardo Lobo: But in this case you have the blog influence over the press. How can you not write about it if someone else is talking about the subject?

Brazilian politics in general

Wikinews: What, if any, are your political affiliations, and do they influence the material you choose to include in your blog?

Ricardo Lobo: Yes, I am from the Green Party. It doesn't influence my work; on the contrary, my work influenced my political life.

Wikinews: Have you run for a political post?

Ricardo Lobo: The national president of my party asked me to be federal deputy candidate in the next elections. I have been with the national executive of the Green Party this year—before the

blog—asking for a moratorium on the deforestation exploitation. I've always been a very active environmentalist.

Wikinews: Are Brazilian politicians more corrupt now than before?

Ricardo Lobo: I think that they are less discreet. Politics and corruption walk together in any country of the world. There are many interests involved in any part of the planet.

The scandal

Wikinews: Political scandals like this have happened before in Brazil?

Ricardo Lobo: Not at this proportion. The volume of money involved is huge. The problem is that the 3 Brazilian powers: Legislative, Executive and Judicial were exposed to the population. Every Ministry had problems of inefficiency and the ruling party, which always represented the ethics and morals, was caught literally with dollars inside his underwear. (laughs)

Wikinews: How far does the corruption go? Does it [the crisis] continue?

Ricardo Lobo: The crisis will continue, sure, there are a lot of things that must be explained. The great doubt is if Lula knew or not. Sure, he knew about the existence of the bribery of parliamentarians by the government using the scheme called "mensalão".

Wikinews: Does the "mensalão" continue?

Ricardo Lobo: Not in the exact manner it was managed before, however I believe that it still exists. The election of Aldo [Aldo Rebelo (PCdoB)] for the Presidency of Congress is an example.

Wikinews: Do you believe Lula did know about the mensalão?

Ricardo Lobo: Certainly he knew and he is part of the ruling and creation of the scheme. Otherwise

he will enter to History as the most ignorant among all of the Brazilian presidents.

Wikinews: What was the role of the ex-minister and deputy José Dirceu, in your opinion?

Ricardo Lobo: Operator, chief of government and chief of its strategies. He and Lula created the scheme of "mensalão". He, Lula, Hugo Chávez and Fidel Castro created a scheme to turn out South America as a huge continent for the world-wide left. The first step was Lula in Brazil, next Evo Morales in Bolivia, and so on. José Dirceu was a part of that.

Wikinews: Do you think that the corruption scandal will end "much ado about nothing" or "pizza" as it is said in Brazil?

Ricardo Lobo: Actually there are a lot of "pizzas". One has already been served: the Vote Buying CPI. They are still trying to serve the others. But I think that it will end in nothing; they, the politicians, are very cooperative with each other.

Ricardo Lobo: They [the deputies] know that their days are numbered, mainly the ones from big cities. As for the ones from provincial and small cities; they don't even know what a computer is and they didn't realize the severity of the problem. They think that if their name didn't appear in the newspaper, their names are not in any place.

Perhaps I'll create a site closer to the elections, when I will put the names of all incompetent ones from the National Congress.

Wikinews: What will end in nothing? The investigations or the scandal?

Ricardo Lobo: The investigations will continue until an acceptable limit is reached by the major parties: the Workers Party and the Social Democracy Party. Then they must stop when it is "enough" for

the population.

Popular reaction

Wikinews: In the streets, how do ordinary Brazilian people see this issue?

Ricardo Lobo: Everybody is disappointed because people thought that everything (corruption, politicians etc) would change. And it really changed, but for the worse. The amateur behaviour of the communications team of President Lula contributed very much to this also; it lacked professionalism.

Wikinews: Are the people who live in Brasilia too upset?

Ricardo Lobo: Nobody gets very upset about the government in Brasilia. Most of the town population works for the federal government, so this is a unique city, really. And it is beautiful.

Wikinewss: But some Brazilians still trust in President Lula, right?

Ricardo Lobo: This number gets smaller each day. But there are people who still believe in Santa Claus. (laugh) You excuse me but I dont know how to speak about Lula without joking. (laugh)

Roberto Jefferson

Wikinews: Why did Roberto Jefferson expose the scandal, in your opinion?

Ricardo Lobo: Good question. He had a rope around his neck. Actually he detonated an atomic bomb, without knowing who was attacking him. Actually the people who atacked him were his party mates and not José Dirceu. This is related to those 4 millions reals and the sharing amongst them. There were a lot of more money, but only 4 [million] were shared. This is the root of the crisis detonated by him.

Wikinews: It seems that you got close to the ex-deputy Roberto Jefferson. Could you tell us

something about it? What does he think about your blog?

Ricardo Lobo: We became friends and he was thankful for my correction, with him and with his family. He said that I am very competent and that I am one of the best products of the whole crisis.

Wikinews: There is some deputy from the Workers Party (PT) who is a neighbor of Roberto Jefferson?

Ricardo Lobo: Yes, all of them live over there. By example: deputy Greenhalg [Luiz Eduardo Greenhalg] from PT lives there, next door too. Rebelo [Aldo Rebelo], the President of the Congress, too. Almost all of them live at 302 North.

Wikinews: Is that a pretty wealthy neighborhood?

Ricardo Lobo: Brasília is different from other cities in the world; it is formed by blocks and not streets. I am a neighbor of a block where there are only federal deputies, among them, Roberto Jefferson. Deputies are very rich, sure.

Politics in Brazil makes people rich. (laugh)

Wikinews: Is Roberto Jefferson still having instructions about singing?

What does he like to sing?
Ricardo Lobo: He continues. Now he is having instructions with a baritone from the Municipal Theatre of Rio de Janeiro. He is instructed in the afternoon, when he is in the city. He likes romantic singers and lyrical songs. He sings: My Way, Io che amo solo te, Dio come ti amo and other Italian songs like the one of Andrea Bocelli.

Wikinews: Would Roberto Jefferson accept to take part in a interview in Wikinews?

Ricardo Lobo: I believe so, he is very open-minded person, to everything. The trouble is that he has litle experience with the keyboard. Another day he wrote a post in my blog and he had a hard

time to find himself with the keyboard. However someone could type for him, that is a solution.

Wikinews: Obviously we need to work on our tech for interviews, we'd like to interview people who aren't familiar with technology and may have telephone interview facilities in the future.

Final remarks

Wikinews: Well we would like to thanks your presence here. Feel free to make your final remarks.

Ricardo Lobo: The Brazilian crisis is showing that the young Brazilian democracy is at the right course. Besides all the problems brought by this scandal to us Brazilians, one thing has been demonstrated: the political maturity of the population. What we need now is maturity for the politicians, who are still living past two centuries. The blog Vizinho do Jefferson (Jefferson's neighbor) brought a new approach to the politics coverture and the Brazilian press grew up too. We all were influenciaded, each other.

Ricardo Lobo: I would like thank everyone for their patience. It was a honour and a great satisfaction to be the first interviewee for the year for Wikinews.

Wikinews: Thank you very much, Mr Lobo.

Ricardo Lobo: An embrace to all of you and thank you for your interest in my country. Brazil is expecting your visit. This country is delicious. Thank you.

Today in History

1265 - Summoned by Simon de Montfort, the first English parliament held its first meeting in the Palace of Westminster.

1320 - After reuniting Poland, Wladislaus the Short was crowned king in Kraków.

1885 - LaMarcus Adna Thompson patented the roller coaster.

1892 - The first official basketball game was played at the YMCA in Springfield, Massachusetts.

1942 - Nazis at the Wannsee conference in Berlin decided the "final solution to the Jewish question", leading eventually to the Holocaust.

Quote of the Day

"I don't understand politics. I don't understand the concept of two sides. And I think that probably there's good on both sides, bad on both sides, and there's a middle ground. But it never seems to come to the middle ground. And it's very frustrating watching it, and seemingly we're not moving forward." ~ David Lynch

About Wikinews

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+1-866-653-4265
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