



Top Stories

15 British Royal Navy sailors captured at gunpoint by Iranian guards

Iranian forces have captured 15 sailors and marines after an inspection was performed by the British Royal Navy on a ship believed smuggling cars into Iraq.



BREAKING NEWS

French Space Agency CNES releases UFO files

French space agency CNES released its UFO files to the public through its website on Thursday. The 100,000 pages of witness testimony, photographs, film footage and audiotapes is an accumulation of over than 1,600 sightings since 1954 and will include all future UFO reports obtained by the agency.



Featured story

Mass wedding held against racism in Belgium

In February, three couples refused to pledge their wedding vows in front of the black alderman of the city of Sint-Niklaas, because of the colour of his skin. So he decided to organise a mass wedding, to send a positive signal against racial discrimination in Belgium.



Wikipedia Current Events

- A Taliban attack on a convoy carrying supplies to a foreign troops in southern Afghanistan kills 17 Afghan security guards and drivers.
- US Marines accused of shooting and killing civilians after a suicide bombing in Afghanistan are under investigation and their unit has been shipped out of the country.
- The President of Iran Mahmoud Ahmadinejad cancels a trip to address the United Nations Security Council before it decides whether to impose further sanctions, claiming that the United States had been "obstructive" in issuing visas to members of his entourage.
- A missile hits an Ilyushin airplane assisting the African Union Mission to Somalia as it takes off from Mogadishu, killing up to 11 people.
- The United States Senate votes 52-47 to approve a budget plan that aims to achieve a balanced budget within five years and aims to find offsets for tax cuts passed in President Bush's first term.
- The United States House of Representatives votes in favor of withdrawing all U.S. troops from Iraq by August 2008. President Bush promises to veto the bill.
- Iraqi Deputy PM Salam al-Zubair is injured in a bomb attack.

U.S. Postage to rise two cents to 41 cents

The United States Postal Service,

having obtained permission from the Postal Rate Commission, the agency that oversees the price of postage stamps, has announced the first increase in the price of a first class letter in several years. The increase, scheduled to go into effect May 14, 2007, will raise the price of the first ounce of a first class letter to 41c, up 2c from the current 39c rate. The second ounce rate, however, would drop to 17c from the current 24c. The price of a 2-ounce letter is currently 63c, under the new rate, a 2-ounce letter will cost 57c. The post card rate will also be increased to 26c, also an increase of 2c.

Project brings dialogue between society and prisoners

A project aimed at feelings of insecurity in society took place over the last month in Belgium. Reintegration consultants Frank Geets and Geert Van Aerscht from the Central and Auxilliary Prison in Leuven came up with the idea to allow a group of citizens to get to learn the life of prisoners in a more realistic fashion.

Together with criminology Prof. Johan Deklerck from the Catholic University of Leuven, the city's civil servant for crime prevention and two local socio-cultural training centres, and with the support of the King Boudewijn Foundation and the Justice Department, they started the project under the header "KAFFEE DETINEE" (Eng. Detention Café), to stress the informal manner in which they wanted to bring together detainees and civilians.

To introduce the group of 30 civilians to the world of prisons, they first went to the oldest prison of Belgium in Tongeren, which has been transformed into a museum since 2005. Later the participants got the chance to visit both prisons in Leuven. They got to know the infrastructure, the prison regime, and they got to meet the gaolers and the prisoners.



The civilians first visited the prison of Tongeren which serves as a museum site since 2005.

With this exchange between the world inside and outside prisons, the participants and organisation think that at least some myths people have from movies and television were adjusted. According to Prof. Deklerck, the project is unique in Europe.

Wikinews interviewed Prof. Johan Deklerck, and one of the civilians who participated in the project, Katrien Vanwildemeersch.

Prof. Johan Deklerck: "There are a lot of prejudices about the prison world, which are enforced by the media, sometimes deliberately. During this project there were some authentic encounters, which were really beautiful. Some people were afraid, or were very angry at the prisoners. But we were able to dislodge some biases. One woman had a very firm point of view when we started, she said to me: 'I don't know anymore... They are sympathetic nevertheless.'. The

prisoners are people too, even if they have done horrible things.

We have to work on reintegration. People hear about it if prisoners who are released after 10 years begin again. How to use the time in prison in such a way that this improves, is an important matter."

Katrien Vanwildemeersch: "In here, you are lived, you don't have to make any choices. If you come back outside, everything is so complicated.

We got to know the difference between the images from television and movies and the reality. We got the chance to talk to real people. For days, I saw the image before me of the detainee that sat in front of me, thinking: 'now he is still there, and in two years he will still be there'.

There was a big difference between the closed cells in the Auxilliary prison and the open regimen in the Central prison. To be locked inside the prison, is the punishment in itself. And those isolation cells, they were not pretty to see."

Prof. Johan Deklerck: "To be imprisoned is the punishment in itself; to be locked inside the prison walls. A prisoner once said to me: 'In my cell, I have a stereo, a television set, a coffee machine, a bed,... but you can have it all if I could get out.

But, how do we spend that time in prison? There is a lot of room for improvement in that area. We have to work on restoration: on the restitution of the prisoner's self, restitution for the victim and for society.

Within the financial margins, we

see that one prison has a good policy, whereas another has an old-fashioned prison model. The policy of the government is determined locally. I think we could book results if we could work consequently and intensely on restoration for a number of years. And maybe even shorten the time of the prison sentence. After all, a night in prison costs society as much as a night in the Hilton hotel."

Wikinews: Maybe what strengthens the feelings of insecurity in society, is the law Lejeune, which allows a prisoner to be released after he has served only a third of his sentence. Would it not be better to say: 'We sentence you for 7 years, but if you misbehave after that, you will automatically get 14 years more'?

Prof. Johan Deklerck: "Of course, the judges calcute that into their judgement. And there are control mechanisms once they enter society. The system allows for more control. The courts responsible for the execution of the punishments decide based on the inmates file. The system is sometimes thought of in an oversimplified manner. The control mechanisms are very important. Those two ways of saying it are very different."

Interview with an inmate: Frederik (fictional name): "In this project, we got the opportunity to talk with some pleasant people from the outside. They got a whole other look on the prison life and the people. People have the idea that prison is like in the movies, but it's not like that in Belgium. Of course there are problems with drugs and agression, but nothing compared to the image from American movies. The image that people have is not very realistic. The project contributed to a different image.

The surplus value of this project for us was the personal contact with the outside world. Their image is not always that negative. They got to see the cells, how we eat, how we live. We got to say what we think for once.

Some people came to look at my cell, and I wanted to give them the chance to see everything without limitations. In the corridor someone engaged in a conversation with me, very spontaneously, not knowing that I was a prisoner. Afterwards, that person told me she really didn't expect that I was a prisoner. That really moved me.

The only criticism I had for the project is that the visitors from outside where only here a limited time. I felt that some left with a pile of unanswered questions."

2007 Cricket World Cup: West Indies vs Ireland

West Indies beat Ireland by 8 wickets (with 59 balls remaining) in the final Group D match of the 2007 Cricket World Cup at Sabina Park, Kingston, Jamaica.

As both teams had already sealed their progress to the Super 8 stage, this match was effectively a Super 8 encounter, as the points won today were carried through to the next stage.

Ireland were missing their captain Trent Johnson after he failed to recover from a shoulder injury. Johnson was replaced by John Mooney, while Kyle McCallan deputised as captain.

Rain delays toward the end of Ireland's innings meant the game was reduced to a 48 over match. West Indies' target was therefore revised under the Duckworth-Lewis method to 190 runs from their 48 overs.

2007 Cricket World Cup: Sri Lanka vs India

Sri Lanka beat India by 69 runs in a crucial Group B match at the World Cup at the Queen's Park Oval, Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago.

Victory was enough for Sri Lanka to progress through to the Super 8 stage, however India's loss put a massive dent in their hopes of progressing in the tournament.

Toss: India won, and elected to field first.

NFL: Houston Texans release QB David Carr

The Houston Texans released quarterback David Carr, Friday, ending a turbulent start to his five year old career. Carr was the first overall draft pick of the 2002 NFL Draft, the first pick in Texans history. Carr had struggled in Houston, being sacked 249 times during his tenure as quarterback. Despite throwing 59 touchdowns with the Texans, Carr threw 65 interceptions in the same time, compiling a 75.5 QB rating. Carr had high numbers at Fresno State when the Texans selected him with the first overall pick in 2002. Houston's all time record under David Carr is 8-24.

It became evident that Houston no longer required Carr's services after the organization made a trade with the Atlanta Falcons to acquire QB Matt Schaub earlier this week. The deal included swapping first round picks in the upcoming draft, with the Falcons moving up from 10th to 8th overall pick. After acquiring Schaub, it was announced that he would become the new starting quarterback for the Texans, and that the organization would attempt to trade Carr.

The Texans also released

runningback Domanick Williams. Williams, formerly known as Domanick Davis, leaves as the Texans all-time rushing leader with 3,195 rushing yards. Davis spent the entire 2006 NFL season on the injured reserve with a knee injury.

Bill Gates to receive honorary degree from Harvard University

Bill Gates, co-founder and chairman of Microsoft Corporation, will be presented with an honorary degree from Harvard University, on June 7, during the university's 356th commencement proceedings. Gates is to deliver the commencement address for the event.



Although Gates enrolled at Harvard in 1973, he left soon after to focus on the development of Microsoft. Gates is, nonetheless, a member of the Harvard Class of 1977.

In a Harvard University Gazette article announcing the commencement event, the accomplishments of Gates, in both business and philanthropy, were highlighted.

"I am very pleased that the Harvard community will have the opportunity to hear from Bill Gates on June 7," said Paul Finnegan, president of the Harvard Alumni Association. "His contributions to the world of business and technology, and the great example he has set through his far-reaching philanthropy, will rightfully put him on center stage in Harvard Yard. I look forward to greeting him in June."

In 2000, Gates founded, with his wife, The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (B&MGF). A charitable

foundation, the B&MGF focuses on worldwide health care and poverty issues. The foundation manages currently more than \$30 billion in endowments.

Founded in 1636, Harvard University is the oldest institution of higher learning in the United States.

Recalled pet food found to contain rat poison

In a press release earlier today, New York State Agriculture Commissioner Patrick Hooker, along with Dean of Cornell University's College of Veterinary Medicine Donald F. Smith, confirmed that scientists at the New York State Food Laboratory identified Aminopterin as a toxin present in cat food samples from Menu Foods.

Menu Foods is the manufacturer of several brands of cat and dog food subject to a March 16, 2007 recall.

Aminopterin is a drug used in chemotherapy for its immunosuppressive properties and, in some areas outside the US, as a rat poison. Earlier reports stated that wheat gluten was a factor being investigated, and officials now state that the toxin would have come from Chinese wheat used in the pet food, where it is used for pest control. Investigators will not say that this is the only contaminant found in the recalled food, but knowing the identity of the toxin should assist veterinarians treating affected animals.

The Food Laboratory tested samples of cat food received from a toxicologist at the New York State Animal Health Diagnostic Center at Cornell University. The samples were found to contain the rodenticide at levels of at least 40 parts per million.

Commissioner Hooker stated, ""We are pleased that the expertise of our New York State Food Laboratory was able to contribute to identifying the agent that caused numerous illnesses and deaths in dogs and cats across the nation."

The press release suggests Aminopterin, a derivative of folic acid, can cause cancer and birth defects in humans and can cause kidney damage in dogs and cats. Aminopterin is not permitted for use in the United States.

The New York State Food Laboratory is part of the Federal Food Emergency Response Network (FERN) and as such, is capable of running a number of unique poison/toxin tests on food, including the test that identified Aminopterin.

15 British Royal Navy sailors captured at gunpoint by Iranian guards



HMS Cornwall at Zeebrugge in 2006.

Fifteen British Royal Navy personnel have been captured by Iranian authorities at gunpoint in the Persian Gulf off the Iraqi coast, according to the British Ministry of Defence. The sailors and marines, from the Type 22 frigate HMS Cornwall, had been inspecting, in accordance with UN Security Council Resolution 1723, a ship that was believed to be smuggling cars into Iraq, though it was

subsequently cleared after inspection. The Royal Navy insists that they were operating in Iraqi waters.

The Ministry of Defense said that the Royal Navy personnel had been "engaged in routine boarding operations of merchant shipping in Iraqi territorial waters" and had finished their search of the suspect vessel when they were surrounded by Iranian forces. An Iraqi fisherman (who wished to remain anonymous) said that he saw the incident take place in the Ras al-Beesha area near the northern entrance of the Persian Gulf.

The British government has demanded the return of the servicemen. Margaret Beckett, the U.K.'s Foreign Secretary said, "we sought a full explanation of what happened and left the Iranian authorities in no doubt that we expect immediate and safe return of our service personnel and boats." The Iranian ambassador was summoned to the Foreign Office to see a senior officer (as Foreign Secretary Beckett was away from London in her Parliamentary constituency at the time).



Approximate location of the incident on the Iraqi - Iranian border river Shatt Al-Arab / Arvand Rud

The United States also called for the immediate release of the sailors, supporting the United Kingdom's demand. Sean

McCormack, a spokesman for the United States Department of State, said "we support the British demand for the safe return of their people and equipment." The United States also confirmed separately (as reported on the BBC Ten O'Clock News) that it believed the British sailors had been in Iraqi waters.

Iran stated that the sailors were "illegally entering" Iran's waterways and that this is not the first time that the United Kingdom has done so.

"This is not the first time that British military personnel during the occupation of Iraq have entered illegally into Iran's territorial waters. [The sailors have been] detained by Iran's border authorities for further investigation ... of the blatant aggression into Iranian territorial waters," said an Iranian foreign Ministry official according to the television station run by Iran's government.

Iran recently threatened to seize Coalition military personnel in response to what it claimed was an undercover operation by foreign security agencies to abduct senior officers in its Iranian Revolutionary Guard. Reza Faker, a writer believed to have links with President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, wrote in the Subhi Sadek (the Revolutionary Guard's weekly newspaper), "we've got the ability to capture a nice bunch of blue-eyed blond-haired officers and feed them to our fighting cocks. Iran has enough people who can reach the heart of Europe and kidnap Americans and Israelis."

In June 2004, three small vessels and eight Royal Navy personnel were detained by Iranian forces after they allegedly entered Iranian waters on the Shatt al-Arab river

without permission. At the time, the story was broken when the capture was announced on state-run Iranian television. British officials only stated that they had "lost contact" with the boats, before confirming their detention.

On that occasion the men were later released unharmed, but only after being paraded on Iranian TV and apologizing for their role in the incident; two of the men were blindfolded at the time. The equipment was not returned.

Pakistan cricket coach Bob Woolmer murdered; investigation underway



*Bob Woolmer
May 14, 1948 -
March 18, 2007*

Ex-England international cricketer and Pakistan cricket coach Bob Woolmer's death is now the subject of a murder investigation by police in Kingston, Jamaica.

At a press conference last night, the Chief of Police confirmed that Woolmer's death at the age of 58 was the result of "manual strangulation".

Commenting on his death, the Deputy police commissioner, Mark Shields, said "Bob was a large man - It would have taken some significant force to subdue him."

Jamaican police questioned members of the Pakistan cricket squad on Thursday, after which the team were fingerprinted and then allowed to leave for their hotel in Montego Bay. They are planning to return home to Pakistan on Saturday.

Police are now studying CCTV footage from the hotel where the team are staying, in the hope of finding any clues as to the identity

of Mr Woolmer's killers.

The pathologist states that he had died from asphyxiation caused by manual strangulation.

Belgian Archbishop lectures on health care and religion

Yesterday, Belgian Archbishop Godfried Danneels visited the Catholic University of Leuven to give a lecture on health care and religion, entitled "Care for the body, care for the mind". Some 120 people, mainly professors at the University Hospitals, but also clerics and students, attended the conference and following piano recital.

In his introduction speech, Dean of Medicine Bernard Himpens reminded the audience how much the art of medicine had changed since the time of Andreas Vesalius, probably the Faculty's most famous scientist. The Dean stressed the important role of the Hospital's Biomedical Ethics Committee, but added that religion continues to be important. "Some people even believe that good ethics must be carried by faith, and any profound ethics should result in faith," the Dean noted. He asked the question where the evolution of a merely "passive tolerance for the christian starting points" would lead the health care system.

In his lecture, the Archbishop acknowledged that the technical aspects of health care were probably the most important to achieve results, but that on the other hand, the medical-technical approach by itself could not guarantee the happiness of the patients.

Wikinews asked Professor Martin Hiele, Chairman of the Commission for Medical Ethics, if he felt there was a need for a lecture on the

subject of religion and health care. He replied that: "Especially when it concerns health, disease and death, everyone is looking for answers. The influence of the Church and of religion on the way that the health care system deals with life and death is an important topic nowadays -that is the reason that a lot of people have come today, I think."



Archbishop Danneels (center) with on his left side Bernard Himpens, Dean of Medicine at the Catholic University of Leuven.

Prof. Bernard Spitz, from the University's Department of Developmental Biology and head of the Hospital's Obstetrics Department, told Wikinews that: "Religion is important in our profession. Increasingly you see that it becomes more technical, but also that people start looking for differentiation. A lot of people do the same thing technically, but not everyone does it from the same perspective. Also, when in organisation that used to be based on an ideology, this ideology disappears, people become burn-out, asking themselves why it is that they work so hard."

The lecture was organised by the DeGroof Bank and the Faculty of Medicine. It is the first of three lectures on the subject of religion, spirituality and ethics in health care.

French Space Agency CNES releases UFO files

French space agency CNES

released its UFO files to the public through its website on Thursday. The 100,000 pages of witness testimony, photographs, film footage and audiotapes are an accumulation of more than 1,600 sightings since 1954 and will include all future UFO reports obtained by the agency.

Jacques Patenet, an aeronautical engineer who is leading the study of the "non-identified aerospace phenomena," noted that the release of the UFO files to the public was "a world first," and that "the data that we are releasing doesn't demonstrate the presence of extraterrestrial beings. But it doesn't demonstrate the impossibility of such presence either. The questions remain open."

Almost 25 percent of the cases have been categorized as "type D", meaning that "despite good or very good data and credible witnesses, we are confronted with something we can't explain," Jacques explained.

CNES receives approximaely 50 to a 100 UFO reports each year. 10 percent of these reports are objects of on-site investigations.

Security was on hand at CNES headquarters during the announcement "to screen out uninvited UFOlogists."

The CNES website containing the UFO files crashed all its host servers three hours after it was brought online due to heavy traffic.

Other countries such as the United States and the United Kingdom do have UFO files available, but only release them through the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) on a case-by-case basis.

U.S. federal judge blocks Internet pornography law

Senior Judge Lowell Reed Jr. of the U. S. District Court for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania issued a permanent injunction on Thursday against the Child Online Protection Act (COPA) passed in 1998 that says it is a crime to make online pornography accessible for underage children.

Reed expressed "personal regret at having to set aside yet another attempt to protect our children from harmful material" but said that adults would "do the minors of this country harm, if First Amendment protections, which they will with age inherit fully, are chipped away in the name of their protection."

He added that software filters would be more effective in protecting children than the COPA.

Chris Hansen of the ACLU, the plaintiffs, said that were the law to go into effect, "all Internet would have had to be brought down to a level that is acceptable to a 6-year-old and that would have had a devastating effect on the kind of interactions that take place on the Internet."

According to the law, which became effective in 1998 but had been barred from enforcement by the Supreme Court, websites containing "commercial" pornography are required to verify that the person looking at the material is of age, by asking for a credit card number. The law says that it would stop minors from viewing material that is "harmful by contemporary community standards."

One advocacy group, Enough is Enough which tries to protect underage children from Internet

predators and pornography, spoke out against the ruling.

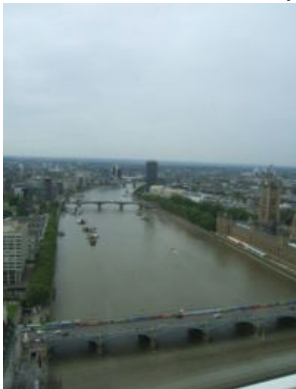
"It's a very frustrating decision. We have an epidemic problem of kids accessing pornographic material online. Pornographers continue to get a free pass on the Internet from our federal courts, and efforts by Congress keep getting trumped," said president of the organization, Donna Rice Hughes.

If websites were caught not following the law, penalties could range from a 6 month jail sentence and fines of up to \$50,000 [USD].

The United States Attorney's office is reported to be looking over the ruling and trying to make a decision on whether to try and appeal the decision in Supreme Court.

River Thames to receive clean-up with new tunnel

At an event at Abbey Mills pumping station in Stratford, East London on March 22, 2007, UK Environment Minister Ian Pearson announced an ambitious project to clean up the River Thames in London.



River Thames (England) from the London Eye

A tunnel, 30 kilometres in length, will be built alongside the river to intercept sewage and stormwater runoff that flows into the Thames currently. The tunnel would shunt the wastewater to a treatment facility in East London. Some 52 million cubic metres of wastewater streams into the Thames each year.



Map of the River Thames

According to a Parliamentary Statement released March 22, the discharges kill fish, create a higher health hazard for users of the river and reduce the aesthetic appeal of the Thames.

"London today is more densely populated, and the greater urbanisation – such as the increase in paved areas – has led to more and faster rainwater run-off and, unfortunately, to an increase in storm overflows into the river," said David Owens, Thames Water's Chief Executive Officer in a press release.

"London's sewers are one of the great engineering wonders of the Victorian age and have served the capital well for more than 150 years," continued Owens.

The tunnel is projected to cost a minimum £2 billion and would be considered the largest such project undertaken in Great Britain.

The announcement comes after six years of detailed study. Experts such as the Thames Tideway Strategic Study, consultants Jacobs Babbie, and Thames Water played a significant role in determining a solution. All recommended a tunnel under the Thames as the right approach to the problem.

"We haven't reached this decision in a vacuum," said Pearson. "A wide range of players have been instrumental in getting us to this point and I thank them all." Further

work on the project, such as detailed design, planning and funding, will now follow. "I think most Londoners would be shocked to hear that...a huge amount of untreated sewage and rainwater is spilling into the Thames"

—Ian Pearson

Funding the project, admits Pearson, may put a strain on ratepayers. "This will inevitably mean some extra costs for customers, but it will deliver tangible benefits for London in the long-term," said Pearson. It is estimated that it will add around £37 to Thames Water sewerage bills by 2017.

There has been criticism of projected expenses. "The costs will be met wholly through increases in consumers' bills," said David Bland, chairman of Consumer Council for Water Thames, in a BBC interview. He suggested the fees "will be far more than most are willing or expecting to pay."

Proceeding with the tunnel would not only improve the environmental quality of the Thames, suggests the government, it would also help satisfy European obligations on sewage treatment.

The project is expected to be completed by 2019/20.

Wikipedia Current Events

- Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction Stuart Bowen describes the reconstruction program in Iraq as "chaotic and badly managed" in an official report.

- Nepal's Government orders a judicial probe into clashes between Maoists and supporters of the Madhesi People's Rights Forum.

Wikipedia Current Events

- Heavy fighting is reported in northwest Sri Lanka between the Army and the Tamil Tigers.
- Democratic Republic of Congo's chief prosecutor issues an arrest warrant for Senator Jean-Pierre Bemba who has sought refuge in the South African embassy as fighting continues in Kinshasa.
- Celebrations to mark the 50th birthday of the European Union begin.
- At least three people die after an accident involving four cars and three trucks causes a fire in the Burnley Tunnel in Melbourne, Australia. Both the Burnley tunnel and nearby Domain Tunnel are evacuated.
- Veterinarians warn that thousands of cats and dogs may die in the wake of the Menu Foods voluntary recall of over 60 million cans of contaminated pet food in North America.

Today in History

1882 - Robert Koch announced the discovery of Mycobacterium tuberculosis, a bacterium that causes tuberculosis.

1944 - World War II: Captured Allied soldiers began "the Great Escape", breaking out of the German prison camp Stalag Luft III.

1976 - Dirty War: President Isabel Perón of Argentina was kidnapped and deposed in a bloodless coup d'état.

1999 - Kosovo War: NATO launched air strikes against Yugoslavia, marking the first time NATO has attacked a sovereign country.

March 24 is World Tuberculosis Day

Quote of the Day

No work which is destined to become a classic can look like the classics which have preceded it. In art, as in biology, there is heredity but no identity with the ascendants. Painters inherit characteristics acquired by their forerunners; that is why no important work of art can belong to any period but its own, to the very moment of its creation. It is necessarily dated by its own appearance. The conscious will of the painter cannot intervene.

~ Juan Gris

Word of the Day

frugal; adj

1. Economical; thrifty; avoiding waste.

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