



Top Stories

US trade deficit increases to record high in first quarter 2005

The United States trade deficit has increased to its highest level yet: \$195.1 billion (£161 billion) in the first quarter of 2005, according to preliminary U.S. Commerce Department figures. The figure represents the sum of the money gained by the US economy by selling exports, minus the cost of buying imports. The last quarter of 2004 saw a deficit of \$188.4 billion.

Mothers, teachers air more concerns about leukemia cases at California elementary school

On Thursday night, California State Senator Joe Dunn held the second town hall meeting regarding a recent outbreak of leukemia in schoolchildren, at Franklin Elementary in Santa Ana, California. Representatives from the City of Santa Ana, the Santa Ana Unified School District, and the South Coast Air Quality Management District (AQMD) were available to answer the community's questions.

Associated Press published today 6 new "Downing Street Memos" labeled "secret" or "confidential"

The Associated Press has put 6 recently obtained internal British government documents concerning the lead-up to the war in Iraq on its website which are labeled "secret" or "confidential". AP is saying that the memos show; "When Prime Minister Tony Blair's chief foreign policy adviser dined with Condoleezza Rice six months after Sept. 11, the then-U.S. national security adviser didn't want to discuss Osama bin Laden or al-Qaida. She wanted to talk about "regime change" in Iraq, setting the stage for the U.S.-led invasion more than a year later."

Wikipedia Current Events

•In Lebanon, the fourth and final round of national elections appears to result in a victory for the anti-Syrian opposition.

•In Iran, Mehdi Karroubi resigns from all his political post in a protest against "rigging the polls" in the first round of the presidential election that took place on June 16 and resulted in a surprise second rank for Mahmoud Ahmadinezhad, the hardline mayor of Tehran.

•One Israeli soldier is killed and two Israeli construction contractors are injured after Palestinian militants fire two anti-tank missiles at an Israeli military base along the Philadelphi Route in the occupied Gaza Strip. One of the Palestinian militants is also killed in the exchange of fire. Palestinian Islamic Jihad and the Fatah's Abu-Reish Brigades claim responsibility.

•At Hawara checkpoint near Nablus in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, a Palestinian teenager is arrested for smuggling five pipe bombs in a wooden box. Palestinian sources identify the boy as 16-year-old Khalil Mohammed Hashash.

•Senator Joseph Biden says that he plans to seek the Democratic Party's nomination for President of the United States in 2008.

Los Angeles Times launches editorial wiki

The Los Angeles Times has launched a web site where readers can collaboratively edit and respond to certain editorials from the paper. The site, called Wikitorial, uses a type of software known as a wiki. Registered users over 13 years of age may edit and contribute to designated "Wikitorials". On Friday, the Times posted the site's first editorial on

latimes.com, entitled "War and Consequences". The corresponding Wikitorial is named "Dreams About War and Retribution".

In its introduction to Wikitorial, a Los Angeles Times editor invited readers to "rewrite the editorial yourself" if they thought something could be improved. The unsigned introduction to Wikitorial drew parallels with Wikipedia, which was said to work "bewilderingly well". The Times hopes that its self-admitted experiment will help a wider range of people express their opinions on editorial topics. The newspaper has acknowledged that the idea may not work, saying "Plenty of skeptics are predicting embarrassment; like an arthritic old lady who takes to the dance floor, they say, the Los Angeles Times is more likely to break a hip than to be hip."

"War and Consequences", a traditional editorial, serves as a starting point for wiki users. The opinion piece calls for clearer goals in the United States' current military involvement in Iraq. The author proposes a clear timetable for training Iraqi troops and police officers, and states that people need to be held responsible for intelligence failures leading up to the war, and failures to provide sufficient troops during and after the war.

The corresponding wikitorial, named "Dreams About War and Retribution", initially started as an exact copy of "War and Consequences" when it was posted on June 17. Since then it has been edited over 150 times. The original editorial confined itself to points supporting two basic claims: The need for a timetable, and the need for responsibility. In contrast, the wikitorial has increased the original scope considerably, weighing in on topics such as the Downing Street memo and drawing analogies to the

Philippine-American War. One contributor even accused the American media, including the L.A. Times itself, of dereliction due to their uncritical coverage of the U.S. administration shortly before the 2003 invasion of Iraq.

As of mid day today, June 19th, the the LATWiki Main Page has been replaced with the text "Where is the wikitorial? Unfortunately, we have had to remove this feature, at least temporarily, because a few readers were flooding the site with inappropriate material. Thanks and apologies to the thousands of people who logged on in the right spirit. " There is speculation that this could be due to the Slashdot effect as it was recently Posted on Slashdot.

Update: the text now reads:

"Where is the wikitorial?"

Unfortunately, we have had to remove this feature, at least temporarily, because a few readers were flooding the site with inappropriate material.

Thanks and apologies to the thousands of people who logged on in the right spirit"

Michelin's tire mistake sends US Formula One Grand Prix into farce

The Indianapolis Formula One Grand Prix descended into farce when just six cars started the race today. The problem arose when Michelin discovered that its tires were incapable of more than ten laps at race pace.

The first indication of trouble was when the rear left tire of Ralf Schumacher's Toyota racecar exploded during practice on Friday. Schumacher's car collided with the track wall while travelling at 300 km/h, leaving him shaken but generally unharmed. However, further investigations by Michelin revealed that another ten tires had suffered problems, with one also failing on track.

All the problems occurred on the rear left

tire during the two long 90 degree corners leading onto the main straight. The nine degree banking and grooves cut into the surface of the track compounded problems.

It is believed that Michelin may not have properly accounted for the grooves cut into the Indianapolis track to improve grip for Indy cars after the track was resurfaced. Indy cars have smaller down-force generating wings so need more grip from their tires than Formula One cars.

Bridgestone, the other tire manufacturer currently in Formula One, did not have similar problems. It is possible that their US subsidiary, Firestone, who supplied tires for an Indy car race after the resurfacing, may have sent information back to their Formula One tires department in Japan. The three teams running Bridgestone tires - Ferrari, Jordan and Minardi - were therefore able to compete without any safety concerns.

Under FIA racing regulations, the only course of action was for the Michelin runners to withdraw from the race on safety grounds. Rules prevented alternative tires from being flown from France overnight, although Michelin were unsure whether these tires were also affected by the problem.

Drivers and teams had also suggested building a chicane to slow cars down between the corners, but again race organisers rejected the idea under regulations.

The 123,000 fans watching from the stands were unaware of the farce unfolding below them until the parade lap before the race.

The fourteen Michelin runners peeled off into the pit lane rather than take up their starting positions on the grid.

Fans jeered and booed as they realised what was happening, and a small number began throwing bottles and cans onto the track.

Rubens Barrichello, in a Ferrari, ran over one bottle of water at high speed which exploded in a spray of droplets.

Fans started stamping in the stands on the finish line straight, causing them to shake.

A British ITV filmcrew spoke to some fans. "I paid \$85 for three-day ticket. I travelled nine hours from Baltimore to be here. Indy cars wouldn't do this. NASCARS wouldn't do this. I'll never attend a race again - only watch on TV."

Other fans had travelled from Mexico and Panama to watch the race, and said they wanted refunds.

A Police Captain also talked to ITV, saying he'd never seen fans as angry as this before. If trouble flared, they could call on 400-500 officers from local and state police, Indianapolis Police Department and the FBI under contingency plans.

The race was eventually won by Michael Schumacher from his Ferrari teammate Rubens Barrichello. Jordan's Tiago Monteiro finished third.

Today in History

1756 - A garrison of the British army in India was imprisoned in the Black Hole of Calcutta.

1789 - 577 deputies of the French Third Estate (commoners) took the Tennis Court Oath, starting the French Revolution.

1837 - Queen Victoria succeeded to the British throne.

1947 - A Mafia hitman murdered gangster Bugsy Siegel in Las Vegas, Nevada, United States.

Quote of the Day

"I cannot think we are useless or Usen would not have created us. He created all tribes of men and certainly had a righteous purpose in creating each." ~ Geronimo

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