

[Gates of Vienna News Feed 7/15/2009](#)

Gates of Vienna

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Body

Jul. 15, 2009 ([Gates of Vienna](#) delivered by Newstex) --

The crackdown on radical nationalism in Hungary continues. The Magyar Gárda (Hungarian Guard) has been banned, but a new version of the group seems to have formed, and a Jobbik MEP wore a Magyar Gárda uniform in the first session of the European Parliament.

In other news, the World Health Organization says that a swine flu vaccine is still months away, but another story reports that a new vaccine will be tested next week on hundreds of adult volunteers in Australia.

Thanks to C. Cantoni, heroyalwhyness, Insubria, islam ophobe, JD, TB, TV, and all the other tipsters who sent these in. Headlines and articles are below the fold.

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[China Foreign Reserves Rise to \\$2.13 Trillion](#)

Chinas foreign reserves have risen to \$2.13 trillion after growth picked up in June despite a slump in trade, data showed Wednesday.

The reserves, already the worlds largest, expanded by 17.8 percent or \$186 billion over the first half of the year, the central bank said. It said the increase in June alone was \$42 billion " nearly equal to growth for the full final quarter of last year.

Chinas reserves have ballooned as the central bank buys up dollars generated by its huge trade surplus and influx of investment. The latest upturn despite a trade slump suggests the difference was being made up by an increase in foreign investment flowing into China.

Chinas reserves are more than double those of No. 2 Japan, which has \$988 billion.

Chinese leaders have expressed concern about the stability of the U.S. dollar and the value of Beijings vast holdings of American government debt. China is Washingtons biggest foreign creditor and is believed to keep almost half of its reserves in U.S. Treasury bonds and notes issued by government-affiliated agencies.

Despite such concern, the U.S. government says Beijing is continuing to buy substantial amounts of Treasuries.

Chinas exports fell for an eighth month in June, plunging 21.4 percent from a year earlier, and its global trade surplus narrowed to just \$8.2 billion, the second-smallest gap in many years.

China added just \$7.7 billion to its reserves in the first quarter of this year as trade and investment plunged due to the global financial crisis. That compared with a \$45 billion increase in the final quarter of last year.

The growth in reserves over the first half was down by \$95 billion from the expansion in the same period last year, the central bank said.

Meanwhile, foreign direct investment fell in June for the ninth straight month, but the decline narrowed, adding to signs of an economic recovery..

Actual foreign direct investment in June totaled \$9 billion, down 6.8 percent from a year earlier, while the number of new approved foreign companies totaled 2,529, down 3.8 percent, an official said.

The FDI **drop** compared to a 17.8 percent fall in May, likely another sign of improvement in Chinas

" Hat tip: heroyalwhyness

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[France Approves Sunday Work](#)

PARIS " French legislators have approved a divisive bill that allows more stores to stay open " and more people to work " on Sundays.

The law was adopted Wednesday by a vote of 282 to 238 in Frances lower house of parliament.

One of President Nicolas Sarkozys key reform pledges, the bills proponents say expanding Sunday opening hours will give the French economy a much-needed jolt as the nation wrestles with recession.

But Frances leftist opposition calls it an affront to labor protections, and traditionalists decry it as an attack on the time-honored day of rest.

" Hat tip: heroyalwhyness

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[French Auto Workers Threaten to Blow Up Factory in Extreme Example of Resistance to Cost Cuts](#)

Outside view of the New Fabris car parts manufacturer in Chatellerault, central France, Wednesday July 15, 2009. A local official dismissed a threat by laid-off French workers to blow up their auto parts factory, saying the gas canisters, center left, they placed outside the plant are apparently empty. The factorys more than 350 workers were fired last month. They are demanding Euros 30,000 (\$41,000) each by the end of the month in compensation from the main clients, PSA and Renault, union officials say. Some 150 of them are occupying the factory, where some equipment has already been burned. Writing on wall reads: ~Garro we want the bonus 30,000 euros net. Garro refers to Italian Florindo Garro, who heads ZEN owners of factory Fabris..(AP Photo/Remy de la Mauviniere) (REMY DE LA MAUVINIERE, AP / July 15, 2009)

CHATELLERAULT, France (AP) " Laid-off auto-parts workers huddled Thursday around gas canisters tied to an electrical cable, threatening to blow up a factory in the latest example of extreme French resistance to cost-cutting in the economic downturn.

Other French workers have kidnapped their bosses, blocked ports and barricaded factories to try to save jobs in Frances worst recession since the 1940s.

Some 200 workers at the New Fabris factory outside the southwest city of Chatellerault, are each demanding euro30,000 (\$42,267) from Renault and PSA Peugeot-Citroen, accusing the carmakers of killing their livelihoods.

If they dont get it by July 31, they say they will blow up the factory, about 190 miles (300 kilometers) southwest of Paris. They are taking turns guarding 20 canisters of acetylene and butane, once used for gas-operated tractors and now spaced out on both sides of the plant and attached by a cable. Guy Eyermann of the CGT union said half of them are full, though that was impossible to verify.

"We are at the end of the line, Eyermann said. "A lot of people worked here for 25, 35 years. Many have given their lives to the company. He called on all factories in Europe that are closing to protest and do what the workers are doing here.

New Fabris closed down June 16 and all its 366 workers are being gradually laid off. They blamed Peugeot-Citroen and Renault for canceling contracts that represented the bulk of the companys sales, and began their protest June 20.

On the gates out front, laid-off workers put up black cardboard cutouts in the shape of coffins noting workers name, year of birth, and "2009 " the year they were let go. A workers empty blue uniform hung from the gate. Enormous machines hauled from inside the factory stood in the courtyard, gutted and charred after employees torched them. The shuttered factory still holds parts and costly machinery, and the workers are trying to keep Renault and Peugeot-Citroen from collecting any material.

The workers are meeting with officials at Renault headquarters on Thursday, and are asking for euro15,000 each from the company. The workers met with officials at Peugeot-Citroen last week, also asking for euro15,000 apiece.

PSA Peugeot Citroen spokesman Pierre-Olivier Salmon said the company rejected the demand.

"Its the world upside down, Salmon said. "Its not our job to replace the companys shareholders or the state. Why should PSA pay for this?

Salmon said PSA had offered to buy New Fabris remaining inventory for euro1.2 million, even though PSA had no need for the spare parts.

Renault spokeswoman Gita Roux said the possibility of buying the factorys remaining inventory is a possible topic of negotiations at Thursdays meeting. As for the workers demand for compensation, Roux said, "It is not for us as clients to pay redundancy packages for a supplier.

The workers on Thursdays morning shift guarding the gas canisters whiled away hours playing ping pong, petanque or simply chatting. No police were in sight, though local officials say police are monitoring the situation.

"I got a severance package of euro3,500, about two months of salary. With the economic downturn if I dont find another job this isnt going to get me very far, said Marc Pinardon, 41, a machine operator who worked at the factory for nine years.

Several car-related factories in the region are laying off workers " along with thousands of auto workers losing their jobs worldwide as the industry undergoes its worst slump in decades.

Pinardon and a colleague, Bruno Perre, a 50-year-old technician at the factory for 29 years, walked through the shutdown factory.

"They throw us a way like Kleenex, Perre said.

Their action prompted a copycat event at a factory of Canadian telecoms firm Nortel Networks. Workers at the factory in Chateaufort west of Paris briefly installed gas canisters at their plant before removing them Thursday.

Labor Minister Xavier Darcos said he understood the anger of the workers but warned against such "incredible violence.

The factorys outgoing director Pierre Reau walked briskly past workers Thursday without interacting with them.

"It worries everyone because some people are uncontrollable, he told The Associated Press.

Anne Frackowiak, top aide to the local governor in Chatellerault, said she thinks the workers gas canisters are empty but that "we are watching.

"The biggest risk is a gigantic fire, but the fire department is on permanent alert, she said.

" Hat tip: heroyalwhyness

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[Treasury Boss Courts Mideast, Sees Gradual Rebound](#)

U.S. Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner reached out to Gulf Arab leaders Tuesday, stressing to some of Americas top creditors that his country has a œspecial responsibility to steer the world through a global recession that may finally be showing signs of easing.

A key aim of Geithners trip is to convince the major oil producers that the U.S. still welcomes their business, and has plans to get itself out of a crisis stemming from what he said was an œunsustainable fiscal path.

œThe force of the global recession is receding, Geithner told Saudi Arabian business leaders in the commercial hub of Jiddah, the starting point of his first official visit to the Middle East.. œGlobal trade is just starting to expand again.

But while noting that the International Monetary Fund has revised up growth forecasts in the second half of 2009 and into 2010, he cautioned that the signs of improvement were fragile and that the œprocess of repair and recovery is going to take considerably more time.

œThis crisis has been brutal in the extent and severity of damage to economies around the world, he said. œGiven the extent of damage to financial systems ! it seems realistic to expect a gradual recovery, with more than the usual ups and downs and temporary reversals.

Geithners Mideast trip was billed as a follow-up to President Barack Obamas recent overtures to the region. But the stop in the Saudi Arabia " the Arab worlds largest economy and OPECs de facto leader " is also a clear reflection of the growing financial clout of the six-nation Gulf Cooperation Council.

The treasury secretary arrives for talks in the neighboring United Arab Emirates, the No. 2 Arab economy, on Wednesday.

What Geithner has to say in private to officials in the oil-rich region could help determine whether the Obama administrations efforts to right the U.S. economy succeed. The Arab Gulf states are major backers of U.S. companies and government bonds and, as a group, are the biggest U.S. creditor after China.

As the American economy has weakened, it raised questions as to whether the dollar could remain the worlds top reserve currency, a key issue for the heavily leveraged U.S. with a deficit that recently topped \$1 trillion for the first time. The slowdown also increased concerns that major foreign creditors could look to more lucrative investments in strong developing economies outside the U.S.

œThe (Gulf) countries have a big stake in the financial stability of the United States. Theyre a big creditor, said Nasser Saidi, chief economist of the Dubai International Financial Center. œThe earlier you bring the Gulf and the Middle East onto the agenda, the better.

The Gulf states wealth skyrocketed during oils earlier boom years, but they have grown increasingly concerned as crude prices and the value of their investments soured.

Five of the GCC nations " Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Oman, Bahrain and Qatar " peg their currency to the dollar. Kuwait uses a basket of currencies that includes the greenback.

œThis is a visit to really re-emphasize U.S. leadership and U.S. pre-eminence in the world economy even in the midst of this global downturn, said Tarik Yousef, dean of the Harvard-affiliated Dubai School of Government. œThe last thing the U.S. wants is for people to lose confidence in its policies and its currency.

Geithner, who was in London on Monday, said the Obama administration is committed to preserving the openness of the U..S. economy. He said the U.S. realizes it has œa special responsibility in protecting the value of the dollar, which remains the worlds dominant currency.

He was to hold talks with Saudi King Abdullah and his top financial advisers later Tuesday, and will meet with officials from the UAEs powerful state investment funds on Wednesday. From the Emirates, he heads to Paris.

In Saudi Arabia, Geithner laid out a four-point strategy that he said is essential for economic recovery.

It includes stabilizing and repairing the U.S. financial system, helping offset the dramatic contraction in demand, working with the major economies of the world on a coordinated program of macroeconomic stimulus and financial stabilization and focusing on the future by building a stronger and more productive economy.

œIn the United States, we need to make sure that as we rebuild, we build a stronger and more productive economy, less prone to crisis, with the gains of growth more broadly shared, he said, adding that the government was determined to cut the deficit once officials were sure the global crisis was over.

America œwas on an unsustainable fiscal path before this crisis, and we will not succeed in establishing sustainable recovery without a credible commitment to address our long-term deficits, he said. (AP)

Beirut, 14 Jul 09, 19:38

[UK Jobless Rate Strikes 12-Year High](#)

LONDON (AFP) " Britains unemployment rate surged to 7.6 percent of the work force in May, the highest level since Labour won power in 1997, official data showed Wednesday, baring the depths of damage from the global financial crisis.

The latest dire economic data to hit recession-battered Britain comes as luxury car brand Jaguar on Wednesday said it would axe up to 300 jobs and end production of its X-Type car at a factory in northwest England.

The unemployment rate struck a higher-than-expected 7.6 percent in the three months to May, the worst level since January 1997 and the biggest quarterly jump for 28 years, the Office for National Statistics said in a statement.

œThese latest figures will make extremely grim reading for Britains embattled businesses, said David Breger, a partner at chartered accountants firm HW Fisher.

œThe recession continues to take its toll on the thousands of small and medium-sized businesses that are the lifeblood of this countrys workforce, businesses that have been left high and dry by the banks reluctance to lend.

The latest unemployment rate, which is according to the International Labor Organization (ILO) measure, was higher than market expectations of 7.4 percent.

In addition, the number of people in Britain claiming benefits increased 23,800 last month to 1.56 million, according to the ONS.

That was the biggest total since the Labour Party swept to power more than 12 years ago " but it was also the slowest monthly increase since May 2008.

The data stripped bare the impact of the global financial crisis and the credit crunch " which erupted in August 2007 as banks fretted over their exposure to soured bets on the collapsed US subprime home loan market.

The crisis has since pulled most major world economies " including Britain, the eurozone, Japan and the United States " into a deep recession.

In a bid to stave off job losses, major **British** companies are asking staff to take pay cuts and even work for free.

About a fifth of **British** Airways 40,000-strong workforce, including pilots, have agreed to accept cuts in pay or to work for free to help the group save millions of pounds (euros, dollars).

Meanwhile telecoms group BT is offering employees a year at home in return for a 75-percent pay cut.

The ONS added on Wednesday that **British** unemployment, according to the ILO measure, rose by 281,000 to 2.38 million in the three months to May.

That was the highest level since 1995, while the quarterly increase was the largest since records began in 1971.

œThe ILO data show more grim evidence of the collapse in the UK economy and the resultant toll on jobs, said Citigroup analyst Michael Saunders.

He warned: œWe suspect that firms " and of course the public sector " have not yet even come close to completing the inevitable cutbacks to hours and jobs.

œThe result is that unemployment is likely to go on rising for an extended period.

Office for National Statistics

" Hat tip: heroyalwhyness

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[Big Blobs of Mystery Goo Floating Off Alaska Coast](#)

Something big and strange is floating through the Chukchi Sea between Wainwright and Barrow.

Hunters from Wainwright first started noticing the stuff sometime probably early last week. Its thick and dark and œgooey and is drifting for miles in the cold Arctic waters, according to Gordon Brower with the North Slope Boroughs Planning and Community Services Department.

Brower and other borough officials, joined by the U.S. Coast Guard, flew out to Wainwright to investigate. The agencies found œglobes of the stuff floating miles offshore Friday and collected samples for testing.

Later, Brower said, the North Slope team in a borough helicopter spotted a long strand of the stuff and followed it for about 15 miles, shooting video from the air.

The next day the floating substance arrived offshore from Barrow, about 90 miles east of Wainwright, and borough officials went out in boats, collected more samples and sent them off for testing too.

Nobody knows for sure what the gunk is, but Petty Officer 1st Class Terry Hasenauer says the Coast Guard is sure what it is not.

œIt's certainly biological, Hasenauer said. œIt's definitely not an oil product of any kind. It has no characteristics of an oil, or a hazardous substance, for that matter.

" Hat tip: heroyalwhyness

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[Bombshell: Orders Revoked for Soldier Challenging Prez](#)

Major victory for Army warrior questioning Obamas birthplace

A U.S. Army Reserve major from Florida scheduled to report for deployment to Afghanistan within days has had his military orders revoked after arguing he should not be required to serve under a president who has not proven his eligibility for office.

His attorney, Orly Taitz, confirmed to WND the military has rescinded his impending deployment orders.

œWe won! We won before we even arrived, she said with excitement. œIt means that the military has nothing to show for Obama. It means that the military has directly responded by saying Obama is illegitimate " and they cannot fight it. Therefore, they are revoking the order!

She continued, œThey just said, "Order revoked. No explanation. No reasons " just revoked.

A hearing on the questions raised by Maj. Stefan Frederick Cook, an engineer who told WND he wants to serve his country in Afghanistan, was scheduled for July 16 at 9:30 a.m.

œAs an officer in the armed forces of the United States, it is [my] duty to gain clarification on any order we may believe illegal. With that said, if President Obama is found not to be a "natural-born citizen, he is not eligible to be commander-in-chief, he told WND only hours after the case was filed.

œ[Then] any order coming out of the presidency or his chain of command is illegal. Should I deploy, I would essentially be following an illegal [order]. If I happened to be captured by the enemy in a foreign land, I would not be privy to the Geneva Convention protections, he said.

" Hat tip: JD

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[Congressman Warns of "Big Brother Dossier](#)

Bill would ensure citizens aren't forced to take extended Census survey

The Obama administrations extended Census survey intended for 3 million people is a plan to create a œgovernment dossier on American citizens, charges a Texas congressman who has introduced a bill to make the lengthy questionnaire voluntary.

œThe federal government has a constitutional duty to count the number of people in the United States every 10 years, Republican Ted Poe told WND, œbut the federal government has no business keeping a comprehensive personal profile on every American citizen.

Poe fears the government can use the American Community Survey questionnaire to compile detailed information about individuals and œuse that information for its own purposes.

œThis is Big-Brother at its worst, he said.

" Hat tip: JD

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[Gag the Internet! An Obama Officials Frightening Book About Curbing Free Speech Online](#)

When it comes to the First Amendment, Team Obama believes in Global Chilling.

Cass Sunstein, a Harvard Law professor who has been appointed to a shadowy post that will grant him powers that are merely mind-boggling, explicitly supports using the courts to impose a œchilling effect on speech that might hurt someones feelings. He thinks that the bloggers have been rampaging out of control and that new laws need to be written to corral them.

" Hat tip: JD

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[State Officials Seek Change in Federal Law to Control Growing Cell Phone Use by Prison Inmates](#)

WASHINGTON (AP) " State officials appealed to members of Congress on Wednesday to give states a new tool to control illegal cell phone use by prison inmates and quickly ran into protests from the phone industry.

Industry representatives say jamming signals could interfere with legitimate service and 911 calls.

Prisons around the nation are grappling with rising problems from prison inmates using cell phones to coordinate criminal activity. Officials are backing legislation to change the law to allow states to use cell phone jamming technology to render cell phones useless in prison.

Texas State Sen. John Whitmire, whose life was threatened by a death row inmate with a cell phone, said cell phones smuggled inside prisons are the fastest growing and most alarming development in prison contraband in Texas. He said corrections officials are in a war and need the jamming tool.

"Short of jamming and a complete shutting down of those phone signals, I don't think we can remedy the problem, Whitmire told the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation. "It is a public safety problem.

Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison, R-Texas, is sponsoring legislation to change the law to make it possible for states to use the jamming technology. Sen. Barbara Mikulski, D-Md., is the lead co-sponsor for Democrats. A companion bill is pending before a House Judiciary subcommittee.

Steve Largent, president and CEO of CTIA-The Wireless Association, testified that he didn't believe cell phone jamming would fully address the issue. He told the committee there are better technological alternatives.

One alternative Largent proposed is called cell detection, technology that would enable prison officials to find a cell phone used inside a correctional environment without sending an interfering signal. By detecting the cell phone, prison officials could find and confiscate cell phones in prison without interfering with citizens' cell phone use or public safety channels.

Largent said another approach to the problem would be to use technology to manage wireless access in a prison. Managed access would restrict cell phone use in a certain area to people who are authorized to use it.

"Put simply, the right solution is one that effectively prohibits access by those who should not have it while ensuring that law-abiding citizens and public safety users enjoy the most reliable service possible, Largent said. His group, CTIA, is the international association for the wireless telecommunications industry.

The dangerous and far-reaching aspects of prisoner cell phone use were illustrated in Maryland two years ago, when a Baltimore drug dealer used a cell phone to plan the killing of a witness from the city jail. In May, Patrick A. Byers Jr. was convicted of murdering Carl S. Lackl Jr., who had identified Byers as the gunman in a previous killing. Gary Maynard, secretary of the Maryland Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services, emphasized that the problem is a national issue, noting that California prison officials collected more than 2,800 cell phones last year " two times the amount found the previous year.

"We need to fight technology with technology, Maynard said.

Maryland has made a request to the National Telecommunications and Information Administration for a 30-minute demonstration at a Maryland prison that houses federal inmates to inform Congress about available technology to combat illicit cell phone use.

The agency shares responsibility for managing the nation's communications network with the Federal Communications Commission.

Last week, South Carolina's prison chief said corrections directors in 26 states signed on to a petition he sent to the FCC asking federal regulators permission to jam cell phone signals inside state penitentiaries.

Lawrence E. Strickling, assistant secretary for communications and information at the Commerce Department, cited the South Carolina filing in a response to Maryland Gov. Martin O'Malley's request to the NTIA. Strickling wrote that he has reached out to the FCC "so that the two agencies can develop a coordinated approach with respect to the jamming issue generally and your specific proposal in the state of Maryland.

The FCC has authority over non-governmental radio communications, while the NTIA has authority over federal uses of the radio spectrum.

Under current law, the FCC can only allow federal agencies " not state or local authorities " permission to jam cell phone signals. The FCC has denied two recent requests from the District of Columbia and Louisiana for test jamming sessions.

[Denmark: Arctic Rivalry Heating Up](#)

Parliament's plans to build up the military's presence in the Arctic will provoke an arms race in the region, worries former military commander

The military is ready to begin a military build up in Greenland that will see the creation of an Arctic task force and an Arctic command.

The efforts will strengthen Denmark's military presence in the region at the same time as Canada and Russia have also announced that they will adjust their national defence strategies to adapt to more traffic, more mining and more potential conflicts in the Arctic.

Parliament's recently adopted defence budget for 2010 to 2014 concludes that increasing activity in the Arctic will transform the region's strategic importance and eventually lead to more challenges for the military.

In order to meet those challenges, an arctic task force drawing on elements from all branches of the military capable of operating in the Arctic will be set up from the existing defence capabilities.

The plan also calls for the possible use of fighter jets for occasional tasks related to monitoring and assertion of sovereignty in and around Greenland, as well as for a study into whether the US Air Force's Thule Air Base could play a larger role in defence tasks in and around Greenland, in cooperation with other partner countries.

Axel Fiedler, former head of the Greenland Command, warned however against an "unnecessary militarisation."

"Why start talking about fighters to Greenland? There is no threat whatsoever towards Greenland and no one denies the sovereignty of Greenland," he said.

In addition to Denmark's on-going border dispute with Canada, the two countries, along with Russia, Norway and the US are currently in the process of staking their territorial claims in the Arctic with the UN.

The process will see the Arctic Ocean divided up amongst the five Arctic powers, and Fiedler believes that the defence bill could provide Canada with new arguments for continuing its arms build up in the Arctic, just as politicians in Russia can use it to demand that the Russian military become more visible in the region.

Fiedler urged Greenland's self-rule government to protest against the plans, but Premier Kujalleq backs the proposals plans to improve efforts to prevent environmental and shipping disasters.

" Hat tip: TB

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[Far Right is Left Out at E.U.s Assembly](#)

By STEPHEN CASTLE

STRASBOURG " It was hardly the ideal start for a career in the European Parliament. Traveling to his first appearance in Strasbourg this week, Nick Griffin, the leader of the far-right **British** National Party, found himself by the side of the highway explaining to the French police why his car had broken the speed limit.

He wasn't driving, Mr. Griffin said Tuesday in describing his encounter with the French authorities. He added that the car was doing only about 10 over the limit.

All in all, it was not a great debut for Europe's far right, whose arrival here failed to generate the anticipated pyrotechnics. Newly elected members from extremist parties found themselves marginalized, with no speaking slot when the Parliament elected Jerzy Buzek, a former Polish prime minister, as president.

They will have a chance to speak soon, but the B.N.P. and other far right parties will not control any of the assembly's influential committees.

There was much attention paid last month when extremist parties made gains in the European Union elections, a success that reflected widespread disenchantment with the traditional parties. But though Parliament was braced for publicity-seeking tactics Tuesday, the far right parties made a minimal impact.

One member from the Hungarian party Jobbik was seen in paramilitary fatigues, and another wore traditional dress. But both were overshadowed by the arrival of a center-right Czech member who had cycled from Prague to Strasbourg and appeared in the chamber in his cycling shirt and shorts.

Far-right members from the Netherlands, Austria and Bulgaria were low key, and the B.N.P., which is trying to shed its image for menacing street politics, sought to portray itself as a mainstream political party. The B.N.P. won its first representation in the European Parliament last month. Mr. Griffin, one of the two elected, complained about being denied access to the same briefing and information that other **British** members get.

œlm disappointed but not surprised, he said. œWe are second-class citizens. Its unfortunate to be in this position, but Im not surprised.

British officials said they give the B.N.P. members standard briefings and other documents on request but are not engaging proactively with them. Unlike other **British** members, the two representatives from the B.N.P. have not been invited to a reception Wednesday hosted by Britains minister for Europe, Glenys Kinnock.

The far right also found itself on the outside when it came to forming transnational groups with common ideological outlooks. Such groups get more financing from the Parliament and also get to head the most influential committees. But the far right failed to find common cause with enough other parties to form a group.

œThey can start a dispute or create a scandal, said Dirk Sterckx, a Liberal Democrat member from Belgium, œif they publish material with money from the Parliament. They can use the Parliament as a way to attract attention.

œBut if you are a party like the B.N.P. or the Vlaams Belang in Belgium, you dont play a role on policy here on immigration, the accession of Turkey to the E.U., or human rights and civil liberties.

The composition of the new European Parliament underlines a shift to the right after the failure of the center-left to mount an effective challenge to most European center-right governments.

Britains Conservative Party, which left the Parliaments main center-right grouping, formed another 55-strong bloc with the Czech party O.D.S. and the Polish party Law and Justice. But strains within the group emerged immediately when a Conservative member, Edward McMillan-Scott, was suspended from the party organization for running against another member of the group for a vice-presidential position within the European Parliament.

A grouping that includes the U.K. Independence Party, which wants to take Britain out of the European Union., and the Northern League in Italy now numbers 30 members as opposed to the 22 in the U.K.I.P.s group last time.

œIf there is a larger representation of Euroskeptics in the European Parliament, Mr. Buzek said, œthis is a signal that our message to the population of the continent was not clear enough.

The Parliament should, he added, œdemonstrate to them what integration is about and how hard their lives would be without this integration.

" Hat tip: TV

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[France: July 14, 240 Arrests in Clashes With Police](#)

(ANSAmé) " PARIS, JULY 14 " Approximately 240 people were arrested in France last night on the eve of the national celebration of July 14, in clashes with the police. Thirteen policemen and gendarmes were injured by firecrackers and fireworks being thrown at them. Out of the 240 people arrested (the number is almost double that of 2008), 190 were detained by the police. The eve of the French national holiday was also marked by the setting on fire of 317 cars, a 6.73% rise on last year. (ANSAmé).

" Hat tip: Insubria

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[Germany: Dresden Hopes to Honour Murdered ~Veiled Martyr](#)

The German city of Dresden is mulling ways to honour a pregnant Egyptian woman stabbed to death in a courtroom in the city, a killing which has sparked anger in the Muslim world, a spokesman said Tuesday.

œA meeting with town representatives and the Central Council of Muslims is set to take place next week to decide how we can honour her, Kai Schulz told AFP, adding discussions would also take place with the womans family.

Dresdens foreign residents affairs officer Marita Schieferdecker-Adolph said: œWe are thinking of naming one of the citys streets after her, but the last time we wanted to do that, it took 16 years.

The July 1 killing of Marwa al-Sherbini, 31, stabbed at least 18 times in front of her three-year-old son and her husband, allegedly by a Russian-born German man identified only as Alex W., has provoked outrage in Germany and abroad.

It has also fuelled anti-German sentiment in Islamic countries, notably Iran and Sherbinis native Egypt, where she has been dubbed the œveil martyr as she was wearing a headscarf when she was attacked for apparently racist motives.

Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad blamed the German government for the act, and on the streets, as many as 150 Iranian Islamist students pelted eggs at the German embassy in Tehran chanting œDeath to Germany! Death to Europe!

In Egypt, small demonstrations were held outside the German embassy in Cairo, with protestors accusing the West of Islamophobia and the countrys top cleric declaring her a oemartyr while calling for the maximum penalty for the attacker.

After an initially slow response to the killing, the German government has moved to deflect criticism, with Chancellor Angela Merkel expressing her condolences to Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak.

" Hat tip: TB

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[Hungary: Jobbik MEP Wears Banned Hungarian Guard Uniform in First EP Session](#)

One of the radical nationalist Jobbik partys new representatives in the European Parliament appeared for the first session of the body wearing the uniform of the banned paramilitary arm of his party, the Hungarian Guard, in Strasbourg on Tuesday.

Csanad Szegedi told MTI that his wearing the uniform was to symbolise his commitment to the Guard, the recent ban on which he found oehard to accept and said that he supported reorganisation of the dissolved militia.

Krisztina Morvai and Zoltan Balczo, Jobbiks two other MEPs, were wearing coats associated with 19th-century Hungarian history.

The legally binding ruling banning the Guard was issued by a court of appeal in Budapest on July 2.

The appellate court upheld a decision of December 2007, not long after the Guards first of a series of anti-Roma marches in Tatarszentgyorgy, a village in central Hungary, which later became known for the murder of a Roma man and his young son and other anti-Roma violence.

" Hat tip: heroyalwhyness

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[Hungary: The Return of the Gendarmerie?](#)

There is no reason whatsoever to be surprised over the fact that the Hungarian ultra-right is busy trying to resuscitate all the odious institutions of pre-war times, including the gendarmerie. For those who need to be introduced to, or just reminded of, this tough specialized police force, it was originally created to keep oerorder in the countryside and soon enough acquired a reputation for ruthlessness and freewheeling violence. When the time came, it was also the gendarmerie who carried out the deportation of Jews into the arms of their executioners in Auschwitz and other destinations. Also, they were the ones who attempted a coup against Governor Miklós Horthy in July 1944, from which only a tank division of the military could dissuade them.

But back to our time! Enter Zsolt Lipusz. This unusual name belongs to a successful and respected high school teacher of history in the city of Nyíregyháza. He moonlights as the deputy chief of the local organization of Jobbik and is also the author of incredibly vicious articles, where else, but on www.kuruc.info.hu and of course Szent Korona Rádió (the Radio of the Sacred Crown). Lipusz also advocates the re-establishment of the gendarmerie because, as all ultra-rightists believe, only a super hard organization like that can restore oerorder in a country riddled with oegypsy crime. He nostalgically tells the story of how a couple of gendarmes scared a whole village of Gypsies into submission by just threatening them. None of that fancy-schmancy due process for those gendarmes! He even supplies pictorial support for his assertion, and indeed the picture speaks for itself: No wonder the word oegendarmes was often hyphenated with oeterror: oecsendor-terror. But Lipusz, in keeping with Jobbiks highest desires, calls the picture oheartwarming.

The gendarmerie was not only an instrument of terror in the villages. They were also key players in the Hungarian Holocaust. As an arm of the state, they collected all the worldly possessions of the dispossessed Jews before shepherding them into the ghettos. They made sure that the Jews got no food, water, or any other oecomfort before they were forced into the cattle cars.

Gendarmes escort the deportees in Nagykörös

Gendarmes lead the Jews to the railroad stations

They bring the Jews of Kiskunmajsa to the wagons

And they deliver these children from Transylvania to Auschwitz

If all these oeheroics of the gendarmerie were not enough, one of the highlights of their activities was the occupation of Northern Serbia, particularly Novi Sad (??jvidék), in the winter of 1942. In order to establish a reign of terror that was unknown in those lands before, in only two days in April they murdered several thousand people, male and

female, without respect to age or ethnicity. The number of victims was never firmly established; some estimates are as high as 12,000, but even the lowest is 3,000-4,000. Some victims were rounded up on the frozen river Danube, in which openings in the ice were created by grenades, and the people were shot and tossed into the water through these holes. This was also the work of the gendarmerie:

Novi Sad in 1942

And of course, they were not without a sense of humor. For amusement they humiliated the local rabbi, forcing him to wash their car:

The Jobbik and with them the entire right-wing of the Hungarian political class, with the support of the Catholic Church, is enthusiastically campaigning for the resurrection of the gendarmerie. They believe that this is the only way to restore order to the country. In the meantime, to accomplish that goal, they don't hesitate to break the law and they work feverishly to overturn the present regime at every opportunity they find, because, they claim, the present order is not order. To them only the gendarmerie's order is the true order.

So far this politics has garnered the approval of 15% of the Hungarian electorate and it is rising.

" Hat tip: heroyalwhyness

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[Hungary: Three Radical Nationalists æArrows Arrested on Terrorism Charges](#)

The Central Investigative **Prosecutors** Office and the National Investigation Office detained two men and a woman on Tuesday, accusing them of terrorism and other crimes, the Defence Ministry announced. All three are suspected members of the Hungarian Arrows National Liberation Army.

The Military Security Office provided valuable information on one of those detained, an army employee who is not a soldier. The ministry fired the person immediately.

One suspect was an organiser, and another a trainer for the Hungarian Arrows. The third was the driver when the group threw Molotov cocktails at the home of Free Democrat MP János K???ka on December 16, 2007. The ætrainer participated in pouring petrol on the door of the home of Socialist Zsuzsanna Dér in Duna???jváros and setting it ablaze.

On April 8, four men from the organisation were arrested who were planning a bomb attack on Socialist MP Lászl??? Ecs???di. The man who kept the explosives was also detained one week later.

The man considered the mastermind of the organisation, Gy???rgy Budaházy, was arrested on June 17 and accused of terrorism, abuse of explosives and planning to murder two persons.

" Hat tip: heroyalwhyness

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[Hungary: Police Investigate æNew Magyar Gárda; Former Minister Mulls Banning Jobbik](#)

Budapest Police are looking into who may have violated the law by refounding the outlawed Magyar Gárda after it was dissolved by a court on July 2, police chief József Bencze told Kossuth Rádió. The police have asked **prosecutors** to investigate the **case**.

Leaders of the far right party Jobbik announced on Saturday that the Gárda will be refounded under the name Magyar Gárda Foundation.

æIt is worth considering whether to launch a procedure to dissolve Jobbik, said Péter Bórándy, a justice minister in the Gyurcsány government. The question, he told Népszabadság, is whether Hungary respects the international treaties it has signed that ban the arousal of hatred, adding that the answer appears to be æno.

æAt the moment society is not aware of the disease, and this malicious development is instead tolerated. If authorities are uncertain in managing the violations of law by Jobbik and the Magyar Gárda then the disease will spread very quickly throughout society, Bórándy warned.

The police prevented a public forum of Jobbik and the Magyar Gárda on Budaörs on Saturday, as the event was considered as recruiting for the banned organisation, Jobbik reported on its website.

" Hat tip: heroyalwhyness

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[Hungarian MEP Schmitt Elected Vice President of European Parliament](#)

The Hungarian MEP Pal Schmitt was voted Vice President of European Parliament on Tuesday. Schmitt was nominated by the European Peoples Partys group as one of five candidates for vice president. The EP has 14 Vice Presidents altogether. Schmitt has been a member of the EP since 2004, delegated by Hungary's main opposition Fidesz party. He is the first Hungarian to fill this position.

" Hat tip: heroyalwhyness

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[Hungary: Analysts Say Ban on Magyar Gárda Has Risks for Jobbik](#)

A recent ban on the paramilitary Hungarian Guard could strengthen the grouping in the short term and make it more difficult to keep it in check, analysts said on Tuesday.

The short-term gain in support for the radical nationalist Jobbik party, the Guards founder, could turn into a woe and pose a danger for Jobbik itself by becoming unmanageable in the longer run, an analysis by think tank Political Capital said.

The paramilitary organisation was recently banned by an appellate court for their black uniform, military-type trainings and racially-motivated marches which generated fear especially among the Roma population. The Guard has already held two demonstrations against the ban, one of which ended in a clash with police, and has vowed to reorganise itself in a number of inventive ways.

The Hungarian Guard is likely to continue holding marches regularly to exert its presence, testing and provoking legislators and political actors, the analysts said. They predicted that Jobbik's political control over the Guards activities would lax in the future.

The ban has put Jobbik under considerable pressure, as the Hungarian Guards role as a bridge between the party and the most extreme, splintered groups comes under strain. Jobbik leadership has tried hard to prevent a breakaway, with Jobbik leader Gabor Vona attending a sit-down against the Guards ban, the analysts added.

On the other hand, the government's firm stand against the Guard reflected in the ban and its ensuing implementation backed by police action could help return voters to the ruling Socialist party, the analysts said, adding that polls show a majority of Hungarians approving of the ban.

The main opposition Fidesz party has already encountered difficulties with the strengthening of Jobbik as seen in their good results in the European elections in June, and the ban on the Hungarian Guard could bring more uncertainty to the party's ranks. Although Fidesz has distanced itself from Jobbik and said it would not enter coalition with them if given the chance, there are overlaps in important issues for the two parties where a fight to pull voters continues, the analysts said.

" Hat tip: heroyalwhyness

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[If this Kind of thing is the First Draft of History, I Pity them](#)

Via Blogger Nopasaran!

posted by Joe Noory @ 10:54

This weekend whilst leafing through the news, I found myself looking for written evidence of something I had heard from an international broadcaster which seemed to me like a stunning breakthrough for the slow-moving world of media in Europe. The Polish will actually be privatizing their state-run media. Period. End of story.

The largest communications conduit in their language can no longer ever be commandeered by an elected official. It's a stunning development for an environment like the EU, and exhibits a shockingly high level of trust that a society can have for its population by European standards. I'm quite sure Natalie and Co. are over the moon about it too.

However, as of Sunday, there was little to be found about it from the big news agencies, with one rather schizophrenic report where it is buried in an item about a politician who once associated himself with people who turned out to be garden-variety European neo-fascists.

Adding to the confusion, members of TVP's own supervisory board turned against Farfal last week, suspending him and replacing him with a former deputy. But the government, though keen to oust Farfal, branded that move technically invalid.

Grad accused Farfal and what he called TVP's highly politicised supervisory board of wasting public money.

œThe situation (at TVP) is bad but the easiest way to resolve it is for President Kaczynski to sign the new media bill now waiting on his desk, said Grad.

Apart from making it easier to remove Farfal from his post, the new bill would cut back state funding for public media, scrap Polands national television and radio licence fee and prepare TVP for digitalisation.

With an amazing lack of self awareness the report even made a point of telling us that the two stories were not related, a mere few paragraphs after defaming privatization through association " a strange thing for an international, non-state media racket like Reuters to report.

Its really strange, actually, to see how some reporters minds operate in the vacuum like that. The ideological position held by the inverse of the target of this story is precisely the one normally all about the defending of a potent state media with as little editorial and information gathering competition as possible.

Grad accused Farfal and what he called TVPs œhighly politicised supervisory board of wasting public money.

- something that has never seemed to bother the European left for a moment, so long as it operated in the narrowing of the public realm around the socialist world view, but here we see an interesting development: a nation where the dominant parties in political society in agreement about the role of freedom of speech and the state.

Once you scrape away the statements and the window dressing that comes out of every other state-related media source in Europe, the move by the Poles is as radical as it gets. Compared to the government reigned-in oligarchs that operate Russias supposed œindependent media, it simply stunning.

So the question remains why something that big could be fumbling around with so little relevance in some writers head, that IT isnt the lead item or a story of its own.

Think about it " the French and the ***British*** " two of the societies with a past history of the proponency of freedom of expression, and both with no shortage of understanding of the burden and suspicion that a state-run media can burden a society with STILL have state run media establishments, but Poland is simply disposing of theirs for precisely the right reasons.

But the story gets bound up with a near press-release style political folly. Is it ignorance? An inability to place the meaning of it in any sort of perspective? One can only speculate

" Hat tip: heroyalwhyness

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[*Lithuania OKs Law to Keep Gay Info Away From Kids*](#)

VILNIUS, Lithuania " Lithuanias Parliament on Tuesday approved a censorship bill that aims to keep information about homosexuality away from children, angering gay rights activists who called the measure homophobic.

Vowing to defend family values in the predominantly Catholic nation, lawmakers overturned a presidential veto on the legislation, which bans publicly disseminating material deemed harmful to the mental health and œintellectual or moral development of minors.

The measure lists 19 examples of œdetrimental information, including material that œagitates for homosexual, bisexual, and polygamous relations, instructions on how to make explosives and graphic depictions of violence or death.

It also bars information that gives credence to paranormal phenomena, hypnosis or œpromotes bad eating.

While critics said the text violated the freedom of speech and international standards of human rights, others said the vague wording would make it difficult to enforce.

The text does not define œpublic information in detail, though it makes references to TV programs, films, computer games and advertising as well as online and print media accessible by children.

œThis is absurd. I cannot even imagine how they will implement this law, said Dainius Radzevicius, chairman of the Lithuanian Journalists Union.

Lithuanias former president rejected the bill before he left office last week, but lawmakers voted 87-6 on Tuesday to override his veto. Forty-eight lawmakers either abstained or were absent in the 141-member legislature.

It takes effect after the new president, Dalia Grybauskaite, signs it into law, which she is required to do within three days.

Supporters said the measure was necessary to defend traditional family values in the former Soviet republic of 3.4 million people, which joined the European Union and NATO in 2004.

œWe have finally taken a step which will help Lithuania raise healthy and mentally sound generations unaffected by the rotten culture that is now overwhelming them, said Petras Grazulis, a lawmaker who co-sponsored the bill.

Grazulis, of the right-wing populist Order and Justice Party, is also seeking a total ban of homosexuality in the Baltic country.

Intolerance toward sexual minorities remains strong in many former communist countries in Eastern Europe " not least in the Baltic region..

Lithuania has repeatedly banned gay pride parades. In neighboring Latvia, the annual gay pride parade draws twice as many protesters as supporters. In 2006, gay rights activists in Latvias capital, Riga, were pelted with feces, eggs and insults as police stood idly by.

Boris Dittrich, an advocacy director of the New York-based Human Rights Watch, urged gay and lesbians in Lithuania to challenge the so-called "Law on the Protection of Minors in court.

"The idea behinds this law is quite homophobic, he said. "It's a violation of international human rights standards.

The new bill amends an earlier censorship law that didn't contain any references to homosexuals. It also steps up pressure on the state ethics panel tasked with reviewing questionable content to punish violators with fines, which can be challenged in court.

The text says the nature of the content must be balanced against its "scientific or artistic value or whether there is a public interest in making it broadly available.

" Hat tip: heroyalwhyness

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[Netherlands: PM Softens Stand on Guantanamo Inmates](#)

The Netherlands may be prepared to take several prisoners from the US Guantanamo Bay prison to help ensure the camp is closed down, prime minister Jan Peter Balkenende said on Tuesday.

Speaking after his first formal meeting with US president Barack Obama in Washington, Balkenende said: "if the closure is held up by a couple of prisoners, the Netherlands will see what it can do.

But no proposals were made and no guarantees were given and the problem was discussed in general terms, news agency ANP said.

One of the first promises made by Obama after his election was to close the prison on Cuba where several hundred people have been held without trial.

The Netherlands was a strong opponent of the camp but until now had always refused to consider taking ex-prisoners. But "a solution must be found and the Netherlands will think and work towards that solution, the prime minister said.

G20

During their meeting, Obama invited the Netherlands to join the next G20 summit which takes place in Pittsburg in September.

The Netherlands is not a member of the group, made up of the worlds biggest economies, but was on the guest list for previous summits in Washington and, most recently, London.

Afghanistan

President Obama also praised Dutch military efforts in Afghanistan, saying Dutch soldiers "are some of the most effective in the region.

The president said he recognised the Dutch involvement is controversial and hoped the expertise and experience the Netherlands had built up in the region would remain available even when the Netherlands pulls out next year.

Balkenende repeated that the Netherlands will pull back as a leading nation in the southern province of Uruzgan next year, but emphasised that the Netherlands will not turn its back on Afghanistan, ANP reported.

" Hat tip: TB

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[Northern Ireland Violence the Work of Splinter Group](#)

PETER CAVE: A peace accord more than a decade ago ended most of the violence between Catholics and Protestants that has plagued Northern Ireland for more than 300 years.

But trouble has again erupted, this time at the annual flashpoint " the Orange Order parades.

These marches commemorate the victory of the Protestant King William over Catholics in 1690.

There've been reports of rioting, arson and minor bombings in Northern Belfast and other towns.

(Sound of a riot)

Ben Wellings, convenor of European studies at the Australian National University, told Bronwyn Herbert that the violence is disturbing, but its unlikely to be a sign of returning to the bad old days.

BEN WELLINGS: The Catholic/nationalist/republican community tend to see these marches as provocative whereas the Protestants see them as a right and they march around parts of Ulster in order to kind of say that they have the right to go here even if that part of Ulster is predominately Catholic area and that is where the kind of more recent troubles have come in and what seems to have happened just overnight is that rioting has again broke out in response to these Orange Order marches.

Now, fears of people seeing this kind of violence again that maybe there is a chance that the peace process will be derailed however I dont think there is a lot of community support for a return to that kind of sectarian violence.

BRONWYN HERBERT: Given that the peace accord in 1998 ended most of that violence between Catholic republicans and pro-**British** Protestant groups which plagued Northern Ireland for three decades and killed more than 3,000 people, how disturbing is this development when many would have thought that the days of bombing in Northern Ireland were actually behind us?

BEN WELLINGS: Well, I guess it is a question of what type of bombs. I understand that these are blast bombs that are used and they are sort of, if you like, crowd control weaponry. I dont think that we are seeing a return to the types of bombing that we saw in the 70s, 80s and even in the 90s which resulted in large loss of life.

I think that the political situation is critical but stable might be a good way of describing it.

Because you have got the two most extreme groups from the Protestant side " the Democratic Unionist Party and from the republican side, Sinn Fein " actually locked into a power sharing agreement at Stormont which is Northern Irelands Parliament House, I think that that is actually quite a good outcome because it means that these two extremist groups are not marginalised and they are actually part of the peace process in a way that they werent before 2007 and whilst this has been actually bad news for the more moderate nationalist and unionist parties, I think it does give the hopes of peace a greater chance in Northern Ireland.

I dont think that things like this, whilst they are serious, I dont think they are going to derail the whole peace process.

BRONWYN HERBERT: Sinn Feins Gerry Kelly, now an Irish republican MP has blamed the Real IRA for the trouble in northern Belfast. Would you agree?

BEN WELLINGS: Um, yes. I mean this is some sort of splinter group. I mean I couldnt say for definite whether it is the Real IRA or not but it seems to be some kind of splinter group who have detached themselves from the IRA who they **feel** are too involved in the peace process so it seems to me that this is trouble being caused by a minority of people but it also might suggest that there is still a group of maybe young protesters who are quite keen to riot.

Now, whether they are politically motivated or I mean, I have even seen it referred to as recreational rioting, again is something that may vary from place to place but I do think this is the work of a minority splinter group.

PETER CAVE: Dr Ben Wellings from the Australian National University, speaking there to Bronwyn Herbert.

" Hat tip: heroyalwhyness

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[*Potentially Powerful: The European Defence Agency at Five Years*](#)

EUOBSERVER / COMMENT " Most Europeans have probably never heard of the European Defence Agency, which celebrates its fifth anniversary this month. Yet, this little known EU agency has slowly created a basis for the development of common military projects. While its achievements can certainly not be called spectacular, in the context of the problematic nature of European defence cooperation, the EDA has shown more potential than its predecessors.

Diverging national interests in the areas of procurement and defence industry policies still impede much of the agencys planned progress. Industry takes a front seat in the EDA decision-making process, with easy access to all relevant players though, naturally, it complains about the lack of speed.

Like most developments in the area of European military co-operation, the work of the EDA is happening completely outside the view of the wider general public. The lack of public involvement in an area that is still highly controversial, undermines its legitimacy and risks further erosion of public support for the wider European project.

With a long history of failures to foster European co-operation on arms production and procurement, the establishment of the European Defence Agency (EDA) on 12 July 2004 was received with considerable scepticism. End of the Cold War era

The end of the Cold War era had changed perspectives on European defence, while emerging conflicts across its borders " especially in the Balkans, but also outside Europe " gave a significant impetus to increased military co-operation. European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) developed rapidly. On the legal front, ESDP was foremost in the process towards the EU Constitution, while out-of-area operations have mushroomed over the past few years.

The statement in the Constitution that "Member States shall undertake progressively to improve their military capabilities is directly linked to the establishment of the EDA. It has led many to doubt whether Europe intends to be a friendly military power. Such suspicions have been further fuelled by the EDA mantra that "we need to spend more and to spend better. Its claims that military co-operation would lead to rationalised forces and thus save money, have not proved credible.

Along the same lines, French President Sarkozy has argued that, "Europe cannot be a dwarf in terms of defence and a giant in economic matters. Then Greek Defence Minister Papantoniou said in 2003: "We [Europe] must strengthen our presence, especially in the defence field, in order for the United States to view us seriously. Curiously, he saw the main obstacle being "that after the Cold War there is no strong threat. We have to overcome this problem.

" Hat tip: islam ophobe

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[Spanish Court Drops Charges Against US Soldiers](#)

MADRID " A Spanish court on Tuesday threw out **charges** against three U.S. soldiers in the death of a Spanish journalist in Iraq six years ago and recommended the **case** be closed.

The National Court said investigative magistrate Santiago Pedraz had produced no new evidence to indicate that the soldiers had acted incorrectly, given that they were in a war situation.

The soldiers, members of a tank crew, said they were responding to hostile fire when they shot at a Baghdad hotel housing Western journalists during the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003.

Spanish cameraman Jose Couso was one of two journalists killed in the shooting. The other was Reuters cameraman Taras Portsyt.

Pedraz first **charged** the soldiers in 2007. The National Court threw out that indictment this year, saying the evidence was insufficient and concluded the Couso's death was an accident of war.

But Pedraz reinstated it in May citing new evidence from three Spanish journalists who were at the hotel at the time of the shelling and looking out of a hotel window along with Couso.

These reporters testified that the tank had not come under fire before shooting at the Palestine Hotel.

But in the latest ruling, the National Court said their testimonies provided no new evidence which could lead the court to question the soldiers claims that they believed, rightly or wrongly, they had come under fire, possibly from a sniper.

U.S. officials said investigations had shown the soldiers acted correctly.

The American soldiers " Sgt. Shawn Gibson, Capt. Philip Wolford and Lt. Col. Philip DeCamp " were all from the U.S. 3rd Infantry Division, based in Fort Stewart, Georgia.

Following the incident, then-U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell said American troops had opened fire after hostile fire from the hotel, perhaps from a sniper. He said a U.S. review of the incident found the use of force was justified.

Tuesdays ruling came after state **prosecutors** appealed against Pedraz's decision to reinstate the **charges**.

The court said the latest ruling could not be appealed.

" Hat tip: heroyalwhyness

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[Sweden: "Sackey Wasky Whacks Wallets of Swedish Men](#)

A cunning internet con artist posing as a love-struck woman from Ghana has succeeded in **defrauding** a number of Swedish men of hundreds of thousands of kronor.

Going by the name Sackey Wasky and lurking on the popular Match.com dating site, the fraudster managed to convince hundreds of men to open their wallets for what they thought were pleas for assistance for everything from plane tickets to shipping costs.

The scam was aided by authentic looking passport and visa documents meant to assuage any lingering doubts in the minds of Sackey Waskys unsuspecting targets.

œI must be honest with you that I really miss you so much. Since morning, I have been thinking of you and I really wish we could go out to have some fun, my one and only love, Wasky wrote to one victim, who had requested to see her passport, in email correspondence reviewed by The Local.

œNo matter what happens I will always love you.

The scam was uncovered when a couple of Swedish computer hackers whose friend had been duped by the bogus beauty from western Africa managed to break into the fraudsters email account.

Among the hundreds of emails sent and received by Sackey Wasky, they found payment order confirmations and other evidence of her numerous cons.

Altogether, the hackers estimate that Wasky managed to rake in around half a million kronor (\$64,000) in just the last year, the Aftonbladet newspaper reports.

œShe presents herself under a number of different guises, one of the hackers told the newspaper.

œSometimes shes a poor girl who cant pay for the flight herself. Other times shes well-to-do and has inherited gold from old relatives. But as soon as someone has started to send money, she gets problems and needs more money to travel.

Some email exchanges are written in Norwegian, however, although Wasky explains her linguistic abilities as a result of working in a hotel in Norway, according to Aftonbladet.

However it remains unclear exactly where Sackey Wasky may be based and where he or she may strike next.

" Hat tip: TB

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[Switzerland Offers Legal Assisted Suicide](#)

Some countries allow incurably sick residents to receive medical help to end their lives, but Switzerland also permits foreigners to travel there for assisted suicide. Every year more than 100 terminally ill people from countries that ban the practice travel to Switzerland for assisted suicide.

They typically follow these steps:

Contact an organization that offers assisted suicide to foreigners. Many turn to Dignitas near Zurich.

Dignitas **charges** 10,000 francs (\$9,200) for its services, which include legal arrangements and consultations with a doctor willing to prescribe a lethal dose of barbiturates. The fees are payable in advance.

When ready, the client goes to a room run by Dignitas, lies down on a bed and drinks the barbiturates. Sleep follows in about five minutes and death in a half hour.

The body is removed. Dignitas recommends cremation. It says the ashes can be sent or taken abroad without problem.

Polls have indicated a majority of Swiss support having assisted suicide available to residents of Switzerland, but are uncomfortable with having people travel from other countries for what critics call œsuicide tourism.

" Hat tip: heroyalwhyness

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[UK: Force Uses Stop and Search Power 3,400 Times " But Suspends it After Failing to Make Single Terror Arrest](#)

Of 124,687 Section 44 stop and searches carried out in England and Wales in 2007/8, 87 per cent took place in the Metropolitan Police area

A police force has suspended searches of people under controversial anti-terror laws after shock figures exposed the futility of the legislation.

Hampshire Police conducted 3,481 stop and searches of people under Section 44 of the Terrorism Act in 2007/2008 " but arrested no-one in connection with terror.

The statistics marked a huge increase on 2004/5, when there were only 275 stop and searches under Section 44 by the force, and a large jump from 2006/7 when there were 580.

They are in sharp contrast to similar-sized neighbouring force, Thames Valley, which used the stop and search powers 244 times in 2007/08 making 40 unconnected to terrorism arrests.

The decision to stop implementing the anti-terror laws was welcomed by civil liberties campaigners.

Last month Lord Carlile, the independent reviewer of terror laws, attacked the laws "accusing police of making unjustified and "almost certainly illegal searches of white people to provide "racial balance to Government figures.

In remarks which deepened the controversy surrounding the powers, Lord Carlile said he knew of **cases** where suspects were stopped by officers even though there was no evidence against them.

He warned that police were wasting time and money by carrying out these "self-evidently unmerited searches which were "almost certainly unlawful.

Section 44 is part of the Terrorism Act, 2000.

It gives police the right to stop and search anyone in a defined area without having grounds of "reasonable suspicion.

Some forces have simply designated their entire force area as Section 44 zones giving them limitless powers to search on demand. The right to use the powers has to be renewed every 28 days.

But Hampshire Assistant Chief Constable David Pryde conceded his forces figures on stop and search had made it think again.

"After review, we determined that it would be appropriate to be more in line with other forces, he said. "We now have suspended Section 44 Stop and Search until such time as the perceived threat is raised to the highest level.

Mr Pryde said the figures reflected several factors including the car bomb at Glasgow Airport on June 30, 2007, when the terrorism threat level was raised to critical nationally.

Ministry of Defence Police Section 44 Stop and Search incidents are also recorded under Hampshire and there are a large number of military installations in Hampshire.

However, another neighbouring force, Surrey Police, did use it 2,559 times in 2007/8 but again with no arrests for terrorism recorded.

According to Home Office statistics, 124,687 Section 44 stop and searches were carried out in England and Wales in 2007/08 "almost three times the 41,924 of the previous year.

Eighty seven per cent of the searches took place in the Metropolitan Police area. Just one per cent of suspects were arrested.

James Welch, of Liberty, said: "Hampshire Polices suspension of Terrorism Act stop and search is an extremely welcome step. Normal stop and search powers, triggered by reasonable suspicion, are more than adequate for routine policing and far less likely to alienate law-abiding people.

Chief Constable Craig Mackey, of the Association of Chief Police Officers, said: "Powers to stop and search are an important part of tackling terrorism but should always be used in a proportionate way.

"The use of stop and search by forces is something that is constantly under review. Used correctly, stop and search is a powerful tool that can help protect all our communities from terrorism. "

Hampshire effectively suspended its use of Section 44 on April 22 when it did not re-apply to extend its powers.

The Metropolitan Police is reviewing how Section 44 is used across the whole of the capital, including a pilot of its more restricted use.

Last month Lord Carlile, a Liberal Democrat peer and QC, suggested whites are being needlessly stopped in order to balance the books.

He said: "If, for example, 50 blonde women are stopped who fall nowhere near any intelligence-led terrorism profile, its a gross invasion of the civil liberties of those 50 blonde women.

"The police are perfectly entitled to stop people who fall within a terrorism profile even if it creates a racial imbalance as long as it is not racist.

Read more: #ixzz0LMgksiNw&C

" Hat tip: heroyalwhyness

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[UK: Muslim Convert Jailed Over Blackmail Plot to "Expose Friend as Terrorist Sympathiser](#)

A woman was jailed for four years today after blackmailing her Muslim friend by threatening to expose her as a terrorist sympathiser.

Mary-Nona Sturges forced 21-year-old student Nabilah Hussain to hand over at least £3,200 by claiming to have a recording of a row the pair had about the 2005 terrorist attacks in London.

Sturges, 54, of Totnes, Devon, claimed to have taped Miss Hussain saying "the **British** deserve what they get and threatened to take it to the police unless she was given money.

Sturges, herself a Muslim convert, was found guilty following a three-week trial at Truro Crown Court of three counts of blackmail and three counts of deception in September and October 2006.

She was sentenced to four years for each count, to run concurrently, and ordered to pay the Hussain family £3,200 compensation and legal costs of £8,500.

Judge Paul Darlow told Sturges that blackmail was a "wicked and ugly crime and she had "grossly betrayed Miss Hussains trust.

He said: "This was a sustained campaign lasting five to six weeks, a campaign where you used her religious beliefs and ethnicity to isolate and frighten her.

"The motive must have been one of sheer greed.

The judge said Sturges knew the Hussain family were "hard-working, modestly-paid people and she had extracted money "they could barely afford.

During the trial, prosecuting barrister Llewellyn Sellick said Sturges told Miss Hussain to get her family in Woking, Surrey, to pay various sums of money escalating from £200.

When they became suspicious, her father travelled to Devon and the police were informed.

The court heard that, during the time of the offences, more than £7,000 was transferred into Miss Hussains bank account and she withdrew around £9,000.

Sturges, a gift shop owner, was acquitted of three counts of blackmail relating to money handed over before Miss Hussains family were involved.

Miss Hussain told the court she was completely convinced by the deception due to the "emotional and psychological hold Sturges had over her.

Detective Constable Jo Aldridge, of Devon and Cornwall Police, said it was a complex investigation into a "despicable crime.

She said: "Justice has been served.

"We are very pleased with the compensation allocated to the family.

"The punishment fits the crime.

" Hat tip: heroyalwhyness

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[UK: Number of People Suffering From Swine Flu Symptoms Rises by Nearly 50 Per Cent in a Week](#)

The number of people suffering from the symptoms of swine flu has risen by nearly 50 per cent in a week.

The highest rates of reported illness are in children aged five to 14, according to a data sample of GPs surgeries.

The report shows that up to 40,000 people visited their doctor last week with flu-like symptoms in England and Wales.

Alarm: Parents leave St Catherines Catholic School in West Drayton after an emergency meeting following the death of pupil Chloe Buckley

Of five-14-year-olds, 160 of every 100,000 in this age group reported symptoms, followed by 114 per 100,000 of 0 to four-year-olds.

Across all all age groups, the rate of people with symptoms increased to 73.4 **cases** for every 100,000, compared to 50.3 **cases** per 100,000 the week before.

This is a 46 per cent rise, The Times Online reports.

The figures, from the Royal College of GPs (RCGP), are based on a sample of 84 doctors surgeries across the country.

Although they do not provide a total of confirmed **cases** of swine flu, they are used by the Government as an official measure of how the outbreak is spreading.

The figures come after it has been revealed that children under the age of 16 and pregnant women will be among the first to receive the swine flu vaccine when it arrives.

On the NHS draft priority list are people with conditions like asthma, diabetes, heart, liver or kidney disease, or a suppressed immune system.

Pregnant women in their second or third trimester are also on the list, as are frontline health workers and children aged from three to 16.

Today the Government insisted that the vaccine would begin arriving by the end of August amid growing fears that the development of the drug was falling behind schedule.

The UK is in line to get around 60 million doses of the vaccine " enough to cover half the population " by the end of December, with the rest of the doses following next year.

However, there is expected to be some delay between when the manufacturers, Baxter and GlaxoSmithKline (GSK), deliver the supplies and people receive their first vaccinations.

The jab has to be approved by the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) and the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) before it can be used.

Draft priority list for swine flu vaccine

Children aged from three to 16 years

Pregnant women in their second and third trimester

Health and social care workers directly involved in patient care

Other health and social care workers

People aged 65 years and over

People with health risks, such as asthma, diabetes, heart problems; and those with suppressed immune systems

A spokeswoman for the Department of Health said: "The manufacturers have told us that they will be delivering the first supplies of the vaccine at the end of August.

"This is not the Department of Health's schedule " it is led by the manufacturers.

"The vaccine will also need to satisfy regulatory requirements before it can be used.

"We have contracts with manufacturers to supply enough vaccine for the whole population once it has been developed.

"These contracts were set up some time ago to ensure we are first in the queue.

"Creating a new vaccine is a complex scientific procedure but based on the manufacturers current forecast, we expect to have around 60 million doses by the end of the year.

"These predictions are as accurate as possible considering that manufacturers are dealing with the production and testing of complex biological products.

The comments come after the head of the World Health Organisation said a swine flu vaccine may be further away than has been claimed.

Director general Dr Margaret Chan said: "There's no vaccine. One should be available soon, in August. But having a vaccine available is not the same as having a vaccine that has been proven safe.

"Clinical trial data will not be available for another two to three months.

The war of words over the vaccine came as it emerged that hundreds of doctors are preparing to come out of retirement to help deal with the swine flu epidemic.

The **British** Medical Association has drawn up a database of 342 former GPs and consultants who will be brought in to treat patients should the situation get any worse.

They will be given a temporary certificate to practice by the General Medical Council that would come into effect immediately.

NHS Direct also released new figures today on the number of calls it is answering about swine flu.

Last night experts warned that around one in 200 of the people who contract the severest **cases** of swine flu could die.

Officially, 17 Britons have now died from swine flu while tens of thousands are thought to have been infected.

Two of the victims appeared to have no health problems before contracting the virus.

But researchers have said that the number of people who have died from the disease in the UK may already be far higher.

Writing in the ***British*** Medical Journal (BMJ), researchers from Imperial College London have also said that it is difficult to accurately estimate how many people have come down with the disease.

Professor Azra Ghani said the number of people who have died "could well be higher than 17.

Natural causes: Police confirmed that Dr Michael Day, 64, did not die from swine flu as was first suspected

And she added that Health Secretary Andy Burnham's declaration that 100,000 people a day could be diagnosed with swine flu by the end of August is a "reasonable assessment.

Current estimates are that 0.5 per cent " or one in 200 " people who are ill enough to seek medical help will die as a result of swine flu.

Commenting on the likely death rate from the disease, Chief Medical Officer Sir Liam Donaldson told the BBC: "We just haven't seen enough ***cases*** in this country to give an accurate figure.

"We're tracking the pandemic very closely and scientists are looking at the virus to see if there are any signs of mutation " we haven't seen anything of that.

"It's still an emerging profile so putting a figure on the death rate is premature.

"But the longer it goes on " as the virus passes through more and more people " you do have to be alert to it changing.

"But provided it stays within the present strain then it will probably produce a similar profile of illness.

Between 30 per cent to 35 per cent of people could come down with the virus this winter, he said.

Previous estimates have been that up to half the population could get infected.

"The virus will not just be here for one winter " previous pandemics have been around three, four, five years, he added.

Yesterday, the parents of a healthy six-year-old who died from swine flu spoke of their heartache yesterday at losing their "fun-loving baby girl.

Chloe Buckley died within 48 hours of complaining of a sore throat and just one day before she was due to celebrate her seventh birthday.

Family home: The house in West Drayton, London, where Chloe Buckley lived with her two brothers and parents, who have since released a statement speaking of their grief

A post-mortem examination will show whether Chloe was healthy before she contracted the virus " or whether she was suffering from an underlying, and undiagnosed, health problem.

Her death last Thursday at St Marys Hospital in Paddington, West London, triggered alarm among parents and a flood of calls to the NHS flu helpline.

Yesterday police said Dr Michael Day, a 64-year-old GP from Bedfordshire, did not die from swine flu as was first suspected.

A post-mortem showed he died from "natural causes while sources said he died from a blood clot to his lungs.

He also suffered from heart disease and high blood pressure, and had viral pneumonia.

Doctors last night stressed that most people with swine flu suffer only mild symptoms. They repeated their calls for those with flu-like symptoms to stay away from hospitals and GP surgeries and phone for advice.

Chloe's parents Michael and Jacinta said they were satisfied with the medical care their daughter received.

There had been reports that Chloe was not given the anti-viral drug Tamiflu after her doctor misdiagnosed her illness as tonsillitis.

In a statement her parents said: "We are obviously very distressed at the loss of our fun-loving baby girl.

"Nothing can replace her in our lives and we would plead with you to allow us to deal with our loss in private and without further intrusion.

They added: "We are satisfied that the medical care Chloe received at all times was appropriate.

Chloe was a pupil at St Catherine's School in West Drayton, West London, where teachers called an emergency meeting last Thursday evening.

Chris Spencer, director of education and children's services at Hillingdon Borough Council, said the school would close early for the summer.

Health Secretary Andy Burnham sought to reassure worried parents. Chloe's death was a "tragedy but "lots of children had suffered from swine flu and had made a full recovery.

"People do need to keep it in perspective " lots of children have already had swine flu and have made a very quick recovery and, obviously, in the early stages we saw lots of school closures, he said.

"There have been lots of children already having the condition but making a very quick and full recovery.

" Hat tip: heroyalwhyness

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[UK: Police Officer ~Attacked by 40-Strong Mob After He Told Teenage Girl to Pick Up Burger Wrapper](#)

A police officer described today how he was attacked by a mob after asking a schoolgirl to pick up a burger wrapper.

PC Anthony Smith was surrounded by up to 40 people after confronting the teenager in a shopping precinct in Croydon, south London.

The towns Crown Court heard how the 15-year-old exploded into a frenzy of violence and screamed abuse as PC Smith tried to speak to her friend.

The beat officer told a jury he was suddenly grabbed by the throat from behind and pulled to the ground before being kicked and stamped on.

He was targeted by members of the crowd as the girl grappled with his colleague, PC Perry Lathwood, before repeatedly punching him in the face.

The teenager then jumped on the second officers back and bit his shoulder, inflicting a wound through his protective vest, the court heard.

The girl, who cannot be named because of her age, and two men went on trial today accused of violent disorder. They all deny the offence.

" Hat tip: JD

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[UK: Watchdog Bans Israeli Tourism Advert](#)

LONDON (AFP) " An advertising watchdog Wednesday banned an Israeli tourism poster that implied the West Bank and Gaza Strip territories were undisputed parts of the country.

The posters, featuring a boy snorkelling with dolphins, were placed on Londons Underground train stations, as part of an Israeli tourism campaign.

They carried the slogan œfew countries pack so much variety into such a small space as Israel and a contested map that sparked more than 400 complaints from pro-Palestinian groups and members of the public.

The Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) upheld the complaints, saying the map implied that the two territories were an undisputed part of Israel.

œWe understood that the borders and status of the occupied territories of the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and Golan Heights were the subject of much international dispute, the ASA said in a statement on Wednesday.

œAnd because we considered that the ad implied that those territories were part of the State of Israel, we concluded that the ad was misleading.

Israels ministry of tourism said the map was œnot meant to carry any political messages, the ASA said.

The ministry also pointed out that the aim of the map was to show œareas that could be practically reached and visited when travelling there.

But the ASA said border lines for the Gaza Strip and the West Bank were faint and œdifficult to distinguish on the map.

The Israelis and Palestinians revived peace negotiations at an international conference in November 2007, but the talks were put on ice after Israel launched its war on Gaza in December.

The Palestinians have said they will not return to the negotiating table unless Israel freezes all settlement activity in occupied territories, one of the main obstacles in the peace process.

" Hat tip: heroyalwhyness

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[Serbia: Eleven Muslims Jailed for Terror Plots](#)

Belgrade, 3 July (AKI) " A special Belgrade court on Friday sentenced 11 members of a radical Islamic Wahabi movement to more than 60 years in prison after they were found guilty of planning terrorist activities and illegal weapons possession.

Fifteen members of the group were arrested in Serbias southern Sandzak region, which has a substantial Muslim population.

The trial started in January last year but 12 members of the group refused to engage defence lawyers, saying they did not recognise a Serbian court and could be judged only by Allah.

Leader of the group, Senad Ramovic, was sentenced to 13 years, while another ten members received from six months to eight years in jail. Three members of the group were acquitted and one is being tried separately.

The group operated a terrorist training camp on Ninaja mountain near Sandzaks regional centre of Novi Pazar and police discovered a large cache of weapons, explosives and ammunition at the camp.

Police also discovered maps and photos of buildings they were planning to blow up including the US embassy in Belgrade.

According to the indictment, the group also planned to kill the head of Islamic Community in Sandzak Muamer Zukorlic, after accusing him of being a CIA agent.

Zukorlic testified at the trial that he had heard about a plot against his life, but pressed no **charges** and said he had forgiven his would-be assassins.

The Wahabi ideology is a conservative form of Sunni Islam attributed to 18th century Saudi scholar Muhammad ibn Abd-al-Wahhab.

It was brought to the Balkans by thousands of mujahadeen fighters who came to fight in support of Bosnian Muslims during the 1992-1995 civil war in Bosnia.

Experts say the number of Wahabis in Bosnia and other Muslim regions of the Balkans is still relatively small.

" Hat tip: C. Cantoni

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[Spain: Survey on Euro-Med Policies](#)

(ANSAméd) " MADRID, JULY 13 " On the first anniversary of the Mediterranean Union, Barcelona, the host of the organisations headquarters, has started an extensive survey among international experts to take the pulse of Euro-Mediterranean politics. The European Institute for the Mediterranean (IEMed) will carry out a survey for the European Commission based on 200 questions each year over the coming four years. The project costs 420,000 euros, according to IEMed sources. The first 3,100 questionnaires, in French, English, Spanish and Catalan, have been sent out to diplomats, representatives of central and regional governments, trade unionists, activists, businessmen, NGO leaders and international experts. The goal of the project is to assess how much progress has been made and the goals that haven't been achieved since the Barcelona Process, which 14 years ago marked the start of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership as a first step towards the creation of the Mediterranean Union. The questionnaire was developed by Erwan Lannon, an expert in European legislation of the Open University of Brussels, and Ivan Martin, economist and researcher of the Instituto Complutense for International Studies. A sample of some of the questions: What should be the priorities of the Euro-Mediterranean University? What is your opinion of the level of women's participation in this process? What do you think are the problems the Euro-Mediterranean Association has to face to reach its goals? Based on the results of this survey, which will be completed by December, a report will be drawn up to be presented to the European Parliament and the leadership of the European Commission and Presidency, which will be Spain in the first half year of 2010. (ANSAméd).

" Hat tip: Insubria

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[Algeria: Female General Appointed for First Time](#)

(ANSAméd) " ALGIERS, JULY 6 " For the first time in Algeria's history, a woman has been appointed general. Algerian APS agency has reported that Aardjoun Fatma-Zohra, the colonel in **charge** of the central hospital of the Popular National Army, has been promoted to the rank of general by President Abdelaziz Bouteflika, who is also the Minister for Defence and the head of the armed forces. The ceremony took place on Saturday in Algiers on the occasion of the 47th anniversary of independence. Four generals were promoted to the rank of major general and 17 colonels became generals. (ANSAméd).

" Hat tip: Insubria

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[UN: Gaddafi for Permanent African Seat on Security Council](#)

(ANSAmед) " SHARM EL-SHEIKH (EGYPT), JULY 15 " Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi has called for Africa's right for a permanent place in the United Nations Security Council. "The current situation at the UN is suffering from a clear imbalance of forces, because the entire Southern Hemisphere is not represented, including Southern Asia, Africa and Latin America, Gaddafi stated at the 15th Non-Aligned Movement Summit. "A permanent seat at the UN is Africa's right after the sacrifices made by its people during the long fight against colonialism, added the Libyan leader, according to whom "no one should contest this right. "The Non-Aligned Movement represents the world, we are the UN because we number 115 of a total of 180 in the United Nations, Gaddafi went on to say. (ANSAmед).

" Hat tip: Insubria

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[Lieberman to Solana, No to Forced Solution](#)

(ANSAmед) " JERUSALEM, JULY 13 " Israel has rejected the proposal put forward by EU foreign policy chief Javier Solana for future recognition of a Palestinian state from the international community in the absence of a specific agreement with the Jewish state. "A peace agreement cannot originate from anything but direct negotiations, said Israeli Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman on Radio Jerusalem, "and it certainly cannot be forced. According to the minister neither the United States or the European Union intend to impose a solution regarding the issue. Referring to the words used by Solana, Lieberman affirmed that "there is no need to attach excessive importance to a diplomat whose term is coming to an end. The Foreign Ministry has instead released a statement confirming that it is the attempt to set a date beforehand for the recognition of a Palestinian state that risks having negative effects on direct negotiations. Even yesterday the Israeli Premier, Benjamin Netanyahu, asked the Palestinian President, Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) to organise a meeting in the short term, but so far the Palestinian Authority has not expressed interest. (ANSAmед).

" Hat tip: Insubria

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[New Details Emerge About Hamas "Murder Plot](#)

Jerusalem, 3 July (AKI) " Hamas activists arrested by the Palestinian Authority have admitted to tracking the movements of Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas in a bid to assassinate him, PA sources told Israeli daily Haaretz.

"Hamas intention was to scuttle the reconciliation talks [between Hamas and Fatah] in Cairo and to create chaos in the West Bank, in contrast to the sense of security that has characterised the territory for the past two years, the spokesman of the West Bank-ruling Fatah movement Fahmi Zarir told Haaretz.

On Monday, Palestinian Authority secretary Taib Abd-Arahim had said earlier this week that PA security forces had arrested 10 Hamas members who were allegedly planning to attack PA institutions.

Haaretz said the detainees admitted they were planning to assassinate several PA officials on 1 July.

According to the PA sources, the Hamas activists were caught with weapons, maps and photos of senior Palestinian officers.

Confessions extracted by Palestinian security forces revealed that the suspects also planned to assassinate several PA officials.

The Hamas cell had three to five members, between the ages of 25 and 30.

However, a spokesman of the Islamist movements military wing, the Ezzedine al-Qassam Brigades has denied the claims.

Fatah, the group who controls the West Bank, and Hamas, who controls the Gaza Strip have been divided by a serious rift since Hamas took control of the coastal territory by force in mid-2007 after Abbas dissolved a Hamas-Fatah unity government in June 2007.

Hamas won a surprise victory in the Palestinian parliamentary elections in 2006.

However, it immediately faced widespread international political opposition and an economic boycott from western powers including the European Union due to its refusal to comply with three conditions: recognition of Israel, rejection of violence and respect for previous accords between Israel and the Palestinians.

" Hat tip: C. Cantoni

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[Palestinian Authority Closes Al-Jazeera in West Bank](#)

The Palestinian Authority ordered the closure of Al-Jazeera television in the occupied West Bank on Wednesday for airing false information, the government said in a statement.

The information ministry said that it was taking the Qatar-based satellite channel to court over a report that it aired the previous day and that its operations in the West Bank would be suspended in the meantime.

The move comes after Al-Jazeera aired a story on Tuesday in which Faruq Kaddumi, a senior member of the Palestine Liberation Organization, accused president Mahmud Abbas of collaborating with Israel to kill veteran Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat in 2004.(AFP)

Beirut, 15 Jul 09, 13:09

" Hat tip: heroyalwhyness

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[PNA Blacks Out Al Jazeera, 'Lies About Arafat Death](#)

(ANSAm) " RAMALLAH, JULY 15 " The Palestinian National Authority (PNA) yesterday ordered the temporary closing of the Al Jazeera office in the West Bank, accusing the pan-Arab Qatari network of gathering provocations and spreading lies, particularly regarding suspicions of a conspiracy surrounding the death of Yasser Arafat, Al Jazeera sources in the Palestinian territories told ANSA. According to these sources, the network's office in Ramallah has received an official letter from the PNA, in which the Authority orders the closing of the office, the suspension of all its activities in the West Bank and the revocation of press credentials. Al Jazeera has been accused of deliberately making incitements. It seems that the airing of the statements by Faruk Kaddumi " the radical rebel PLO leader who has always been against the Oslo peace agreements " has angered the Palestinian leaders. Kaddumi accused PNA President Mahmoud Abbas of bringing about Arafat's death (in November 2004), conspiring with men of his entourage and with Israel to poison him. Lies, the PNA accused, which the network allegedly has provoked and deliberately used. (ANSAm).

" Hat tip: Insubria

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[Qaddoumi Drops a Bombshell](#)

RAMALLAH, West Bank: The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) on Tuesday harshly criticized Farouk Qaddoumi, secretary-general of Fatah, for accusing President Mahmoud Abbas of involvement in the alleged poisoning of Yasser Arafat.

The PLO said in a statement that as part of Qaddoumi's efforts to disrupt the sixth convention of Fatah, he made hysterical remarks to reporters during his visit to Amman in the last two days.

Qaddoumi said that Abbas and Fatah strongman Mohammed Dahlan were involved in poisoning Arafat. He said that the minutes of a joint Palestinian-Israeli-American meeting held in early March 2004 proved that the two were involved in the poisoning of Arafat and the assassination of Hamas leader Abdul Aziz Al-Rantisi.

Qaddoumi said the meeting was attended by Abbas, Dahlan, former Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, his Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz and an American delegation led by William Burns.

Those who attended the meeting planned to assassinate a number of Hamas and Islamic Jihad leaders, Qaddoumi said, adding that the minutes of that meeting were sent to him by Arafat himself.

The Fatah official said that he was coming out with the disclosure now to warn Palestinian factions of what is being hatched against them. The PLO said that these allegations are the invention of a man who has lost political and psychological balance.

Arafat's death in November 2004 in a military hospital near Paris triggered rumors that he had been poisoned. French doctors said the 75-year-old died from a massive brain hemorrhage but could not explain what prompted it. Arafat's widow, Suha, refused to allow an autopsy.

Accusations have since been routinely directed at the Israeli government which saw Arafat as an obstacle to peace, putting him under house arrest in Ramallah and allegedly talked of eliminating him. Israel has strongly denied any involvement in his death.

Arafat became ill in October 2004 and was flown from his Ramallah headquarters to France. He died a few weeks later.

Arafat is seen as a national hero and was the first to give the Palestinian cause a legitimate voice on the world stage. His photograph still adorns homes, offices and public buildings in the Palestinian Authority-controlled West Bank.

" Hat tip: heroyalwhyness

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[What Happened to the Suicide Bombers of Jerusalem?](#)

Nasty, fanatical old men, not human emotions, decided who died and when.

It is sometimes important to write about the things that are not happening and the dogs that are not barking.

To do so, of course, can provide an easy hostage to fortune, which is why a lot of columnists prefer not to risk it. For all I know, some leering fanatic is preparing to make me look silly even as I write. But I ask anyway: Whatever happened to the suicide bombers of Jerusalem?

Its not that long since the combination of self-immolation and mass murder was a regular event on Israeli soil. Different people drew radically different conclusions from the campaign, which had a nerve-racking effect not just on Israeli Jews but on Israeli Arabs and Druze"who were often among the casualties"and on visiting tourists. It was widely said by liberals, including people as eminent as Tony Blairs wife, Cherie Blair, that the real cause of such a lurid and awful tactic was despair: the reaction of a people under occupation who had no other avenue of expression for their misery and frustration.

Well, surely nobody will be so callous as to say that there is less despair among Palestinians today"especially since the terrible events in the Gaza Strip and the return to power of the Israeli right wing as well as the expansion of Jewish-zealot settler activity. And yet there is no graph on which extra despair can be shown to have eventuated in more suicide. Indeed, if there is any correlation at all, it would seem to be in reverse. How can this be?

Of the various alternative explanations, one would be the success of the wall or œfence that Israel has built or is building, approximating but not quite conforming to the œgreen line of the 1967 frontier. Another would be the ruthless campaign of œtargeted assassinations, whereby Israeli agents took out important leaders of Hamas and Islamic Jihad, the two organizations most committed to œmartyrdom operations.. A third might be the temporary truces or cease-fires to which Hamas (but not Islamic Jihad) have from time to time agreed.

But, actually, none of these would explain why the suicide campaign went into remission. Or, at least, they would not explain why it went into remission if the original cause was despair!

" Hat tip: islam ophobe

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[Demography: Jordan; Population Increase Tenfold in 50 Years](#)

(ANSAmEd) " ROMA, 13 LUG " The Jordan population, in the last fifty years, has increased ten folds, steading, today, around 5.8 millions of inhabitants. Is this the datum that refer, today, Jordans Department of Statistics, publishing his demographic elaboration on the country. An impressive growth, that mainly come from waives of immigrations from neighbouring countries, particularly from Palestine, Lebanon, Syria and Iraq. Infact the majority of the population is settled by palestinian, that, even if naturalized, dont avail of the fundamental political and civil rights. (ANSAmEd)

" Hat tip: Insubria

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[Syria: Signers of Damascus Declaration Sentenced in Appeal](#)

(ANSAmEd) " BEIRUT, JULY 14 " The appeal court of Damascus today confirmed the sentence of two and a half years in prison for 12 Syrian dissidents who have signed a document in which they ask for œdemocratic and radical change in the country, reported the Organisation for Human Rights in Syria (Ondus). In a statement, the organisation specifies that the appeal lodged by the lawyers of former MP Riad Seif, of doctors Fidaa Hurani and Walid al Bunni, of writer Ali Abdallah, of leader writer Fayez Sara, of lawyer Akram al Bunni, of Ahmad Taame, Jabr al Shufi, Yasser al Itti, Muhammad Darwish, Marwan al Ish, Talal Abu Dan has been rejected. The 12 accused, sentenced in October 2008, in 2005 signed the œDamascus Declaration, a public document written by representatives of the community, the secular opposition and by others of the Muslim movement in exile in London. The movement has remained active and was tolerated by the Syrian authorities until January 2008, when the main members of the movement were arrested after the election of its leadership. œThis is a political sentence based on

an investigation carried out by the security services in an attempt to silence the voices of democracy the Ondus statement reads. (ANSAmEd).

" Hat tip: Insubria

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[Turkish PM Holds Surprise Meeting on Terror](#)

Turkish Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan came together with several other members of the Cabinet in a surprise meeting on Wednesday in Ankara as one of the participants said the meeting focused on the fight against terror. Erdoğan met with his deputy Cemil Çiçek, Economy Minister Ali Babacan, Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu, Justice Minister Sadullah Ergin and Interior Minister Bepir Atalay in his office in Ankara.

Çiçek told reporters that the fight against terror was discussed in the meeting. æIf you have noticed, the ministers that attended the meeting are also members of the MGK [National Security Council] he said. æThe agenda of this meeting is security, and specifically the terror issue. We have made assessments in light of the latest MGK meeting.

The surprise meeting came as the Turkish president urged the government to take steps to soothe the militarys concerns after he approved a law that allows military personnel to be tried in civilian courts in peace time. Some TV channels earlier speculated that the top officials met to discuss the long-delayed appointment of prosecutors and judges.

" Hat tip: heroyalwhyness

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[Caucasus Talks Wont Resolve Issues, Says Armenian Official](#)

As the presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan prepare for another round of peace talks Friday, a former deputy to the Armenian ambassador in Moscow has said negotiations will fail to resolve the long-standing Nagorno-Karabakh dispute.

Dr. Stepan Grigorian, who has also been an adviser to the Armenian Foreign Ministry, told the Hürriyet Daily News & Economic Review that Russia, which is hosting the Caucasus peace talks, does not want reconciliation in the Karabakh dispute. He also said he thought attempts by Matt Bryza, U.S. deputy assistant secretary of state for European and Eurasian affairs, for a solution were superficial and inadequate.

Presidents Serge Sarkisian of Armenia and Ilham Aliyev of Azerbaijan met in November for talks near Moscow, as Russia cast itself as peacemaker after its August war with Georgia. Russian President Dmitry Medvedev said Armenia and Azerbaijan had made progress toward a resolution. Mediators from the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, who have been monitoring peacemaking efforts, had also reported in early May that they saw signs of progress.

Nagorno-Karabakh is an enclave in Azerbaijan that has been occupied by Armenian forces since the end of a six-year conflict that killed about 30,000 people and displaced 1 million before a truce was reached in 1994. Its unilateral independence is not recognized by the international community. Turkey closed its border with Armenia in 1993 in support of Azerbaijan in the conflict.

Past policies:

Despite the promising signals from the peace negotiations, Grigorian said he believed Fridays meeting between Sarkisian and Aliyev would not provide a breakthrough in the Karabakh problem, which he said had become more complicated due to the flawed policies of Armenias second President Robert Kocharian.

æSince Kocharian himself was from Karabakh, he wanted to rule Armenia and the disputed region together. He advocated Karabakh independence. But this perception made the situation more difficult, he said.

Evaluating the Russian mediation of the talks, Grigorian said he did not believe Moscow was honest about a clear solution to the dispute, adding: æRussia just pursues its own interest in the negotiations. Therefore, a solution will not be possible unless the interests of Russia, along with the U.S., have been met.

According to Grigorian, Russia wants to be the only power in the Caucasus region and a possible deal between Yerevan and Baku means waning Russian influence in both former Soviet countries. Recalling Russias recognition of the Georgian rebel regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, Grigorian said that like the international community Russia had never recognized the independence of Karabakh.

œArmenia thinks Russia will always be the protector country, but this is a big mistake. Russias stance on Karabakhs independence should be an important lesson for Armenia, he said.

Criticism of optimism:

Grigorian said he thought attempts by Bryza for a solution were left wanting. œIt is hard to understand the optimism of Bryza on the Karabakh issue. Optimistic statements raise expectations and that is extremely wrong. Bryza does not know the area well enough and this is a great danger.

He also suggested that rushing the process might pose grave risks to the region and could even lead to another war, which would cause instability not only in the Caucasus but also in the Middle East.

Grigorian said among all EU nations, only the policies of France were similar to the Russian stance œbecause of the French hostility toward Turkey.

œFrance does not want Turkish-Armenian relations improved, he said, adding: œAnkara is seeking a deal with the Armenians that will open the EUs doors to Turkey. However, France does not want to see Turkey among the EU family.

As a result the key to a solution is in the hands of the Armenian and Azerbaijani people, Gregorian said, adding that they should be further informed because both societies were not ready for the solution process yet.

Gregorian said he also believed Turkey might play an active role in the process by establishing dialogue with Armenia. But warned: œLike Cyprus, the Karabakh problem is not one that can be solved quickly.

" Hat tip: heroyalwhyness

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[*Russian Activist Found Murdered*](#)

A prominent Russian human rights activist, Natalia Estemirova, has been found dead in the North Caucasus.

She was bundled into a van and abducted as she left her home in Chechnya on Wednesday morning, a colleague said. Her body was found in Ingushetia.

The Russian President Dmitry Medvedev expressed œoutrage at the murder, and ordered a top-level investigation.

Ms Estemirova had been investigating human rights abuses in Chechnya for the independent Memorial group.

Memorial is one of Russias best known rights groups, working to document Soviet-era abuses and those taking place more recently, especially in Chechnya.

In recent months, she had been gathering evidence of a campaign of house-burnings by government-backed militias.

Forcefully taken

Ms Estemirova, who was 50 according to Russian **prosecutors**, had worked in the past with the activists Anna Politkovskaya, who was shot dead in 2006, and Stanislav Markelov, who was killed in January this year.

In 2007 she was awarded the inaugural Anna Politkovskaya Prize, and had also received awards from the Swedish and European parliaments, Memorial said.

In a statement the group said she œwas forcefully taken from her house into a car and shouted that she was being kidnapped at about 0830 local time (0430 GMT).

" Hat tip: islam ophobe

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[*US Hails Karabakh Peace Talks as "Breakthrough"*](#)

Ahead of the Armenian and Azerbaijani presidents key meeting in Russia, US mediator of the Minsk Group Matt Bryza tells the Daily News that the strengthening dialogue has brought mediation efforts to a "new and hopeful level and welcomes Moscows contributions

The United States has welcomed the progress in the peace process between regional rivals Armenia and Azerbaijan concerning the disputed Nagorno-Karabakh territory.

œThere is a real breakthrough in negotiations, said Matt Bryza, U.S. deputy assistant secretary of state for European and Eurasian affairs. The U.S. official on Monday attended the European Unions flagship Nabucco natural gas pipeline project signing ceremony in Ankara, where he spoke to the Hürriyet Daily News & Economic Review.

Together with Russia and France, the United States is co-chairing an international panel, the Minsk Group of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, or OSCE, which has sought to mediate the dispute between the two countries.

The presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan are due to meet in Russia on Friday for the sixth time in 13 months and the third time in three months.

œThe OSCE Minsk Groups mediation of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is accelerating. † The increasing pace of their meetings reflects a strengthening of the dialogue between the presidents, Bryza said.

œThese factors have brought our mediation effort to a new and hopeful level. We hope the presidents meeting on July 17 will build on the important progress they made in St. Petersburg on June 4, and clear the way to finalize the set of basic principles proposed by the Minsk Group co-chairs in Madrid in November 2007.

He stressed President Barack Obama and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton were providing their personal support to his efforts as the U.S. mediator.

œThe three Minsk Group co-chairs, from the United States, Russia, and France, work together as a strong and collaborative team. We welcome the important and positive contributions by Russian President Medvedev, said Bryza.

In recent remarks marking the most revealing announcement to date on the details of the peace process, Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev said the Armenian pullback from five territories was reflected in the Minsk Groups proposals and only after the complete withdrawal could there be discussion about the status of Karabakh.

œThe question of the phased withdrawal of Armenian forces from occupied territories outside Nagorno-Karabakh is the first stage. Immediately after the signing of agreements, troops are slated to be withdrawn from five regions, Aliyev was quoted as saying, adding that the withdrawal of forces from the two regions would take place five years after the initial pull back.

While in London on Monday, Aliyev, who did not attend the Nabucco signing ceremony in Ankara, instead sending his energy minister Natic Aliyev, said Nagorno-Karabakh would never be recognized as an independent country.

” Hat tip: heroyalwhyness

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[*US Navy, Georgian Coast Guard Conduct Training Exercises on American Ship in Show of Support*](#)

Wearing traditional costumes, common for all Caucasian ethnic groups, local residents welcome Russian President Dimity Medvedev, right, during a ceremony marking his arrival in Tsinkhvali, the main city of the breakaway Georgian region of South Ossetia, Monday, July 13, 2009. Medvedev visited South Ossetia on Monday in a trip apparently designed to assert Russias ties to the region and dash Georgias hopes of regaining sovereignty over it.(AP Photo/ RIA Novosti, Vladimir Rodionov, Presidential Press Service) (Vladimir Rodionov, ASSOCIATED PRESS / July 13, 2009)

ABOARD THE USS STOUT (AP) ” U.S. Navy sailors and Georgian coast guard crews held training drills aboard an American warship visiting the former Soviet republic Wednesday in a show of support as tensions with neighboring Russia persist following last years war.

Sailors clutching mock submachine guns swarmed up ladders on the guided missile destroyer USS Stout and pretended to fire at each other in an exercise simulating the boarding of a hostile ship.

They also held firefighting drills and other exercises as rain drummed the deck of the vessel anchored at the Georgian Black Sea port of Batumi. The USS Stout is the sixth American warship to call at Georgias ports since its losing five-day war against Russia in August.

œThe U.S. is our strategic ally, and the Georgian sailors can feel that, Georgian coast guard chief Beso Shengelia told The Associated Press. The training and expertise visiting U.S. crews have provided is œinvaluable help, he said.

” Hat tip: heroyalwhyness

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[*Afghanistan: Italian Solider Killed*](#)

Italys mission will not change, premier says

(ANSA) ” Rome, July 14 ” An Italian paratrooper was killed and three others wounded in Afghanistan when the vehicle they were riding in was hit by a roadside bomb, defense ministry sources said on Tuesday.

The soldier was later identified as Lance Corporal Alessandro Di Lisio, 25, from the city of Campobasso in the southern Molise region. He had been in Afghanistan four months.

The incident took place some 50km from Farah, located in the southern part of the western region where international ISAF forces are under Italian command. Military sources said the vehicle was part of a convoy carrying soldiers from the Folgore paratrooper brigade and a Bersaglieri regiment. The other three paratroopers did not suffer life-threatening injuries and the ministry said their names were Lieutenant Giacomo Donato Bruno, Lance Corporal Simone Careddu and Lancer Corporal Andrea Maria Cammarata. œOur worst fears have unfortunately become a reality, Italian Defense Minister Ignazio La Russa said after being informed of Di Lisios death.

œWe were afraid that these improvised explosive devices would become more powerful in order to injure those inside armed vehicles, which until now had proved to be very resistant to attacks, La Russa told the press.

œNow we are going to have to take a close look at the efficiency of the vehicles and equipment being used by the Italian contingent in Afghanistan, he added.

La Russa, who had just arrived for an official visit to Algeria, said Di Lisios death would not change the mission of the Italian contingent in Afghanistan and that he would move up his scheduled visit to Afghanistan in order to get a first-hand evaluation of the situation there.

The minister sent his œdeep-*felt* condolences to Di Lisios family.

According to La Russa, one of the three injured soldiers appeared to be in worse condition than the others and all three would be flown out of Afghanistan as soon as possible.

La Russa will report to parliament on the incident on Wednesday.

Premier Silvio Berlusconi has also sent his condolences and those of his government to Di Lisios family, a statement from his office said.

The statement added that while Di Lisios death was tragic, the role of the Italian mission in Afghanistan was œimportant to bring stability to strategic areas.

President Giorgio Napolitano issued a similar message. Italian and other allied forces have come under increasing attacks as Afghanistan heads towards presidential elections in August. The violence has also increased as allied forces target Taliban strongholds in an attempt to bring more territory under government control. Last month four Italian solders were injured in firefights in Afghanistan.

ISAF AND NOT ITALY TARGET OF ATTACKS, GENERAL SAYS.

According to General Marco Bertolini, the head of the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in western Afghanistan, Tuesdays attack was not against Italian forces in particular but against the ISAF mission in general.

Evidence of this, he added, was the recent high number of casualties among other contingents. Britain, for example, has lost ten men in 15 days.

So far this year there have been 196 casualties among ISAF forces. œOur boys are engaged in a difficult battle in support of Afghan authorities, operating in ground missions as well as training the Afghan army so it can take over defense responsibilities, Bertolini said.

œThe sacrifice of Lance Corporal Di Lisio and the wounding of three of his comrades confirmed the extreme delicate and dangerous nature of the area where we are carrying out our mission, the general added. Di Lisio was the 14th Italian soldier to be killed since Italys mission in Afghanistan began in 2004.

Italy has 2,795 soldiers deployed in Afghanistan, most in the western area of Herat and in the capital Kabul.

An additional contingent of 500 men was recently sent to Afghanistan to help bolster security for the August elections, bringing the total to some 3,200.

This meant that Italy now has the fourth-largest contingent there after the United States (28,850 men), Britain (8,300) and Germany (3,380).

The ISAF mission is made up of over 61,000 men from 42 countries. It is divided into five theatres of action: Kabul, operated by France; Kandahar in the south, the command of which is rotated between Canada, the Netherlands and Britain; Herat in the west, which Italy commands; Mazari-Sharif in the north, the responsibility of Germany; and Bagram in the east, run by the US.

" Hat tip: Insubria

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The sodomy trial against Malaysias opposition leader, Anwar Ibrahim, has begun in Kuala Lumpur.

It is the second time Mr Anwar has faced allegations of sodomy.

The prosecution alleges that in June of last year Mr Anwar had sex with a 23-year-old man, who worked as a campaign aide.

Homosexual relationships are illegal in predominantly-Muslim Malaysia.

Defence lawyers are set to question the medical evidence, which has yet to be provided to Mr Anwar's team.

They are also questioning the impartiality of those prosecuting him.

More than a decade ago, when Mr Anwar was dumped as Malaysias deputy prime minister, he was convicted of sodomy and corruption.

The sodomy charges were ultimately overturned.

Mr Anwar says this latest case is also politically motivated.

" Hat tip: heroyalwhyness

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[Malaysia: Nine Christians Arrested Accused of Proselytizing](#)

Muslim students at the University Putra Malaysia (UPM) argue that the group distributed leaflets about Christianity. The story seems linked to the controversy regarding an article by two Muslims journalists who faked being Catholics and attended two masses taking communion, to see if forced conversions occur during celebrations.

Kuala Lumpur (AsiaNews) " Nine Christians were arrested on charges of wanting to convert some Muslim students at the University Putra Malaysia (UPM) in Serdang, near the capital Kuala Lumpur. Annou Xavier, defence lawyer of those arrested, says five Muslims students made the report accusing the nine, two of whom are students in UPM, of distributing leaflets and booklets on Christianity. In Malaysia proselytizing is prohibited by law and in most districts is punishable by prison.

The University Putra Malaysia episode comes at a tense time between the Muslims and Christian community, which in its various denominations counts for less than 2 of 28 million inhabitants of Malaysia, two-thirds Muslim. On July 8, two Catholics denounced the monthly Al-Islam for a report on alleged forced conversions to Christianity. Two Muslim journalists faked being Catholics and participated in two masses, receiving communion, thus desecrating the Host of which they also published a picture. The two failed to collect evidence in support of their argument, but they accuse Catholics of using the word Allah to define God during celebrations in the local language.

Reached by AsiaNews, Fr Andrew Lawrence, director the Herald, the magazine of the Catholic Diocese of Kuala Lumpur, says that the story of Al-Islam "has humiliated Catholics in Malaysia and is a violation of the rights of Christians as well as a direct challenge to the Federal Constitution which affirms the freedom of religion. "

Fr. Lawrence links the article of the Muslim monthly magazine to an episode in which the Herald was the main protagonist. For more than a year, the weekly magazine has been struggling with a legal matter in which they have brought the government to court because it prohibits the use of the word "Allah in Catholic publications in Malay language. The priest and director noted that Friday 17 there will be a new sitting of the trial and reaffirms the position of the local church: "In 1641 the then Congregation for Propaganda Fide published a Latin Malay vocabulary which made this translation. The Malaysia of today was born in 1957. Celebrations in Malay have always used Allah for God, because the word is translated into the different languages in which mass is recited.

" Hat tip: C. Cantoni

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[Pakistan: Spy Agency Exposes Link Between Militants and Religious Schools](#)

Islamabad, 14 July (AKI) " By Syed Saleem Shahzad " As refugees displaced by conflict in northwest Pakistan make their way home, they are afraid that their children will now depend on Islamic religious schools as their only option for education. At least 270 schools, used by the Pakistani army as military posts, were destroyed in the crossfire and by bomb attacks in Malakand agency during the recent military offensive in North West Frontier Province.

More than two million displaced people have begun leaving refugee camps and other shelters in the Peshawar valley region of the province.

Now there is renewed fear that Islamic schools or ~madrasahs will be the only system of education left to fill the vacuum which could lead to a new generation who could be trained for the Taliban.

Pakistan's largest spy agency, the Inter-Services Intelligence, has produced a full dossier (photo) on this new phenomenon describing the connection and roles played by different religious education organisations in Pakistan and how they play a role for the networking of Jihadis.

The first page of the dossier is about a recently arrested militant, allegedly responsible for attacks on the state police Special Branch and a military camp in Islamabad highlights the connection between the militants and religious schools.

Fidaullah Yousufzai alias Abdul Rahman was recently detained by the ISI along with former MP, Shah Abdul Aziz, from the home of Maulana Abdul Aziz.

Maulana Abdul Aziz, the recently freed cleric who was prayer leader at Islamabad's Lal Masjid or Red mosque, during the violent siege in July 2007 in which more than 100 people were killed.

The Pakistani interrogation report chart showed Fidaullah, 24, was educated at Lal Masjid Islamabad, Jamia Mohammadia, Jamia Faridia, Jamia Haqqania and Darul uloom Huda Golra. He comes from Buner in Malakand.

He joined a militia Ghazi Force, named after slain Abdul Rasheed Ghazi of Lal Masjid, because all his fellow students or teachers of seminaries he was educated in were part of the Ghazi Force.

He was also part of Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan's Buner chapter because he came from that area and spent time in prison where he increased his links with militants.

As the report suggested, this background helped him to become someone who plans terror attacks, raises funds through his sources and executes his plans with whichever group is available in a given area.

This chart focuses on four Islamic seminaries that are Jamia Mohammadia, Jamia Faridia, Jamia Haqqania and Darul Uloom Golra which engage a network from Swat Valley to Islamabad and setup an array of Jihadi outfit.

" Hat tip: C. Cantoni

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[Religious Row Flares in Malaysia](#)

Police in Malaysia have said they will release nine Christians mistakenly accused of trying to convert Muslim university students to Christianity.

A university security guard wrongly thought they were handing Christian pamphlets to Muslims, police said.

Trying to convert Muslims to another religion is forbidden in Malaysia, though Muslims may proselytise.

Members of religious minorities have complained that their rights are being ignored in Muslim-majority Malaysia.

The nine Christians, five students and four friends from Hong Kong, were arrested late on Tuesday at Universiti Putra Malaysia in Serdang, near Kuala Lumpur.

District police chief Zahedi Ayob said they had been distributing questionnaires to other Christians, not Muslims, as security guards at the university had believed.

Religious disharmony investigation

The arrests followed a controversy last week centring on two journalists who wrote about hiding their Muslim identity in order to receive Communion at a Roman Catholic church.

One of the journalists said they were investigating reports that Muslims had committed apostasy by attending prayers or Communion at the church, but that they found no evidence of this.

A Christian priest complained about the article, published in the Malay-language magazine al-Islam.

Police said officials were investigating whether the two men had caused religious disharmony, a crime punishable by up to five years in prison.

Religious issues are highly sensitive in Malaysia, which has a 60% Muslim population. Christians, Buddhists and Hindus make up most of the rest of the population.

Religious freedom is guaranteed by law, but minority groups have accused the Muslim Malay majority of trying to increase the role of Islam in the country.

" Hat tip: islam ophobe

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[Singapore to Legalize Financial Compensation for Organ Donors](#)

Under Singapore's opt-out organ donation system, everyone who does not explicitly opt out is assumed to be an organ donor upon their death. Compulsory organ donation is enforced even when survivors of the deceased object.

The new law legalizes the reimbursement of costs incurred by organ donors related to the donation. Costs that can be reimbursed include short- and long-term medical care, loss of income, travel, accommodation and child care. Any payment that constitutes an undue inducement [or] organ trading is still prohibited, but the terms of this prohibition are not defined in detail.

Legislator Christopher de Souza was among those opposing the law, warning that it could turn Singapore into a center for transplant tourism.

The framework in the bill could be the subject of abuse, he said.

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[Two U.S. Soldiers Lie Dead. Captured on Film, One of the Boobytrap Bombs Killing So Many British Troops](#)

[Comment from heroyalwhyness: MSM collaborating with the enemy to sell papers again?]

This is the picture that brings home the terrifying explosive power of the Taliban roadside bombs which pose the biggest threat to Britain's 9,000 soldiers in Afghanistan.

It is believed to be the first time that an Improvised Explosive Device (IED) has been photographed as it detonates in the insurgent heartland of Helmand.

In the foreground a soldier is almost knocked off his feet by the devastating impact. He runs for his life as the enormous cloud of smoke, dirt and shrapnel conceals the bodies of two U.S. Marines killed by the explosion.

The picture was taken yesterday as the bodies of eight UK servicemen killed in 24 hours last week were flown home to RAF Lyneham and honoured by thousands lining the streets of the Wiltshire town of Wootton Bassett.

Seven were killed by IEDs in three separate incidents " five from the 2nd Battalion The Rifles died together in an ambush near the town of Sangin, northern Helmand.

A Taliban fighter looks through binoculars in an undisclosed location in Afghanistan

This year 36 of the 47 **British** soldiers killed in Afghanistan have been victims of IEDs, which have become the Taliban's most feared and effective weapon. The soldier in this picture and the two killed in the Gamsir district of Helmand were from the U.S.. 2nd Marine Expeditionary Brigade.

Their deaths bring the number of U.S. soldiers killed by IEDs in Helmand over the last three days to six. The total number of American troops killed in Afghanistan so far this year is 107, compared with 151 in the whole of 2008.

An Italian soldier was also killed by a roadside bomb which exploded in the western province of Farah yesterday.

Three others were wounded. Three hundred UK bomb disposal specialist soldiers are to be sent to Helmand to help to counter the threat. Last year 3,276 IEDs were detected and safely detonated by bomb disposal officers.

In recent months, the Taliban has used increasingly sophisticated tactics in its attacks " many perfected by Al Qaeda and insurgents in Iraq " and placed hundreds of IEDs along routes.

Bomb makers have been able to adapt their devices and tactics as U.S. and **British** forces have introduced methods to counter the threat.

They have been using three types of IED: the roadside bomb where an insurgent detonates the device by wire; the remote bomb set off by radio or mobile phone signal; and the conventional landmine which is buried beneath the road surface before being detonated by the pressure of a passing vehicle.

The IEDs generally consist of a landmine or artillery shell rigged to a makeshift detonator and, increasingly, to fertiliser to give it greater impact.

Some are extremely basic, but others are more inventive and it is possible for the bomb to be set to explode under a third or fourth vehicle in any convoy.

In Iraq, insurgents would often block a road with other vehicles to stop a convoy in a precise position over an IED, but in Afghanistan many of the attacks have been against soldiers on foot patrols and triggered by trip wires or booby traps.

Helmand is ideal territory for bomb makers as patrols often go through compounds of mud walls where holes can be cut, a bomb implanted, and the hole filled with mud which will have dried within a couple of hours.

Soldiers usually carry electronic equipment that creates a "bubble around them, blocking any electronic signal that might trigger a bomb " but the Taliban has found ways around this.

A civilian helicopter ferrying humanitarian aid was shot down in Helmand yesterday, killing all six Ukrainian crew members and a child on the ground, officials said.

" Hat tip: heroyalwhyness

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[Will History Repeat Itself in Afghanistan?](#)

British military intervention in Afghanistan has a chequered history, making it easy to conclude that **British** forces will fail again. But such a conclusion is a mistake and does a disservice both to troops fighting there and to history itself, writes military historian Dr Huw Davies.

General comparisons of Britains first three wars in Afghanistan and the current conflict, are difficult and fraught with pitfalls and traps. However, if one compares the specific experiences of soldiers and officers, there is much to learn from Britains history in Afghanistan.

Many know that the **British** tried three times between 1839 and 1919 to subjugate Afghanistan, and each time they failed.

But when dealing with the history of **British** military involvement in Afghanistan, and in the difficult business of looking for parallels between then and now, it is necessary to separate the general from the specific.

The reasons for the wars in the 19th Century were somewhat different and incomparable with the reasons for the war now. If general comparisons of the conflicts are made, without looking at the specifics, it might be easy to conclude that there is little hope for success in Afghanistan.

The First Anglo-Afghan War broke out when Britain invaded Afghanistan because she feared Russian encroachment into Central Asia. The **British** were eventually routed and the 16,000 strong army forced to flee Kabul in the winter of 1841. Only one man survived the retreat.

" Hat tip: islam ophobe

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[China: Xinjiang, Al Qaeda North Africa Threatens Beijing](#)

(ANSAméd) " BEIJING, JULY 15 " China has invited Chinese citizens in Algeria to exercise extreme caution. Yesterday Al Qaeda for the Islamic Maghreb, the north African section of the terrorist group set up by Osama bin Laden, stated that it wanted to œavenge Uighur Muslim victims of Chinese œoppression. The Chinese embassy in Algeria has delivered notices to Chinese people and businesses warning them of potential attacks. News of this Al Qaeda threat against Chinese people in the Middle East and North Africa was given yesterday by Stirling Assynt, a security company based in London. Interviewed by Chinese paper Global Times, a company manager claimed that the threat œmust be taken seriously despite coming from a remote section of the terrorist organisation. Stirling claimed that organisation managers ordered their followers to attack Chinese workers and businessmen working in northern Africa. Chinese people working in Algeria are mostly employed in the energy, communications and mining sectors. Chinese investment in the country totalled more than 4.5 billion dollars at the end of 2008, with an 18.7% increase on the previous year. Confirming its penetration in the African continent, today China announced that it has reached an agreement with Ethiopia to build seven dams worth 1.9 billion dollars in total. (ANSAméd).

" Hat tip: Insubria

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[China Blasts Turkish Boycott Call](#)

China on Wednesday blasted a Turkish call for a boycott of Chinese goods as œirresponsible, a day after it angrily denounced accusations from Turkey that it was guilty of genocide.

Turkish Trade Minister Nihat Ergün last week called on consumers not to buy goods from China, in protest to unrest in Chinas Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region involving Turkic-speaking Muslim Uighurs on July 5 that left more than 190 people dead.

Chinese commerce ministry spokesman Yao Jian on Wednesday hit out at Ergüns comments, saying he was confident the boycott would not be implemented.

œSome people in some countries made some irresponsible comments on imports of Chinese products after the Xinjiang incident, Yao told reporters, when asked about the boycott call.

œBut I dont think this means the country will introduce this policy.

Yao said Turkish leaders had very good communications with China, adding he believed the tension would subside soon.

His comments came a day after Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Qin Gang blasted weekend remarks made by Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who said the plight of China's Uighurs amounted to a kind of genocide.

In 1949, the population of Uighurs [in Xinjiang] was 3.29 million. At present, the Uighur population there is nearly 10 million, or three times more than 60 years ago. What kind of ethnic genocide is this? Qin said Tuesday.

Turkey has repeatedly expressed concern about recent unrest in Xinjiang, China's northwest region that is home to 8 million Uighurs who have long said they suffer repression and discrimination under Chinese rule.

Turkey says it supports China's sovereignty over Xinjiang but retains strong cultural links with the Muslim Uighurs because of a shared language, culture and history.

Several exiled Uighurs live in Turkey where they have been supported by nationalist groups.

" Hat tip: heroyalwhyness

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[Cyber Attacks May Have Come From Britain: S Korea](#)

A Vietnamese computer security firm believes Britain was the likely origin of last week's cyber attacks that **crippled** major US and South Korean websites, Seoul officials said.

The Korea Communications Commission said the information came from Vietnamese firm Bach Khoa Internet Network Security. Vietnam is part of a regional grouping known as the Asia Pacific Computer Emergency Response Team.

The **(British)** server appears to have controlled compromised handler servers which spread viruses, said Park Cheol-Soon, a network protection team leader of the government-run communications commission.

However, it needs more investigation to confirm whether this server was the final attacker server or not, he told AFP.

Seoul's National Intelligence Service earlier said North Korea was a prime suspect in the attacks, which briefly **crippled** major government and commercial websites in the United States and South Korea.

Park said the apparent discovery of a master server in Britain did not mean North Korea could not be held responsible. It does not either bolster or undermine claims that someone has done the attacks, he said.

The distributed denial of service attacks involved sending multiple requests for website access from tens of thousands of zombie computers so the sites became overloaded.

The computers that were used to send the flood of requests had been infected with a virus that allowed attackers to control them anonymously.

The Korea Communications Commission said 166,000 zombie computers in 74 countries were believed used.

The intelligence service Monday downgraded its alert against the cyber attacks, saying they were fizzling out and most targeted sites had normal traffic restored.

North Korea has staged a nuclear test and numerous missile launches in recent weeks, raising regional tensions. But a cyber attack, if confirmed, would be a new tactic.

Hong Min-Pyo, president of security solution provider Shiftworks, told AFP Wednesday it was technically impossible to trace who initiated the attacks.

Shiftworks has also tracked down a server in New Jersey that was believed to have been spreading the so-called malware, he said.

DDoS attacks are designed to hide the attackers, Hong told AFP.

" Hat tip: heroyalwhyness

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[Erdogan: Xinjiang is Nearly Genocide. But the Islamic World Remains Cautious](#)

The Turkish premier wants to push the UN Security Council to address the crisis in Xinjiang. But Beijing could block it. The Turkish foreign minister calls for a boycott of Chinese goods. Demonstrations of Uyghurs in Istanbul, Canberra, Holland, Germany. Nothing new from the Organisation of Islamic Conferences or Iran.

Ankara (AsiaNews / Agencies) " The Islamic world feels little solidarity it seems, with fellow believers in Xinjiang. Among governments, however, Turkey has distinguished itself. Yesterday, Premier Recep Tayyip Erdogan defined what is happening in China as nearly genocide. The Turkish prime minister made this statement at the end of the G8 in LAquila, where the heads of nations did not mention events in Xinjiang at all, though President Hu Jintao cancelled his presence at the summit as a result of the demonstrations and subsequent clashes between Uyghurs and police and between Han and Uyghurs in recent days.

On the one hand " said Erdogan " we talk about universal human rights, but on the other hand, we have to witness something like this. Stating that he has expressed his concerns to the heads of state and ministers of the G8, the Turkish premier added: I have used the word "atrocities" before?? no other word can describe a situation which is nearly genocide in which hundreds have been killed and more than 1,000 others wounded.

Erdogan also said that Turkey is considering putting the issue of the Uyghurs on the agenda of the Security Council, but it is almost certain that China would block the step, it being a permanent member of the Council and stating that Xinjiang is an internal problem.

In the Islamic world there are some demonstrations in favour of the Uyghurs. Yesterday in Istanbul about 5 thousand people demonstrated in front of the Fatih mosque after Friday prayers shouting "No to ethnic cleansing and burning Chinese products. Two days ago, Nihat Ergun, the Turkish trade minister called on his fellow countrymen to boycott Chinese goods. The population of Turkey has historical, linguistic and ethnic bonds with the Uyghurs.

The demonstrations and protests worldwide that have occurred in recent days are all due to the exiled Uyghur community. In Canberra (Australia) 200 people gathered in front of the parliament shouting "death to Chinese terrorists. In Holland, in The Hague other exiled Uyghurs launched stones against the Chinese embassy; other exiles in Berlin staged a sit-in in front of the embassy.

Many ordinary Muslim people have expressed sorrow for what is happening in Xinjiang, but governments are being lukewarm in their reactions.

The Organization of Islamic Conferences has condemned the use of disproportionate force and called on China for an honest inquiry into the incidents.

The Iranian foreign minister, Manuchehr Muttaki said that he will telephone his Chinese counterpart to discuss the situation in Xinjiang with him.

China is the main trading partner of the Arab countries, surpassing the United States. Between 2004 and 2008 trade between China and Arab countries came to about 100 billion dollars.

Beijing has also long secured the friendship of Saudi Arabia and Iran. China has increasingly large economic ties with them, with its ever-growing need for oil. In return, Beijing has become their advocate in the international community, putting a stop to certain points of the UN embargo against Tehran and willingly closing a eye on the worlds criticism of Saudi Arabias human rights record.

" Hat tip: C. Cantoni

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[Reasons Behind the Ethnic Rivalry in Xinjiang](#)

MARK COVLIN: Nur Muhammad Majid is a Uighur who came here from Xinjiang five years ago and now has Australian citizenship.

He still keeps in close contact with people in the Xinjiang capital Urumqi and other cities.

On the phone from Adelaide I asked him about the Uighurs grievances.

NUR MUHAMMAD MAJID: These clashes happened because of the region is lack of autonomy. Because the Government, the Chinese state, has officially said this region is called Xinjiang Autonomous Region but in fact there is lack of autonomy, lack of self determination, lack of human rights, dignity or you know human rights activities, especially for the Uighur minority people in this region.

Thats why the priority is given to the Han Chinese and the local Uighurs has been separated, has been assimilated and you know, the majority rights, the legal rights, constitutional rights is given to Chinese.

For example, obtaining employment, land rights and opening a company, working in any sector of the Government employment sector " its first priority is given to Chinese.

MARK COLVIN: I think you just used the phrase the "Uighur minority. I thought it was about half and half Han Chinese and Uighur.

NUR MUHAMMAD MAJID: At this time, in 2009, the Uighur have become, have officially become the minority in this region.

MARK COLVIN: And thats because of the Chinese Central Government has migrated central Han Chinese into this area?

NUR MUHAMMAD MAJID: Thats correct. In 1949 there was only 6 per cent of Chinese in our country but now 46 per cent of Chinese have been living. This officials say, and we dont believe this one because we have seen every day by train, Chinese are migrating; 90,000 illegal migrants are coming into this region.

MARK COLVIN: To what extent is this conflict about religion? Because Uighurs are mostly Muslim and the Chinese have in some ways tried to paint to paint the idea of Uighur autonomy to connect it in some way with Osama bin Laden and so on.

NUR MUHAMMAD MAJID: Chinese authority would always find some excuse to accuse the people, innocent people because if they dont find some sort of excuse they wont have any sort of things to defend their actions. The Uighur people inside the East Turkestan region wouldnt have any direct connection with Osama bin Laden, neither with Al Qaeda or neither any Islamic, Islamic movements around the world.

Because if you go to any Islamic country or Muslim countries, if you ask, æDo you know about the Uighur people? No, no single one person would say, æYes, because there is no connection from the Uighur Muslims to the outside Muslim communities as well.

MARK COLVIN: Now tell me what contacts youve had in the last couple of days into Urumqi and other cities in Xinjiang and what youve been told.

NUR MUHAMMAD MAJID: The clash is now become so severe, the BBC reported 156 people were dead during the clash and even in Chinese state media didnt show the bodies of the dead people. Why? Because the dead bodies are belong to the Uighur community not to the Han Chinese. You have seen the Han Chinese were bleeding and you know shouting in the streets and you have seen on TV. Why cant you see dead bodies of the Han Chinese? There was no Han Chinese bodies dead and you know, all of these, killed people or you know, people are Uighurs and my friends told me, æJust laugh mate. Chinese, the people, the local residents also start house to house searching Uighur residents around their area and start to kill them.

MARK COLVIN: We reported last night that there were Han Chinese mobs armed with sticks and clubs and other weapons rampaging through the streets.

NUR MUHAMMAD MAJID: But did you report that they have killed several people?

MARK COLVIN: No, what do you know about that?

NUR MUHAMMAD MAJID: Two Uighur young female were beheaded in medical university of Xinjiang and thrown their bodies were thrown into the street.

MARK COLVIN: And how sure are you of that because rumours spread very fast in situations like this.

NUR MUHAMMAD MAJID: Because this news was called from my local resident to our family members in Australia and its very in dangerous situation they just call to tell this information to us. Some photos were also put in the website of these dead females now.

MARK COLVIN: What do you fear and what do you hope from the situation now?

NUR MUHAMMAD MAJID: We fear now that the situation is being worsened because the Chinese state President Hu Jintao has now returned from Italy and I believe Hu Jintao, the state President, Chinese state President, was the Tibetan secretary when he cracked down the Tibetan people in 1995.

This does not mean to Chinese state leader will bring a peaceful resolution into the Xinjiang region. This is not like a accident. This is not an accident. This is a state, well planned accident, well-planned orchestrated you know their policy. They say, æKill the Uighurs and we dont ask. I have read in the news theyre saying the Chinese were shouting, æKill the Uighurs, and nobody asked. æKill the Uighurs.

MARK COLVIN: Thats Nur Muhammad Majid, a Uighur who came here as a refugee from Xinjiang and is now an Australian, speaking on the line from Adelaide.

” Hat tip: heroyalwhyness

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[Tension in Urumqi. æAl Qaeda Threatens China](#)

An Algerian Islamic group has promised revenge against Chinese companies in North Africa. Demonstrations in Jakarta for a jihad against Beijing. Iranian Ayatollah condemns the suppression of Uyghurs and criticises the silence of the government in Tehran, a friend of China.

Urumqi (AsiaNews / Agencies) " Stores bolted closed, mosques shut: this is the image of the capital of Xinjiang, a day after the killing of two Uyghurs by two policemen. Meanwhile, groups in some way linked to Al Qaeda have launched a Jihad, or holy war against China and have promised to avenge the blood of Uyghurs against Chinese commercial interests in the world.

Even today, soldiers and security personnel armed with machine guns and truncheons are patrolling roads especially in the area where yesterday the murder took place.

The police say they intervened because three Uyghurs were assaulting a fourth and at the violent response of two of the attackers they were forced to open fire killing two and wounding a third. Instead witnesses say that the three, exiting a mosque and armed with knives, tried to attack the police, who responded with fire. The incident shows the height of tension in the city, after the interethnic clashes last week, and also shows that the police is not seen as the guarantor of order, but as an enemy of the Uyghurs.

The Chinese media, to defuse the tension, continue to show the great love of people towards soldiers and police.

The Muslims Uyghur population has suffered decades of political, social and economic exclusion in the region rich in oil and gas. China tries to maintain control through a heavy military presence, justified by charges of terrorism. Indeed, some groups in the past have been responsible for acts of violence, but most of the population is only asking for greater autonomy and religious freedom. Beijing, to prevent the emergence of Islamic fundamentalism, keeps tight control of the entire religious life of the Uyghurs. In the face of last weeks clashes, the Islamic world in general has kept a low profile. Only groups of Uyghurs and Turks abroad " who have the same ethnic and linguistic roots " have demonstrated against Beijing.

According to Stirling Assynt, a think-tank for global companies, an Algerian Islamic group affiliated with Al Qaeda has launched messages threatening revenge against Chinese companies in North Africa. If this is confirmed, it would be the first time that the network of Osama bin Laden has directly threatened China. According to Stirling Assynt, threats against China and its trade representations abroad are growing in the jihadist world.

Yesterday, dozens of Indonesian Muslims clashed with guards protecting the Chinese Embassy in Jakarta. They were demanding that the Indonesian government take measures against China and shouted slogans for a jihad in favour of the Uyghurs. Some posters sported slogans like "Stop the genocide of Muslims in Xinjiang."

Two days ago, the Grand Ayatollah Naser Makarem Shirazi condemned the violence against the Uyghurs and the silence of the Iranian government. "It's true " he said " that the Chinese government and its people have close economic and political ties with us and other Islamic countries, but this is no reason for them to horribly suppress our Muslim brothers and sisters.

" Hat tip: C. Cantoni

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[China Tries to Block Uighur Film](#)

Organisers of Melbourne's International Film Festival have defied calls from China not to show a documentary about an exiled Uighur leader.

Festival director Richard Moore said a Chinese consular official had insisted that the film be withdrawn, but he had refused to do so.

The film, Ten Conditions of Love, centres on Rebiya Kadeer, the US-based head of the World Uighur Congress.

China accuses the group of inciting recent ethnic unrest in Xinjiang.

Beijing and Canberra are already locked in a row over an Australian mining executive who has been arrested for spying in China.

~Strident

Mr Moore said that after the events programme was published, he was contacted by Melbourne-based Chinese cultural attache Chunmei Chen who urged him to withdraw the film.

"I said I had no reason to withdraw the film from the festival and she then proceeded to tell me that I had to justify my decision to include the film in the festival.

"No-one reacts well to strident approaches, or to the appearance of being bullied. I don't think it's a positive way of behaving, he added.

" Hat tip: islam ophobe

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[Vaccine to be Tested on Healthy Adults Next Week](#)

TONY EASTLEY: Two-hundred-and-forty healthy adults in Adelaide will undergo clinical trials of the new swine flu vaccine next week and if all goes well 400 children will be given a trial dose the week after.

The number of swine flu deaths in Australia has grown alarmingly and health authorities are expecting the number of **cases** to hit 10,000 today.

The company making the swine flu vaccine says its working as fast as possible to get it ready for the rest of Australia by October.

But Britons will get access to a vaccine next month.

Di Bain reports.

DI BAIN: Its been just under two months since the Australian Government placed an order with pharmaceutical company CSL for the new vaccine to fight whats become Australias dominant flu " swine flu.

Dr Rachel David from CSL says landmark trials of the anti-viral drug will begin next week in South Australia.

RACHEL DAVID: We are doing a trial of 240 healthy adults in Adelaide starting next week. In the week after that we will be starting to recruit children for a similar clinical trial in the major capital cities; 400 children between the ages of six months and nine years.

And that process is similar, in that were trying to determine the dose of the vaccine that will be effective.

DI BAIN: Health authorities are expecting the number of confirmed **cases** of the pandemic virus to break through 10,000 today.

So far 19 people in Australia have died from swine flu and emergency wards are filling up, with 123 people in hospital with the virus.

Its a similar story around the world " however the UK will get access to the new swine flu vaccine next month.

Shortly after a six-year-old girl died in London, the **British** Health Secretary, Andy Burnham promised the vaccine would be ready by next month for high-risk patients.

Dr David says CSL wants to conduct thorough clinical trials.

RACHEL DAVID: Different governments have made different decisions based on advice from public health experts and the level of flu spreading in the community, the severity of the flu and the point at which they are, in terms of their seasonal ! um, as you know flu does get worse in winter, so in terms of their seasonal cycle.

DI BAIN: Did the Australian Government stall on making a decision to order the vaccine and thats why were a couple of months behind the UK?

RACHEL DAVID: I dont think we are behind the UK at all and the Government did act appropriately.

We, all the major manufacturers are in the process of making a vaccine but there is a difference between making vaccines and the point at which, in the clinical trials process you release them to the general public.

TONY EASTLEY: Dr Rachel David from vaccine maker CSL.. Di Bain reporting.

" Hat tip: heroyalwhyness

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[Ethiopian Minister Refuses to Return Home From U.S.](#)

Ethiopias state minister for communication affairs has refused to return home from the United Sates after an official visit, a top government official told Agence France Presse (AFP) Wednesday.

Ermias Legesse was issued with an 11-day visa and left for the U.S. in the second week of June, but has not returned.

œHe didnt report back, but there is nothing political in that, said the official who spoke on condition of anonymity.

œHe has chosen to stay there. It seems he has dreamt about going to the U.S., he added. œSometimes strange things happen.

Ermias, who is in his thirties, was appointed to the position earlier this year.

The U.S. embassy in Addis Ababa declined to comment on the matter, but a diplomatic source said Ermias œhas not been reachable for several days.(AFP)

Beirut, 15 Jul 09, 15:51

" Hat tip: heroyalwhyness

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[Ex-Rwanda Governor Sentenced to Life for Genocide](#)

ARUSHA, Tanzania " A U.N. war crimes tribunal sentenced a former governor in Rwanda to life in prison Tuesday after finding that he was one of the main perpetrators of genocide in the African country in 1994.

Lt. Col. Tharcisse Renzaho, 65, was governor of the Rwandan capital, Kigali, during the genocide, giving him authority over the police force. The court said he incited the killings and urged soldiers and Hutu militia and civilians to construct roadblocks where they could intercept and kill fleeing Tutsis.

Presiding Judge Erik Mose said Renzaho was implicated in the killings of more than 100 Tutsis at Holy Family church during the height of the genocide because he was at the site before the attack and shortly before it ended, but failed to stop the killings.

œHe was also involved in the removal of bodies, the judge said.

Renzahos lawyer, Francois Cantier, says his client will appeal the convictions of five counts of genocide and crimes against humanity.

More than half a million members of the Tutsi ethnic minority and moderates from the Hutu majority were slaughtered during the 100-day Rwandan genocide in 1994.

Rwandas genocide began hours after a plane carrying President Juvenal Habyarimana was shot down as it approached Kigali on the evening of April 6, 1994. The slaughter ended after rebels, led by current President Paul Kagame, ousted the extremist Hutu government that had orchestrated the killings.

The International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, which sits in Tanzania, has delivered judgments on 39 people.

Six of the judgments were acquittals.

" Hat tip: heroyalwhyness

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[Kidnappers Want \\$2 Million for Darfur Aid Workers](#)

KHARTOUM (Reuters) " Kidnappers of two female aid workers in Sudans Darfur region have demanded \$2 million for their release, but the government is determined not to pay, a minister said Tuesday.

The two workers for Irish aid group GOAL were seized by armed men on July 3 from their base in the north Darfur town of Kutum " the third abduction of foreign humanitarian staff in the region in four months.

œThe kidnappers are asking for \$2 million. But our policy is not to pay ransom. We **feel** that would encourage others to do the same, said state minister for humanitarian affairs Abdel Baqi al-Jailani.

The minister said Darfur officials were using local leaders to negotiate with the kidnappers, adding he was still expecting a positive outcome. œOur main priority remains the safety of the two women, he told Reuters.

Irish negotiators and government officials have sent teams to Khartoum and El Fasher, the capital of North Darfur, to help free the women, named by GOAL as Hilda Kawuki, 42, from Uganda, and Sharon Commins, 32, from Dublin.

Two groups of foreign aid workers kidnapped in Darfur earlier this year were released unharmed after a period of negotiation.

A group calling itself the Eagles of Bashir said it seized staff from the Belgian arm of Medecins Sans Frontieres in north Darfur in March to protest against the International Criminal Courts decision to issue an arrest warrant for Sudans president Omar Hassan al-Bashir, to face **charges** of human rights abuses in the region. Bashir has dismissed the allegations.

Another group, calling itself the Freedom Eagles of Africa, said it abducted staff from Aide Medicale Internationale in south Darfur in April to demand Paris retry members of Zoes Ark, a French humanitarian group, convicted but later pardoned over the abduction of children from Chad.

The six-year Darfur conflict has pitted pro-government militias and troops against mostly non-Arab rebels, who took up arms in 2003, accusing Khartoum of neglecting the region.

Estimates of the death toll range from 10,000 according to Khartoum, to 300,000 according to U.N. humanitarian chief John Holmes.

The minister said reports in Sudanese state media the abductors were asking for \$200 million were incorrect.

" Hat tip: heroyalwhyness

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[Liberias Taylor Rejects War Crimes Charges](#)

THE HAGUE, Netherlands " The American CIA and Libyas leader Moammar Gadhafi both had a hand in Charles Taylors rise to power as Cold War politics and pan-African struggles helped propel him to the presidency in Liberia, according to his testimony Wednesday at his war crimes trial.

Taylor sketched a turbulent African continent in the 1980s that was the backdrop for American anti-communist efforts and African freedom fighters backed by Gadhafi fighting to shake off æthe yoke of colonialism.

Taylor is **charged** with 11 counts of crimes against humanity and using child soldiers in his role backing rebels in Sierra Leones 1991-2002 civil war. He has denounced the accusations against him as ædisinformation, misinformation, lies, rumors.

He took the stand for the first time Tuesday after listening in silence to 91 prosecution witnesses, many of them describing murders, mutilations, tortures and acts of cannibalism by Sierra Leonean rebels. Others who claimed to be former Taylor aides gave accounts of his communications with the rebels and supplying them with weapons, and the transfer of illicit diamonds in return.

In 10 hours of testimony over two days, Taylor portrayed himself as a liberator of the Liberian people whose intention was to sweep away the corrupt military regime in Monrovia and establish democracy.

His lawyer, Courtenay Griffiths, said the former president is enjoying his time on the stand at the Special Court for Sierra Leone.

æHes over the moon, hes buzzing, Griffiths told reporters during a break.

Taylors testimony is expected to take several weeks before **prosecutors** begin their cross-examination.

In his second day of questioning by Griffiths, Taylor described a tumultuous period of coups and executions in Liberia, a West African nation buffeted by Cold War politics after a sergeant major in the Liberian army, Samuel Doe, seized power in a bloody coup in 1980.

Waving his hands or pointing his finger, Taylor gave an animated account of his falling out with Doe, his flight to the United States for safety and his escape via a sheet knotted to a windows bars from a Massachusetts prison where he was being held on an extradition request after the regime accused him of embezzling \$900,000.

Taylor said U.S. authorities helped organize his escape days before a failed 1985 coup by a former close friend, Gen. Thomas Quiwonkpa, who was later butchered by Doe loyalists.

æHe was cut to pieces and his flesh was eaten by military people, he said.

Taylor said he was æ100 percent positive the CIA bought weapons used by Quiwonkpa and his rebels in a coup Taylor supported, even though Washington had earlier pumped hundreds of millions of dollars into Does anti-communist regime.

Griffiths told reporters that by 1985, the U.S. government appeared to be embarrassed by the excesses of the Doe administration so that supporting the Quiwonkpa coup and Taylors escape was likely æanother route to a bit of regime change.

Returning to Africa via Mexico and Belgium, Taylor began recruiting rebel fighters to stage his own coup in Liberia. He sent them for training in Libya at a sprawling former U.S. military base outside Tripoli where they spent two years.

The Libyans æwere seriously involved in trying to free the rest of Africa and that is why I think Gadhafi " whether people like it or not " is an African hero, Taylor said, banging his finger hard on his desk.

Prosecutors allege that Taylor plotted to terrorize the people of Sierra Leone with rebel leaders at the Libyan camp. But he denied forming an alliance there with Sierra Leone rebel leader Ali Kabbah or meeting another key rebel, Foday Sankoh.

He said groups ranging from the African National Congress to the Irish Republican Army sent fighters to the camp.

æIt was not a terrorist camp, he said. He said his men were trained æin the laws of war, and instructed on how to win the peoples support which was necessary for the revolution to succeed.

Taylor said he never used child soldiers for military operations during his 1989 revolution in Liberia.

æNo child was to be recruited, or used or trained for military activities, he told a three-judge panel.

Griffiths lead his client through a reconstruction of his life, from his æhumble birth to the circumstances of his 1997-2003 presidency. That effort aimed to draw a picture of a peacemaker rather than the cannibalistic warlord described by **prosecutors** at the U.N.-backed court.

On Wednesday, Taylor spoke confidently about topics ranging from tribal rivalries to big power politics to a personal life strewn with an overlapping procession of wives and girlfriends and stints in jails in three countries.

Doe was the first Liberian leader of an aboriginal origin in a country that had been led for more than 130 years by freed American slaves and their descendants, who rarely mixed with the purely African population. Taylor, the son of an American-Liberian judge and his maid, parlayed his mixed background to gain entry to both groups.

Armed with an economics degree from the United States, he became a midlevel member of Does government.

Taylor, who is alleged to have siphoned millions of dollars when he became Liberias president, said he took action to rein in rampant corruption among Does ministers and aides.

œThat made me very unpopular, Taylor said.

His unpopularity led to embezzlement allegations, Taylor said, while categorically denying the claim.

Taylor fled Liberia to the United States in 1983. He said he left out of fear for his life under the increasingly autocratic Doe regime.

" Hat tip: heroyalwhyness

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[National Guard Troops Seize Police Station Under Control of Chavez Opponent in Venezuela](#)

CARACAS, Venezuela (AP) " Dozens of National Guard troops seized control of a police station controlled by a leading opponent of President Hugo Chavez on Wednesday, adding to tensions between Venezuelas government and elected opposition officials.

About 40 National Guard troops tossed tear gas canisters at a police precinct post in the town of Curiepe, east of Caracas, shortly before dawn, said Elisio Guzman, director of the Miranda state police. He said the officers inside were forced to leave and the National Guard occupied the building.

Guzman said the motive behind the takeover was unclear and national government officials could not immediately be reached for comment.

œThey started launching tear gas without mediating, without speaking with anyone, Guzman said in a telephone interview. He said he ordered officers under his command to stand down, telling them to œavoid any conflict.

At least six people were hurt, including two who were wounded and four who required treatment after inhaling tear gas, Guzman told the Venezuelan television station Globovision.

Troops shot plastic bullets at demonstrators who protested the takeover, said Adriana DElia, a representative of Mirandas state government.

A television cameraman working for the channel RCTV was among those injured, requiring five stitches on his face, she said.

Guzman said the National Guard troops carried out œwaves of attacks against residents who turned out to protest. œThis should stop somehow, he told the Globovision network, calling it an œillegal takeover by troops.

On Tuesday, National Guard troops seized another state police station in Miranda, which includes part of Caracas and surrounding areas to the south and east. Four people suffered minor injuries during the standoff in the town of Caucagua, Guzman said.

Tensions between Chavezs government and Miranda Gov. Henrique Capriles have been brewing since the opposition politician defeated an incumbent ruling party candidate in elections last year.

" Hat tip: heroyalwhyness

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[US Military Presence in Colombia Would Expand With Greater Use of Air, Sea Bases](#)

BOGOTA (AP) " The United States and Colombia are nearing agreement on expanding the U.S. militarys presence in this conflict-torn nation, potentially basing hundreds of Americans in a central valley to support Air Force drug interdiction missions.

Both sides say they hope a fifth round of talks slated for later this month in Bogota will seal a 10-year lease deal. Two of the Colombian ministers involved were to answer questions about the talks at a public hearing Wednesday following complaints about secrecy surrounding the negotiations.

Opponents worry that a broadened U.S. military role in the worlds No. 1 cocaine-producing nation could antagonize Colombias leftist neighbors and draw Washington deeper into Colombias complicated, long-running conflict with leftist rebels and rightist paramilitaries.

Details of the negotiations are secret and U.S. officials declined comment other than to confirm the talks next round.

However, senior Colombian military and civilian officials familiar with negotiations told The Associated Press that the idea is to make Colombia a regional hub for Pentagon operations " though without exceeding a limit of 1,400 U.S. military personnel and contractors set by the U.S. Congress.

The Colombian officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity due to the open negotiations, said the current draft accord specifies more frequent visits by U.S. aircraft and warships to three air bases as well as two naval bases " at Malaga Bay in the Pacific and Cartagena in the Caribbean. Colombia could also get preferential treatment in arms and aircraft purchases.

The centerpiece of the talks is the Palanquero air base at Puerto Salgar on the Magdalena river 100 kilometers (60 miles) northwest of Bogota.

The U.S. interdiction missions it would assume " identifying suspect vessels and planes so Coast Guard and Navy ships can intercept them and look for drugs " had been flown out of Manta, Ecuador, on the Pacific Ocean.

About 220 Americans shared space at a Mantas international airport but were allowed no more than eight planes at a time.

The E-3 AWACs and P-3 Orion surveillance planes based there were credited with about 60 percent of drug interdiction in the eastern Pacific. But the U.S. mission there is shutting down this week because President Rafael Correa refused to renew its lease, calling their presence a violation of Ecuadors sovereignty.

Palanquero was off-limits to U.S. military operations until April 2008 after a human rights sanction: A Colombian military helicopter operating out of it had killed 17 civilians in the 1998 bombing of a northern town that was initially covered up.

A bill passed by the U.S. House and pending in the Senate would earmark \$46 million for construction at Palanquero, which has a 3,500-meter runway and two huge hangars and is home to Colombias main fighter wing.

The money would be released 15 days after an agreement is signed, according to a key congressional staffer who spoke on condition of anonymity because hes not authorized to comment publicly on such matters.

The U.S. Embassy declined to comment about the talks, as did Colombias acting defense minister, Gen. Freddy Padilla. "Nothing is agreed upon until everything is agreed upon, told the AP.

Asked recently about the talks, U.S. Ambassador William Brownfield stressed that Washington would not be acquiring bases but rather obtaining increased access to Colombian facilities.

U.S. Southern Command spokesman Robert Appin said the Pentagon would have no immediate comment.

However, one indication of the Pentagons goals can be found in a U.S. Air Mobility Command document "Global En Route Strategy that was presented in early April at a symposium at Maxwell Air Force Base in Alabama. Beyond counternarcotics, Palanquero could become a "cooperative security location from which "mobility operations could be executed the document proposes.

A potential jumping-off point for operations by expeditionary forces, in other words.

"Nearly half the continent can be covered by a C-17 (military transport) without refueling from Palanquero, the document says.

Rafael Pardo, a former defense minister and candidate for president in May 2010 elections, has complained of secrecy surrounding the negotiations, and worries about alienating other South American nations. The radar and communications intercept ability of U.S. aircraft can extend well beyond Colombias borders.

"elf its to launch surveillance flights over other nations then it seems to me that would be needless hostility by Colombia against its neighbors, Pardo said, although one of the Colombian officials said the agreement will specify that U.S. flights wont cross Colombias borders without permission from affected countries.

It is not clear what other restrictions would be placed under a new bases agreement on U.S. military aircraft, warships or troops. Putting more Americans on the ground would raise the risk of casualties, although Colombias leftist rebels " chiefly funded through cocaine trafficking " have no record of attacking Americans in the country.

About 600 U.S. service personnel and civilian contractors already work in Colombia, according to the most recent figures available. Advisers are attached to Colombian army divisions, have their own offices at armed forces headquarters and have trained thousands of Colombian troops since 2000.

Under U.S. law, the number of Department of Defense employees in Colombia cannot exceed 800 while the number of military contractors cannot top 600.

That number would not change under the draft accord, the senior Colombian officials said. Nor, they said, would U.S. troops lose their immunity from criminal prosecution.

While drug interdiction is the chief U.S. goal, some worry that bringing in more Americans will lead to the U.S. taking sides in a conflict involving Colombias military, rebels and private militias over land and cocaine that has led to hundreds of extra-judicial killings of civilians over the years.

The U.S. could be pushing Colombia to negotiate a solution with the leftist rebels, said John Lindsay-Poland of the U.S.-based Fellowship of Reconciliation. Instead, æthis is an indicator that the United States is going to be supporting a military approach.

" Hat tip: heroyalwhyness

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[Zelaya Issues Ultimatum: "Reinstate Me or Else](#)

Negotiations to end Honduras political crisis faced a new challenge after the ousted president vowed to act on his own if he is not returned to power in the next round of talks, possibly this weekend.

Manuel Zelaya, who was toppled by a military-backed coup and flown out of the country in his night clothes on June 28, was clearly frustrated by the slow movement of negotiations mediated by Costa Rican President Oscar Arias, which have produced no breakthrough after two rounds.

æWe are giving the coup regime an ultimatum, Zelaya said Monday at a news conference in Nicaragua, where he arrived Sunday night following a brief trip to Washington.

If at the next round of talks the interim government does not agree to reinstate him, æthe mediation effort will be considered failed and other measures will be taken, he said. He did not say what those measures would be.

The interim government of Roberto Micheletti, which insists the coup is legal since it was backed by Honduras Supreme Court and Congress, has refused to bend on reinstating Zelaya and is trying to make life return to normal in the impoverished Central American nation.

On Sunday, the government lifted a nighttime curfew in place since the coup and it successfully urged tens of thousands of Honduran teachers and students to return to class Monday.

Micheletti said late Monday that a Honduran negotiating team could return to the bargaining table as early as this weekend to try to end the stalemate caused by the coup. At the swearing-in ceremony of a new foreign minister Monday, Micheletti said his team of delegates was æready for another meeting.

Zelaya accused the Micheletti government of using the talks æas a means to distract attention from repression in Honduras, where protests for and against Zelayas return have filled the streets, though they have waned in recent days.

Members of Michelettis administration did not immediately respond to Zelayas comments.

Arias, the 1987 Nobel Peace Prize winner for his role in helping end Central Americas civil wars, was expected to announce the date for new talks soon.

In Washington, State Department spokesman Ian Kelly reiterated U.S. support for Arias mediation efforts. æIt is not a process thats being led by the United States of America. We just have to give time for this process to work. And Ill just say, were standing firmly behind President Arias, Kelly said.

Despite Kellys comments, Washington has clearly been playing an influential role in the negotiations: It was U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton who invited Arias to mediate and Zelaya supporters have been urging the United States in particular to take firm action that they say would force the interim government to back down

" Hat tip: heroyalwhyness

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[Australia: Government "Slow To Act on Surge in Unlawful Entrants](#)

AS THE latest boatload of unlawful entrants was being dealt with by authorities last night, it emerged the Government was warned as early as last October to prepare for a flood of boat people.

On Saturday night Australias Border Protection Command intercepted a boatload of 73 asylum seekers believed to be from Sri Lanka, many æfamily groups including women and children.

The boat arrived about 11am yesterday at Christmas Island where the group will undergo security, ID and health checks to establish their identity and reasons for travel.

At the same time it emerged Immigration Minister Chris Evans was briefed by his department on an expected æsurge in unauthorised boat arrivals on October 27.

But it took seven months to fund new measures " and the boats still keep coming.

The advice followed the Rudd Governments move to soften border protection policies.

At that stage, Asian people smugglers had only just started to resume operations, sending two boats south with 31 passengers.

Since then, another 23 vessels have been intercepted carrying more than 1000 asylum seekers.

Senator Evans continued to receive advice on the anticipated surge in subsequent briefings, The Daily Telegraph has learned through Freedom of Information laws.

Yet Prime Minister Kevin Rudd scoffed at suggestions of a surge in unauthorised arrivals in an answer to Parliament in December..

œIn 2008 there have been four boats with 48 passengers. In 2007 there were five boats with 148 passengers. If this year we have had a surge, that was a deluge, he said.

The new \$654 million plan includes more money for surveillance and engaging with our neighbours.

" Hat tip: islam ophobe

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[Czechs Want EU Response After Canada Imposes Visas](#)

The Czech government has called for EU solidarity after Canada decided to stop its visa-free regime with Prague due to an increasing number of Czech Roma applicants for asylum in Canada.

Two years after abolishing visa requirements for Czechs as a new member nation of the European Union, Canada re-introduced the visa obligation for all visitors from the country on Tuesday (14 July), following several diplomatic warnings about the likely move.

Although aware of the problem of asylum seekers of Roma origin and Ottawas plans to tackle it, Czech officials stated that the decision was one-sided and unfair and should be protested by all of Europe.

As a response Prague withdrew its ambassador to Canada and imposed visas for Canadian diplomats. Imposition of visas for all Canadian citizens would need to be agreed in co-operation with other EU states.

But the Czech government has also officially requested the European Commission to invoke the blocs solidarity procedure which could theoretically result in a decision by all 27 EU member states to introduce visa to Canada.

œIm curious to know how the other EU member states will react, Czech prime minister Jan Fischer told reporters in Strasbourg on Tuesday, after meeting commission president Jose Manuel Barroso to discuss the matter.

The Czech leader said Mr Barroso had already spoken to Canadian prime minister Stephen Harper and promised he would try hard to help Prague to achieve the lifting of the visa requirements from Czechs.

œWe expect the measures introduced by Canada to be temporary, and we hope that full visa-free travel between the EU and Canada is re-established soon, the commission spokesman Michele Cercone told journalists in Brussels.

The EU executive will reply to Pragues official request within three months and submit a report assessing the demand for reciprocity to the council, representing member states. The council then has another three months to decide what action to take.

But Canadian authorities have defended their proceedings and refuted Pragues criticism. The countrys immigration minister Jason Kenney also downplayed the possibility of a joint EU reaction as asked for by the Czechs.

œI met with [the EUs] acting ambassador yesterday and they gave no indication of such a measure, he told CTV News Channel Tuesday afternoon.

The minister argued that Canada cannot let migrants from other countries abuse its œgenerous, open immigration system, one of the most generous in the world.

œWe cant allow the systematic abuse of people who are basically coming to Canada as economic migrants, jumping the queue, by going through the backdoor of the asylum system, said Mr Kenney.

Czech citizens submitted 1,720 asylum claims in Canada in the first half of 2009, twice as many as in the whole of 2008, with the majority of claims made by Czech Roma citizens complaining about discrimination in their home country.

" Hat tip: islam ophobe

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[Editorial: Human Trafficking](#)

The new law on human trafficking that the Council of Ministers has approved may strike some observers who have never associated the Kingdom with such problems as odd. They would be wrong. Trafficking is not some theoretical

activity. It is a real issue " and a real problem. There is a number of foreigners whose presence in the Kingdom, whether legal or illegal, was organized by unscrupulous characters who trade in human misery.

The new law is deliberately wide in its interpretation of trafficking, and rightly so. Most people consider human trafficking as the organized movement, often the smuggling of illegal immigrants from one country to another " Kurds into the UK, for example, or Afghans to Australia; or shipping prostitutes, willing or unwilling, from East to West Europe. It can be that; there are organized rackets bringing beggars to the Kingdom, especially during Ramadan and the Haj season. But in this case, it is more complex.

It is not so much a question of people being brought to the Kingdom against their will as people being brought under false pretences and then kept against their will, maltreated, underpaid (if not unpaid), forced to work all hours or perform under conditions that amount, in extreme cases, to nothing less than slavery.

The problem starts because of Saudi Arabia's reputation as a land with streets paved with gold " black gold. People imagine in poor countries that prosperity awaits them here. They make easy prey for unscrupulous traffickers.

Take, for example, the poor young man in Bangladesh with no hope of a job or the widow in Indonesia with two children to look after. First, they are deceived by a local agent who tells them that there is a job available in Saudi Arabia paying \$1,000 or more a month. Having signed up, they arrive full of expectations " only to be told that they are going to get \$100 a month or less and that there is nothing that they can do about it. Or maybe they are not paid at all. In some cases, maids are kept imprisoned in their employers homes, subject to sexual abuse from the men of the house and violence from them and the women.

It is not a widespread problem, but even one case would be one too many, and it is certainly more than that.

Like the organizers of the begging rackets, those who lie to people about salaries and the work description, those here who are part of the immigrant labor chain and complicit in those lies, and those employers at the end of the chain who refuse to pay the agreed wage or who treat their staff badly; all need to be tracked down and punished.

But this is not the most important part of this initiative. There is no shortage of existing laws on human trafficking, keeping people in bondage or sexually abusing them. The courts are usually very good at delivering justice when cases are lodged with them. It is about ensuring that those breaking the law are rapidly brought to court. That is where the main effort has to be. A few well publicized stiff sentences would do wonders in bringing the problem to a swift end.

" Hat tip: heroyalwhyness

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[EU Lifting Visa Requirements for Some Balkan Nations](#)

EU Justice and Home Affairs Commissioner Jacques Barrot talks to the media during a press conference at the EU Commission headquarters in Brussels.

The European Union proposed visa-free travel for citizens of Serbia, Montenegro and Macedonia, thus extending some benefits of its common market to the Balkans.

The no-visa rule would apply to a passport-free travel zone that embraces 22 EU countries plus Switzerland, Norway and Iceland. That free-travel zone excludes the U.K., Ireland, Romania, Bulgaria and Cyprus. While the scrapping of the restrictions will prompt a considerable increase in travel from the Balkans, the EU has not put a number on it, EU Justice and Home Affairs Commissioner Jacques Barrot told a press conference.

But, there are no current plans to loosen visa restrictions on citizens of Turkey, said Barrot, Bloomberg reported. EU officials said the move would end a requirement that has made it nearly impossible for citizens of the three nations to travel freely to the rest of Europe for nearly two decades.

The proposal still needs the backing of all 27 EU member states, which could come in October, paving the way for visa requirements to be dropped Jan. 1, Barrot said.

"This is a historic moment in our relations with countries of the western Balkans, Barrot told reporters. "This will allow for far closer and more frequent relations between citizens of those three countries and the European Union.

Barrot said that while Macedonia had fulfilled all the EUs conditions, Serbia and Montenegro still had to carry out measures to enhance their management of borders, migration policies, and their fights against organized crime.

Macedonia has been a candidate for EU membership since 2005, but has still not received a date for opening entry talks due to a name dispute with neighboring Greece. Montenegro and Serbia are also seeking membership, but the latter has been blocked by a Dutch requirement that it capture its last two war-crimes suspects.

EU Enlargement Commissioner Olli Rehn said that while the Netherlands continues to block pre-membership trade ties with Serbia, the government is fully supportive of lifting travel restrictions.

The EU Commission stopped short of recommending that citizens of two other Balkan nations, Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina, also be allowed visa-free travel because they still lack enhanced passports containing microchips with biometrics data.

Europes newest nation, Kosovo, has not yet been included in the visa liberalization program due to security concerns, EU officials said, according to a report by The Associated Press.

It is our common goal that Albania and Bosnia could follow their neighbors soon, if the authorities in these two countries put their full weight behind this effort, Rehn said.

In Belgrade, Deputy Prime Minister Bozidar Djelic called the commissions comments great news. He said that the measure would help foreign investment in Serbia. We are opening new horizons, he said. The key European freedom, the freedom of movement, is now here with us.

Citizens of Serbia, Macedonia and Montenegro earlier enjoyed visa-free travel to Western Europe for 40 years as part of the six-member Yugoslav federation " the only communist countries that allowed its citizens to travel freely abroad.

Visas were first introduced as the federation was breaking up in 1991. Slovenia, which is now an EU member, was the first to be removed from the list, and Croatia followed.

Critics say the strict visa requirements hurt the EUs own plans to integrate the region into the bloc.

" Hat tip: heroyalwhyness

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[Fini: Society Today is Multicultural](#)

(ANSAmEd) " ROME, JULY 14 " The President of the Chamber of Deputies Gianfranco Fini has stated in his introduction to the catalogue to the exhibition "Convergenze mediterranee. Artisti arabi tra Italia e Mediterraneo (Mediterranean Convergences. Arab artists between Italy and Mediterranean) that today society itself is multicultural. The exhibition will be inaugurated this afternoon at Montecitorio, the home of the Chamber of Deputies. Fini mentions dangerous phenomena of xenophobia and racial hatred which unfortunately have been more frequent in recent months. The institutions, writes Fini in his introduction, have a duty to favour and promote culture, which as part of its nature tends towards mutual exchanges between different people: multiethnic and multicultural. I believe the latter term is fundamental, because it implies the full freedom to choose regardless of your own culture of reference. Today society itself is multicultural. We see different cultures living together within a national community, as the artists of the works show us. This scenario, which is in itself a rich opportunity for mutual growth, is also exposed to dangerous phenomena of xenophobia and racial hatred that unfortunately have been more frequent in recent months. Racism, underlined Fini, is not only an attack on the individual rights of a person. It is also an obstacle which prevents societies and people from reaching and fully performing the resources of thought implicit in the development of personal identity. (ANSAmEd).

" Hat tip: Insubria

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[Germanys Visa Exemption: A Test of the EUs Sincerity](#)

On June 5, the German Embassy in Ankara released a press statement announcing that it had undertaken an administrative change that would ease the visa procedure applied to Turkish nationals and widen the scope of Turkish nationals who would be able to enter Germany by simply providing a visa exemption document. Since then, the discourse has been based on the compatibility of the new German regulation with the European Court of Justice, or ECJs, Soysal I ruling in February that declares the visa requirement for Turkish service providers is in breach of both community law and the EC-Turkey Partnership law.

Since the 1990s, the ECJ has played a key role in improving EC-Turkey Partnership law through determining the legal nature of the Ankara Agreement (1963), Additional Protocol (1970), Associate Council Decisions (No 2/76, 1/80, 3/80) and the legal status of Turkish nationals in Europe. Following the failure of the Associate Council to introduce a concrete timetable for abolishing restrictions on freedom of establishment and to provide services between contracting parties, the ECJ began to look at individual cases brought by Turkish nationals who have claimed that EU countries foreigners laws are in breach of Turkey-EU Partnership Law and hinder them from efficiently establishing themselves in EU countries or providing services. At that point, Article 41/1 of the Additional Protocol, which was signed on Nov. 23, 1970, constituted the main legal basis of the applications. According to Article 41/1, "The Contracting Parties shall refrain from introducing between themselves any new restrictions on the freedom of establishment and the freedom to provide services. The European Court of Justice confirmed for the first time in its Savas ruling that this provision has a direct effect since it provides clearly, precisely and unconditionally an unequivocal standstill clause that envisages certain obligations on contracting parties not to act. Thus, Turkish nationals were permitted to rely on Article 41/1 before the national courts of EU member states. However, the court stated that Article 41/1 is not in itself capable of conferring on Turkish nationals a right to enter EU countries and reside there unlawfully. This provision only envisages a general prohibition for contracting parties not to introduce any new stricter conditions than those that are applied to citizens of the parties at the time when the Additional Protocol entered into force.

Turkish nationals long-lasting legal struggle for visa exemption finally yielded results in the ECJs Soysal ruling and the ensuing diplomatic openings placed considerable pressure on the German government to introduce a more favorable treatment for Turkish nationals. Before examining the new German regulation in detail, it is important to put forward the most striking points of the Soysal ruling. In the main proceedings, the ECJ examined for the first time, the legality of visa requirements within the context of entrance conditions for Turkish nationals.. The court once more confirmed the direct effect of Article 41/1 of the Additional Protocol and stated that this provision precludes the introduction, as from the entry into force of Additional Protocol, of a requirement that Turkish nationals must have a visa to enter a member state since on that date, such a visa was not required.

Although the ECJ didn't clarify the scope of the "freedom to provide services", it should be interpreted widely and in line with the Community law and the ECJs well-established jurisprudence. In other words, the court's decision should include both "freedom to provide services" and "freedom to receive services". Moreover, Article 14 of the Ankara Agreement states, "The Contracting Parties agree to be guided by Articles 55, 56 and 58 to 65 of the Treaty establishing the Community for the purpose of abolishing restrictions on freedom to provide services between them. In this context, besides Turkish service providers, Turkish service receivers such as students, patients and tourists must benefit from this right. However, as will be emphasized in the forthcoming paragraphs, the German government preferred to interpret the freedom in a narrow sense and introduced visa exemption only to Turkish service providers who belong to specific professional groups.

The ECJs interpretation on the legality of the visa requirement paved the way for the adoption of the new German visa regulation. Last month, the German Embassy in Ankara announced that hereafter, Turkish service providers who belong to the enlisted professional groups in the decision could freely travel to Germany by providing a visa exemption document from German consulates. However, it has to be noted that the regulation introduces a different visa procedure under the name of "visa exemption" instead of a new system that guarantees the legal gains of Turkish nationals.

Under the new decision, some specific professional groups are enlisted and two pre-conditions are required: 1) Those Turkish nationals should preserve their usual place of residence in Turkey. 2) The maximum duration of stay in Germany with the aim to provide services should not exceed two months. In this context, Turkish nationals who belong to the professional groups specified below are exempt from obtaining a visa to travel:

1) Those who are employed by a Turkish company established in Turkey and who travel to Germany with the aim to provide services for a temporary period: a) driver personnel and ship/plane crew members engaged in the international transportation of goods and passengers, b) maintenance workers.

2) Those who will travel with the aim to carry out activities of a commercial character: a) Those who will make a presentation or performance that is of great artistic value (internationally recognized artists or groups of artists whose performances are distinguished from their counterparts.) b) Those who will make a presentation that is of great scientific value or, c) Those professional sportsmen who predominantly earn their living from this profession.

As is seen, the right to enter Germany without being subject to visa requirement is only granted to a very limited group of people. Contrary to the ECJs well-established jurisprudence, the freedom to provide services is interpreted

in a narrow sense and does not include service receivers. Another noteworthy point is that the new regulation prescribes a condition requiring the commercial activity to have a *œspecially* value. However, the regulation does not mention a competent authority that will evaluate this very subjective condition. According to my opinion, the main goal is to ensure the implementation of the visa exemption is as limited as possible, which is definitely in violation of EC-Turkey Partnership Law.

Another critique that can be directed to the German regulation is that it requires a bunch of official documents to obtain a visa exemption document and this method inevitably reminds of the regular visa system. Especially, those requested documents revealing the type and amount of the remuneration earned, raises question marks over the sincerity of the new regulation.. Moreover, Turkish nationals are *œkindly* asked to apply for a visa exemption document 10 days before they travel, which is probably going to lead to difficulties in future implementation.

However, one must not forget that this non-legally binding document does not provide absolute protection for Turkish service providers since German border authorities reserve the right to reconsider whether those Turkish nationals meet the exemption criteria. This option strengthens the arbitrariness of the future implementation. Lastly, the German government states that the visa exemption regulation, *œwhich* introduces a more favorable treatment for Turkish nationals, is only valid for travel to Germany. In other words, Turkish nationals cannot rely on the German regulation while traveling to the other Schengen countries. However, this approach constitutes an apparent violation of the ECJs Soysal ruling since the courts decision is not only binding over German visa requirements. Firstly, the nine states that had been admitted to the Community by Jan. 1, 1973, (the date on which the Additional Protocol entered into force) did not have a visa requirement for Turkish nationals at that time and consequently the standstill clause embedded in Article 41/1 became binding for those countries. However, there are contradicting views regarding the situation of EU countries that became members after Jan. 1, 1973. According to the dominant view, the standstill clause goes into effect for those countries on the date of their accession to the EC/EU. Accordingly, if those countries had a visa requirement for Turkish nationals on the date of their accession, then the application would continue.

Taking into consideration the main idea behind European integration " to create an Internal Market without borders " differentiation between member states regarding visa exemption for Turkish nationals probably will make implementation impossible. Yet, this complexity should not abandon the responsibility of member states to act in accordance with their loyalty obligation embedded in Article 10 of the EC Treaty. Accordingly, they should undertake the necessary amendments in their national laws. Since the Ankara Agreement envisages certain obligations for both the European Community and member states, the EU Commission should also act in accordance with its responsibilities through introducing a comprehensive and just solution to this long-lasting problem. The Commission firstly has to adopt a common stance in line with the ECJs ruling and prepare a draft proposal that includes the necessary amendments in Council Regulation no 539/2001 on Schengen Visa.

To sum up, the ECJs Soysal ruling constitutes one of the milestone decisions in terms of its consequences, especially the confirmation of the illegality of the visa requirement that Turkish nationals have been subjected to for a very long time. Hereafter, the legal process has to be accompanied by a political dialogue respecting the equality of the parties. A comprehensive solution taking into consideration the concerns and rights of both parties must be the main goal. Turkey, as a negotiating country with the European Union, should be treated on an equal footing with member states already admitted to the Union and have gone through the same EU process. As in the case of Bulgaria and Romania, Turkey should be presented a road map on visa liberalization that is in conformity with Turkish nationals granted legal rights. It is an undeniable fact that easy traveling conditions will increase mutual understanding between the parties and ease the full integration of Turkey into the EU.

(Ceren Mutu??? is a researcher at the Center for European Studies International Strategic Research Organization, or USAK.)

" Hat tip: heroyalwhyness

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[Patra Immigrant Camp Cleared Out](#)

A migrant scales the wall of an unfinished building to escape a fire that broke out yesterday at a camp accommodating illegal immigrants next to the port of Patras. Authorities moved in yesterday to clear out the camp,

which has grown significantly since springing up 13 years ago. The blaze broke out during the clear-out operation for unknown reasons.

Almost 100 officers and riot police took part in an operation to clean out and flatten a makeshift camp for illegal **immigrants** next to the port of Patra, which resulted in dozens of migrants being moved elsewhere.

The operation almost went dramatically wrong when a large fire broke out in the camp as bulldozers moved in to level the temporary wooden huts that had been constructed by the migrants, mostly from Afghanistan. The fire service was called in to prevent the blaze reaching nearby buildings. Nobody was injured.

Authorities said that they discovered 44 minors in the camp. The youngsters will be moved to a special center in northern Greece, officials said.

At least 15 migrants that did not have official documents were taken into custody at a Patra police station. Another 15 that did have the necessary paperwork were moved into a hotel in the city.

The Patra **immigrants** camp has been at the center of much debate recently, having grown into a makeshift home for dozens of migrants at a time, usually hoping for an opportunity to board a ferry headed for Italy.

Local residents had complained about the size of the camp, which lacked running water, and the hygiene levels, which they feared posed a threat to their health.

The camp had become a flash point for clashes between extreme rightists and leftists. Following yesterdays raid, four cars belonging to state organizations were attacked. A cash machine was destroyed and assailants set fire to the door of a local court.

Late last night, police in Patra remained on alert to prevent any further disturbances.

" Hat tip: Insubria

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[Spain: One Dead and 5 Injured in Canary Islands Landing](#)

(ANSAméd) " MADRID, JULY 13 " An **immigrant** was found dead and another 5 suffering from severe dehydration just before midnight on the island of Hierro in the Canary Islands. They were onboard a boat carrying with some 68 people from Sub-Saharan Africa, according to quotes in the media by local officials. Four of the **immigrants**, taken to hospital for severe dehydration and the hypothermia suffered during the long crossing, are still under treatment even if medical sources have said their lives are not in danger.(ANSAméd).

" Hat tip: Insubria

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[UK: Customs Discover **British-Bound** Illegal **Immigrants** Stacked Three-Deep in Plastic "Coffins](#)

Customs officials in Calais discovered 12 **British**-bound migrants crammed into five plastic "coffins" hidden aboard a lorry at the northern French port.

The Vietnamese refugees were squashed in pairs into the crates just 120cm long, 70cm wide and 80cm high " slightly larger than an average washing machine.

Two boxes each contained three men, all hoping to sneak illegally into Britain, officials said.

A customs spokesman said: "These men were sweltering in the most unbearably cramped condition.

"In two of the boxes there were three of them, so squashed that they could not even move.

"There were only tiny air vents cut into the sides of the boxes. They could have suffocated to death in there.

"They had apparently been in the boxes for more than three hours, since their last stop in Paris.

"When we opened them up, the stench of urine was horrific.

Lorry driver Lukas Unger, 27, said he had stowed the men aboard his truck in his native Czech Republic two days earlier, but only put the refugees inside the crates hours before they were found..

He confessed to being paid £3,000 to smuggle the men " who had trekked overland for two months to reach France.

He told a court in Boulogne: "For most of the journey from Prague they were simply sitting in the back of the truck.

"But once in Paris I made them climb into the crates and threw a tarpaulin over them so they would not be spotted at the port.

"I cut air holes in the crates and gave them bottles of lemonade to drink.

He said he did not where he was to deliver the refugees in Britain and had been awaiting instructions from his accomplices in Prague.

He added: "I did it because I needed the money.

Unger, who was stopped by customs at the Calais ferry port on the night of July 9, was jailed for 18 months by the court in Boulogne.

Britain has agreed to give France £15 million to help tighten its borders, under a deal struck by Gordon Brown and President Nicolas Sarkozy last week.

The money will pay for new technology to search vehicles heading for Britain, with trial of the system set to be carried out at Calais before being extended to Boulogne, Dunkirk and the Channel Tunnel terminal at Coquelles.

Of the estimated 2,000 migrants currently in Calais, up to 50 a week are thought to be crossing the Channel illegally, with more migrants arriving in the town to replace them every day.

The Home Office said the number of refugees caught sneaking into Britain from Calais fell from 10,000 five years ago to 1,500 last year, a fall of about 88 per cent.

Read more: #ixzz0LMjUP6QW&C

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[*UK: You Cant Deport Me, Im a Lesbian: Jamaican Drug Dealer Makes Human Rights Plea*](#)

A drug dealer is appealing against her deportation on the grounds it will violate her human rights as a lesbian.

The Jamaican argues she will be persecuted for her homosexuality if she is returned to her home country at the end of her sentence.

She had a boyfriend before her conviction for supplying class-A drugs, but has since had several same-sex lovers in prison.

Drama mirrors life? Scene from the TV series Bad Girls, which depicts a lesbian fling in prison

Yesterday the Court of Appeal heard that the woman, called A for legal reasons, wants to stay in the UK where she says she has found love with a fellow inmate.

But the Home Office refuses to accept the relationship is genuine and said it was just a ruse to get her deportation order returned.

They argue her same-sex relations were merely the result of the lack of male alternatives " similar to one of the lesbian flings depicted in prison dramas such as Bad Girls. Her case is set to cost the taxpayer tens of thousands of pounds.

A, who is 24, was introduced to drugs by a former boyfriend, but since her conviction in 2005 she claims to have had at least six lesbian lovers.

She says in Jamaica she faces the threat of criminal gangs who would set out to kill her because of her homosexuality.

Her legal case is that deporting her would violate her rights to life, freedom of expression, a private life and freedom from discrimination.

But the Home Office believes her alleged relationship is "part and parcel of a campaign to be allowed to stay in the UK.

They claim that as As alleged girlfriend is also Jamaican, there is nothing stopping the couple returning to the Caribbean and setting up home there together.

The Court of Appeal was told that A met the woman she says she loves while they were both inmates at Downview, in Surrey.

Carine Patry Hoskins, for the Home Office, said that it "did not accept that the relationship was genuine.

She added that it was little surprise that A had been a lesbian when in prison. "If she wanted to be sexually active, there was no other option, she said. "There was no other choice but celibacy.

A, who is fighting her case using legal aid, said she was "lost and frightened when she left Jamaica as a teenager, but is now more confident about who she is.

She says she had homosexual and heterosexual relationships before being imprisoned, but had become "more socially confident behind bars, and as a result, had confirmed in her mind her lesbianism.

She is challenging her deportation notice, served earlier this year. Her barrister, S Chelvan, said that as a lesbian she would be in danger if returned to Jamaica.

He also attacked the Home Office for withdrawing two concessions it had made to A before her asylum appeal was heard.

Mr Chelvan said officials had agreed that if it was found she was a lesbian then she would be "at risk in Jamaica, and had also accepted she was in a lesbian relationship.

He said the Home Offices behaviour was a "public disgrace and had "undermined public confidence in the immigration system.

The Home Office conceded that As case will have to be remitted to an appeal tribunal to decide whether she will be at risk if returned to Jamaica, but still disputes her claim to be involved in a lesbian relationship.

" Hat tip: heroyalwhyness

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[Christian Student Fights Prof, Wins Big](#)

Judge rules college cant censor religious speech for being "offensive

A California court has ruled in favor of a student who was insulted for defending traditional marriage and has ordered the college to strike from its website a sexual harassment policy that censors speech deemed "offensive to homosexual people.

As WND reported, Jonathan Lopez, a student at Los Angeles City College, was delivering a speech on his Christian faith in speech class when professor John Matteson interrupted him, called him a "fascist b"rd for mentioning a moral conviction against homosexual marriage and later told him to "ask God what your grade is.

The professor also warned on his evaluation of Lopezs speech, "Proselytizing is inappropriate in public school, and later threatened to have Lopez expelled.

" Hat tip: JD

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[Nearly All My Professors Are Democrats. Isnt That a Problem?](#)

What I didnt realize is that journalism that examined the dominance of liberal ideas on campus would be addressed with hostility.

A professor who confronted me declared that he was "personally offended by my column. He railed that his political viewpoints never affected his teaching and suggested that if I wanted a faculty with Republicans I should have attended a university in the South. "If you like conservatism you can certainly attend the University of Texas and you can walk past the statue of Jefferson Davis everyday on your way to class, he wrote in an e-mail.

I was shocked by such a comment, which seemed an attempt to link Republicans with racist orthodoxy. When I wrote back expressing my offense, he neither apologized nor clarified his remarks.

Instead, he reiterated them on the record. Was such a brazen expression of partisanship representative of the faculty as a whole? I decided to speak with him in person in the hope of finding common ground.

He was eager to chat, and after five minutes our dialogue bloomed into a lively discussion. As we hammered away at the issue, one of his colleagues with whom he shared an office grew visibly agitated. Then, while I was in mid-sentence, she exploded.

"You think youre so [expletive] cute with your little column, she told me. "I read your piece and all you want is attention. Youre just like Bill OReilly. You just want to get up on your [expletive] soapbox and have people look at you.

From the disgust with which she attacked me, you would have thought I had advocated Nazism. She quickly grew so emotional that she had to leave the room. But before she departed, she stood over me and screamed.

"You understand that my column was basically a prophesy, I shot back. I had suggested right-leaning ideas werent welcome on campus and in response the faculty had tied my viewpoints to racism and addressed me with profanity-laced insults.

Whats so remarkable is that I hadnt actually advocated Republican ideas or conservative ideas. In fact, Im not a conservative, nor a Republican. I simply believe in the concept of diversity " a primarily liberal idea " and think that we suffer when we dont include ideas we find unappealing.

After my article on political diversity was published, I received numerous e-mails from students at other schools who spoke of similar experiences. As a result of my research and personal experience, I can now say without reservation that the lack of ideological diversity on college campuses is a dangerous threat to free and open discourse in academia. Sadly, there are few perfect solutions.

" Hat tip: JD

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[UK: Could Teens be Fed a More Dangerous and Deluded Message!](#)

It's not being told sex is their human right " and it's good for them too?

A leaflet promoting the idea that sex is fun sounds like a waste of taxpayers money. Uh, tell us something we don't know.

But a sex education leaflet telling teenagers that sex is fun " in a bid to prevent underage pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections " is not only a waste of taxpayers money, it's misguided do-gooding gone crazy.

And yet that's exactly what NHS Sheffield has just published.

The leaflet, entitled "Pleasure", advises school kids that they not only have a "right to an enjoyable sex life, but also that regular sex is good for their health.

" Hat tip: JD

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[How Much Cooling is Enough?](#)

Here's what I wrote in last year's column titled "The specter of global cooling (Dec. 24, 2008): "Once laws are written, they are very difficult, if not impossible, to repeal. If a time would ever come when the permafrost returns to northern U.S., as far south as New Jersey as it once did, it's not inconceivable that Congress, caught in the grip of the global warming zealots, would keep all the laws on the books they wrote in the name of fighting global warming. Personally, I would not put it past them to write more. On June 28, 2009, the House of Representatives, by a narrow margin (219-212), passed the Waxman-Markey bill. The so-called "cap and trade" bill has been sold as a system for cutting greenhouse gas emissions in the struggle against global warming. There's a full-court press on the U.S. Senate to pass its version of "cap and trade."

"Cap and trade" is first a massive indirect tax on the American people and hence another source of revenue for Congress. More importantly "cap and trade" is just about the most effective tool for controlling most economic activity short of openly declaring ourselves a communist nation, and it's a radical environmentalists' dream come true.

So why the rush and the press on the Senate? Increasing evidence is emerging that far from there being global warming, the Earth has been cooling and has been doing so for 10 years. Prominent atmospheric scientists have recently sent a letter to Congress saying, "You are being deceived about global warming. The Earth has been cooling for 10 years. The present cooling was not predicted by the alarmists' computer models. Last March, more than 700 international scientists went on record dissenting over manmade global warming claims. About 31,500 American scientists, including 9,029 with Ph.D.s, have signed a petition, that in part reads, "There is no convincing scientific evidence that human release of carbon dioxide, methane or other greenhouse gases is causing or will, in the foreseeable future, cause catastrophic heating of the Earth's atmosphere and disruption of the Earth's climate."

" Hat tip: JD

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[Swine Flu Vaccine Still Months Away: WHO Chief](#)

LONDON (AFP) " World Health Organisation chief Margaret Chan cast doubt Wednesday on the government's plans to start vaccinating from next month those most at risk of contracting swine flu.

Chan told the Guardian newspaper that a vaccine would not be available for several months, despite statements from health officials here that the first stocks would start arriving in August.

"There's no vaccine. One should be available soon, in August. But having a vaccine available is not the same as having a vaccine that has proven safe, WHO director general Chan said in an interview with the newspaper.

"Clinical trial data will not be available for another two to three months, she said.

Health Secretary Andy Burnham has said the first batches were set to arrive in the country in August, and will be eventually be available to everyone.

Seventeen people have died after contracting swine flu, while nearly 10,000 have been confirmed with the virus. A post-mortem examination has established that one of the latest victims, a doctor from Bedfordshire, died of causes other than swine flu, officials said Tuesday.

Tests were still being carried out on a six-year-old girl who also died, as health officials urged the public to remain calm.

Chief medical officer for England Liam Donaldson told the BBC Tuesday that a third of the population may catch swine flu this winter, and the virus could be here for up to five years.

œThe virus will not just be here for one winter " previous pandemics have been around three, four five years, he said.

The World Health Organisation said all countries were going to need vaccines against the virus because the swine flu pandemic was now unstoppable..

With the global death toll from A(H1N1) now reaching at least 429, WHO director of vaccine research Marie-Paul Kieny said Monday that a vaccine should be available as early as September.

" Hat tip: heroyalwhyness

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[Tagging Technology to Track Trash](#)

The ebb and flow of thousands of pieces of household rubbish are to be tracked using sophisticated mobile tags.

It is hoped that making people confront the final journey of their waste will make them reduce what they throw away. Initially, 3,000 pieces of rubbish, donated by volunteers, will be tagged in New York, Seattle and London.

œTrash is almost an invisible system today, Assaf Biderman, one of the project leaders at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, told BBC News.

œYou throw something into the garbage and a lot of us forget about it. It gets buried, it gets burned, it gets shipped overseas.

The Trash Track aims to make that process " termed the œremoval chain " more transparent.

Friends of the Earths Senior Waste Campaigner Michael Warhurst said the project could be a œuseful tool for highlighting the impact of rubbish.

œ[Waste] doesnt simply disappear when we throw it away, and all too often it ends up causing damage when it could be recycled instead.

œPeople must have much better information on " and control over " where their rubbish and recycling ends up.

Global waste

In order to monitor how the pieces of rubbish move around the cities and beyond, the MIT team has developed a small mobile sensor that can be attached to individual pieces of waste.

œIts like a miniature cell phone with limited functionality, said Carlo Ratti, another member of the project.

Each tag " encased in a protective resin " continuously broadcasts its location to a central server. The results can then be collected and plotted on a map in real time.

œIts like putting tracers in your blood and seeing where it moves around your body, said Mr Biderman.

Because cell phone technology is cheap and " importantly " ubiquitous, the system should be able to track rubbish around the globe.

This could be important when tracking computers and electronic waste, which is often disposed of incorrectly, according to Mr Ratti.

œSome of them are shipped to Africa to pollute, he said.

The team aims to tag different types of waste from computers and cell phones to bags of garden waste.

The group is currently looking for volunteers to donate their trash.

The results of the US studies will be shown at two exhibitions in Seattle and New York during September.

~Zero waste

The team stresses that it has tried to limit the impact of its study and of the technology, and limit the amount of extra waste it contributes to the œremoval chain.

œWe are adhering to the highest standards in terms of environmental impact, said Mr Biderman.

œThe impact this could have on waste management and removal! could be significant, so these kinds of experiments could be much more useful than harmful for the environment.

The MIT team has previously revealed the movements of people around cities, such as Rome and Copenhagen, by analysing mobile phone signals.

They used a similar method to show how crowds moved around Washington during the inauguration of US President Barack Obama.

The tags used to track the rubbish are a departure from these more passive studies of city movements.

Ultimately, the team hopes that the technology can be miniaturised and made cheap enough that the tags could one day be attached to everything.

œThink about a future where thanks to smart tags we will not have waste anymore, said Mr Ratti. œEverything will be traceable.

" Hat tip: heroyalwhyness

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