

NEWS

National and world news in brief

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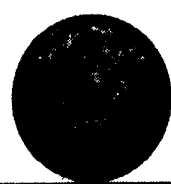
Children seeking asylum in UK face deportation

UK - Children seeking asylum in the UK will now be deported before the age of 18 if they are denied the right to stay. The old proceedings didn't initiate deportation proceedings until the subject turned 18.

Nearly 2,000 children seek asylum in the UK each year, unaccompanied by a parent or guardian. Children rights organizations are criticizing the UK government, stating that children being sent out of the UK could potentially enter a harmful environment. "The government should not try to force any child to return against their wishes where their safety and welfare cannot be guaranteed," said Donna Covey, chief executive of the Refugee Council. "The government should not try to force any child to return against their wishes where their safety and welfare cannot be guaranteed." The government said children would not be deported until authorities were "100 percent sure" of safe reception in their homeland.

Immigration minister Liam Byrne said the old policy allowed child traffickers to not have to worry about children being sent home once entering the country.

Children's Commissioner for England, Sir Al Aynsley-Green commended the government's efforts to tackle the problem, but was still concerned about unaccompanied children from "conflict-affected countries." Aynsley-Green said "If they feel unsupported in the UK, these children could disappear from a local authority's care well before their 18th birthday. This puts them at serious risk of harm..."



Sources: BBC News, CNN

Source: senior al Qaeda terrorist killed

WASHINGTON - A military source has said that a senior al Qaeda terrorist has been killed in Pakistan.

Abu Laith al-Libi, 41, allegedly plotted and led terrorists against the U.S. and coalition forces and was listed as one the military's most wanted people.

Al-Libi is believed to have been involved in the Feb. 2007 bombing at the Bagram Air Base in Afghanistan while Vice President Dick Cheney was visiting.

Officials have said that al-Libi was "not far below the importance of the top two al Qaeda leaders." The top two leaders are considered to be Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri. A CNN Middle East analyst called al-Libi the third-ranking terrorist in al Qaeda and the fourth in the world.

Radical Islamist websites are acknowledging al-Libi's death. One posting read, "May God have mercy on Sheikh Abu Laith al-Libi and accept him with his brothers, with the martyrs."

Earlier in al-Libi's life, he served as the leader of the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group. His group later joined forces with al Qaeda where he was allegedly responsible for plotting terrorist attacks throughout North Africa and the Middle East. Officials describe al-Libi as an inner circle man who filled the space left by other senior leaders who had been captured or killed.

The military spokesman Maj. Gen. Athar Abbas told CNN reporters that it was impossible to know exactly who had been killed because all the bodies of the deceased have been removed and buried by Taliban and al Qaeda members.

Al-Libi was placed on the U.S. military's most wanted list in 2006. The U.S. offered a reward ranging from \$20,000 to \$200,000 for information on al-Libi and 11 other terrorist leaders.

Stolen laptop contained Penn State alumni information

By Matthew Schwabenbauer
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The Social Security numbers of 677 Penn State alumni are at risk after a University laptop was stolen earlier this month. The laptop, which contained past students' archived information, including Social Security numbers was in the possession of a traveling faculty member. The theft opens up alumni which graduated between 1999 and 2004 to the possibility of identity theft.

"[The laptop is] on the National Crime Information Center data base," said David Lindstrom, Penn State's chief privacy officer. "So every police department in the United States can try to find it." Lindstrom said the neither name of the faculty member who was in possession of the laptop will be released because he said he does not "want the bad guys to know what they have." He added that he believed the theft was random and unrelated to Penn State.

Annemarie Mountz, a spokesperson for Penn State said letters have been sent to the individuals whose information is at risk. She stated that the university hasn't received a complaint from any of the exposed alumni. Mountz said she was unaware why the old information was being stored on the laptop, and that no new information on the laptops whereabouts had been discovered. According to Lindstrom, the University no longer stores sensitive information on devices such as laptops, but in the case of the laptop he said "that was how the university used to do business." Lindstrom added that laptops previously stolen from the University had been recovered, but never contained such sensitive information about Penn State alumni. "We have no reason to believe anybody's information has been compromised, but you need to take precautions, watch your credit, and just be careful," said

Lindstrom.

Former assistant vice provost for enrollment management and registrar, Jim Wager, told The Daily Collegian in March 2004 that "by using the Social Security number, we have compromised people's identities. We're trying as an institution to not play into this." Students' Social Security numbers were printed on Penn State identification cards until 2005. Wager said the University ceased listing social security numbers on identification cards due to the rising popularity in internet commerce.

By having a social security number exposed, identity thieves can then open bank accounts, credit cards and checking accounts in someone else's name. Identity thieves can also take out loans in someone else's name by having their own social security number, which then ruins the victims credit. In rare cases, criminals have been known to obtain copy identification cards by using someone's social security number, then if arrested for a crime they present the false identification card which places the charges under someone else's name.

The last time the University caused a similar security risk, no cases of identity theft were reported. In July 2007, 8,400 Marines' Social Security numbers were posted on the Penn State web site. A researcher posted the information which was part of a larger file, not realizing the numbers were part of the file. The information was removed after 12 days.

"We have no reason to believe anybody's information has been compromised, but you need to take precautions, watch your credit, and just be careful."

- Penn State chief privacy officer David Lindstrom.

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Quotes on Civility

"Until he extends the circle of his compassion to all living things, man will not himself find peace."

— Albert Schweitzer, French Nobel Peace Prize-winning mission doctor and theologian (1875-1965)

Janet Neff Sampler Center
 for Manners & Civility



Former Behrend student sentenced in child porn case

By Lenny Smith
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Former Penn State Behrend student Jonathan Demerecz, 24, was sentenced to six months to a year in the Erie County prison today after being convicted of child pornography possession.

After his release from prison, Demerecz will be

placed on five years probation and required to register as a sex offender.

Demerecz was found guilty of possessing 21 files depicting children being raped or sexually abused on his personal computer in Oct. 2007 at a non-jury trial.

While at Behrend, Demerecz was a physics major that was very active in extra-curricular activities. He also served as the vice-president of the gamers club. Demerecz was scheduled to graduate in the spring of 2007, but has not been a registered student at the college since Dec. 2006.

Bomb scare at Erie County Courthouse

By Lenny Smith
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Erie County Police are investigating who left a pipe bomb after a worker discovered the bomb around 8 a.m. on Jan 31.

Erie County Sheriff Bob Merski said the pipe bomb was seven to eight inches in length and also included a fuse and gun powder. The bomb was not yet been able to determine how the bomb was to be detonated. Although, Merski called the bomb a "simple device."

The courthouse was closed to the public while police secured the streets and surrounding areas. "The action they took was to defuse the pipe bomb, which entailed blowing off the end cap which would render it pretty much harmless," Merski said.

The courthouse was not evacuated because

officials felt that there was no threat to the workers inside the courthouse. The courthouse was reopened to the public at 9:30 a.m., and services ran in normal operation throughout the day.

Investigators are hoping that film from two security cameras at the courthouse will shed some light onto who left to bomb. Police have requested the use of footage from buildings owned by Gannon University that surround the courthouse.

The bomb was sent to a lab for further testing. A white substance found next to the bomb is also undergoing tests to determine exactly what it is, although officials believe it could be salt.

Merski said the call was never looked at as a false alarm. "False alarms, we don't consider anything a false alarm. We handle everything as if it were an incident that could potentially damage property, or injure, kill or maim people."

No one has been arrested.

Robotics club prepares for competition

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The Robotics Club here at Behrend is looking for new fighting robot competition at the Penn State Abington campus next spring.

Rebounding from roughly five members last fall, the club has grown into the double digits. Spreading through word of mouth, the club is ready to tackle the task of a three semester long project, but they are more than willing to take in any new members that are interested.

"Any major is welcome," said Frisk, president of the Robotics Club and a junior double majoring in computer and electrical engineering who hopes to go into robotics after graduate school. "If you are interested in helping us, you can. Pre-med students are allowed to come. Doesn't matter here. Pretty much whoever is interested in robotics, but we would like to see some upper class men like mechanical engineers, computer engineers, electrical engineers, software engineers, computer science... even technology people can help out a lot."

The club wishes to enter into a competition that challenges the contestants to design a small robot no larger than 12 and a quarter inch cubed that can autonomously find its way through a short maze to extinguish a small candle placed at random in one the maze's four rooms. The event is based on the International Fire Fighting Robot Contest at Trinity College.

Winning the competition is determined by whichever team can complete the task of extinguishing the flame the fastest. Each robot is

given two chances to extinguish the candle following certain guidelines such as, for example, being at most a foot away from the flame before putting it out.

Robots that complete certain tasks in addition to extinguishing the flame can get seconds taken off their time. Using carbon dioxide to put out the candle, returning back to the starting position, ascending or descending a set of stairs in the maze, and starting to operate after hearing a fire alarm all give the competitors bonuses if they can complete them, all of which the Robotics Club is trying to achieve. An additional time deduction can be achieved if obstacles are placed in the rooms.

With roughly three whole semesters to prepare for the event, the club plans to take this spring semester to plan, design, and purchase parts for the robot, use next fall for construction, and use next spring to fine tune, debug, and ultimately enter their creation into the competition.

The faculty advisor for the Robotics club, Ron Krahe, Associate Professor of Electrical and Computer Engineering Technology, expressed what can be gained by taking on such an undertaking. "It is the process that is important I think here," Krahe said in a brief interview. "It's going through the steps and solving the problem...what they come up with is valuable but more important than that is the process that they go through to figure out how to do these kinds of things."

Any students interested in joining or finding out more about the Robotics Club and the competition can contact them at their website, www.clubs.psu.edu/bd/robotics or email them at behrendrobotics@gmail.com.