

NEWS IN BRIEF

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PAKISTAN

THE DEATH OF TWO PAKISTANI MEN AT THE HANDS OF AMERICAN CITIZEN, Raymond Allen Davis, lifted the cover on CIA operations within the country and created a firestorm of controversy. As details of the case emerge, U.S. officials within the CIA have revealed that Davis is a CIA security contractor working under the guise of a "administrative and technical staff" member of the U.S. Embassy, reports the Associated Press. The true purpose of Davis' work in Pakistan, surveillance and tracking of the country's numerous militant groups, has forced the already unstable pro-Western government between a rock — caving to U.S. influence — and a hard place — pressure from an unhappy population to punish the American and limit the freedom CIA operatives have to work within the country.



UNITED STATES

UNION DEBATES RAGE IN WISCONSIN, spread through midwest In the face of a budget shortfall, Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker and his Republican congressional supporters wish to rewrite the roles of public unions, reports The New York Times. The proposal, which has caused widespread protests and debate, would cut worker benefits and eliminate union bargaining rights. The issue has caused rifts between union members from the private sector — who have suffered large cuts to benefits because the manufacturing business that dominates the state has been severely affected by the country's recession — and the members of public unions that would be affected by the proposed cuts.



SOMALIA

FOUR AMERICANS HAVE BEEN REPORTED DEAD after being held hostage for days by Somali pirates who commandeered the group's yacht off the coast of the Horn of Africa. Despite ongoing negotiations between the U.S. Navy and the pirates, including their financier and village elders in Somalia, the hostages were murdered within the yacht's cabin, reports The New York Times. Thirteen pirates have been taken into custody, while two were found dead at the hands of the pirates themselves.



NEW ZEALAND

AT LEAST 65 HAVE BEEN REPORTED DEAD FOLLOWING A 6.3-MAGNITUDE EARTHQUAKE in New Zealand's second largest city, Christchurch. According to BBC News, the death toll is expected to rise, with rescue workers searching the rubble and trying to deal with the quake's unusually strong aftershocks, some of which reached a level 5 magnitude. The city's mayor, Bob Parker, declared a state of emergency, ordered an evacuation of the city center, and described the scene as "New Zealand's darkest day." The quake toppled the city's cathedral spire, demolished a six-story TV building that housed an English language school, and left much of the city without water or electricity.

Aboriginal group divided in decision over proposed natural gas plant

By Andrew Glass
STAFF WRITER

In Australia, an economic boom of enormous proportions has been occurring thanks to its abundant natural resources. Trade with China and India has boosted demand for iron and other resources, enriching many Australians, reports The New York Times.

However, the Aboriginal population — Australia's marginalized indigenous minority — has been left out of receiving many of the benefits. The Aboriginal population falls well below the rest of Australia in home-ownership and education levels.

In Broome, Western Australia, an Aboriginal group may be able to receive some benefits of the boom. Woodside, an Australian natural gas company, wants to build a \$30 billion natural gas plant on James Price Point.

Although James Price Point has not been officially recognized as Aboriginal land, the Australian government and Woodside have been negotiating with the Kimberley Land Council — the largest Aboriginal group in the area —

for the past three years.

According to The New York Times, the plant would bring an estimated \$1.5 billion in compensation to the community over the next 30 years.

The Goolarabooloo Jabirr Jabirr group, which is headed by the KLC, is split over the decision, with some wanting the economic boost to build their community and others wanting to preserve the land — which the group considers sacred ground — according to The Australian.

Wayne Bergmann, the executive director of the KLC, fully supports the construction of the plant.

He argues that it will help empower the Aboriginal people and improve their quality of life.

"These resources booms come along maybe every 50 to 100 years, big ones like this," said Bergmann to The New Strait Times.

"So, if we don't get positioned during this next stage, the chances are we're going to be locked out of the opportunities that are going to help build the economic basis for our families in the future. We can't sit

back."

Joseph Roe — the Goolarabooloo law boss and elder — is the most active opponent of the natural gas plant.

He desires to protect the culture and the sense of country of the Aboriginal people, reports The New York Times.

"(The supporters of the gas plant) don't know how to connect to country anymore," he said. "They walk around with a dead feeling, these people, inside them."

He is backed by many environmental groups, who point out that the plant would negatively impact Broome — the major tourist site in Western Australia — reports The New Strait Times.

Bergmann says the opponents of the plants want the Aborigines to remain "museum pieces" instead of progressing into society, while the supporters claim honest intentions benefiting from the economic boom as non-Aboriginal Australians.

Due to the conflict in the KLC, West Australian Premier Colin Barnett started the process of compulsory acquisition, which would require that

the Goolarabooloo Jabirr Jabirr sell the land to Woodside.

This would prove a setback for the economic gain of the Aboriginal group, according to The New York Times.

"That's another reaction based on (Australia's) colonial history," said Visiting Assistant Professor of Philosophy Joseph Cole. "There's a pattern here of destroying these traditional societies and undermining their ability to take care of themselves and then still putting them in a very difficult situation in having to sell off what little resources they have left in order to try and survive."

On Feb. 15, a judge replaced Roe as the legal applicant for the Aboriginal groups, according to the Australian Associated Press, pleasing supporters of the natural gas plant. Roe has a week to appeal, and he says that is what he plans to do.

"So a spoiler element has now been removed," said Barnett. "Hopefully now the people can work collectively, we can finalize the negotiations and can reach by consent an agreement on the development (of the natural gas

plant)."

The KLC is afraid that compulsory acquisition of the land will dissolve the Aboriginal support for the project, reports the New Strait Times.

Barnett should drop the compulsory acquisition, says the KLC, since Roe is gone, negotiations can move forward. Barnett, however, has not stopped the process, according to The Sydney Morning Herald.

"I think a natural gas plant would be a double-edged sword that would end up causing more harm than good," said senior biology major Elliot Diggs, who studied abroad in Australia in fall 2009. "Even after (the Aborigines) got recognized by the government they gave up a lot to gain something, but it always seemed like they gave up more than what they got in return."

As for the final decision, many say the government should not be involved.

"It's (the Aborigines') choice to make," said Cole. "Do they want to assimilate more into modern industrial society or do they want to preserve their traditional way of life? Only they can decide what is good for them."