



BRITAIN

*For free brochure  
just click*

H A R P E R ' S M A G A Z I N E

---

**WEEKLY REVIEW**

OCTOBER 28, 2003

Iraqi guerrillas using a homemade launching pad fired eight to ten rockets at the Al Rasheed hotel in Baghdad, where American officials have been staying since April. Some of the Americans were seen fleeing the luxury hotel in their pajamas and shorts; one of the missiles struck a floor just below Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz, but he escaped unhurt. The following day, a suicide bomber driving an ambulance struck the offices of the International Red Cross in Baghdad; the bomb left a six-foot-deep crater and broke windows a mile away. Within 45 minutes, bombers struck four police stations in other neighborhoods; at least 34 died and more than 200 were injured. "The more successful we are on the ground," said President Bush, "the more these killers will react." The Pentagon was planning to spend \$335 million on high-tech solutions to the guerrilla war; the measures include electronic jamming devices, tethered blimps with digital cameras, and other "rapid-reaction/new solution" technologies. Several soldiers home from Iraq on leave went AWOL. Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld admitted in a leaked memo that the United States still doesn't have much of a plan for fighting the war on terrorism, and in a published interview he called for a new government bureaucracy to fight the "war of ideas" against international terrorism. There were grumblings among Republicans, none of whom spoke on the record, that Rumsfeld has become a political liability. The chairman of the independent commission investigating September 11 threatened to subpoena the White House for documents that it has been refusing to turn over. FBI agents at the Norfolk, Virginia, airport took anal swabs from a mechanical farting dog to make sure it did not contain explosives. The lawyer for Captain James Yee, the former American prison-camp

chaplain who was arrested for being a Muslim spy, complained that his client was being mistreated in prison. President Bush was reportedly astonished to discover, during his recent trip to Asia, that Muslims around the world believe that the United States is hostile to them. In Arizona, a firefighter pleaded guilty to starting a wildfire so that he could get paid for putting it out.

Firestorms in southern California killed at least 13 people and drove tens of thousands from their homes. A large geomagnetic storm caused by explosions on the surface of the sun (called coronal mass ejections) hit the earth but caused few disruptions. Lightning struck the actor who plays Jesus Christ in Mel Gibson's current film project, "The Passion of Christ," during a shoot in Italy. The United States was granted broad exemptions for the use of methyl bromide, a pesticide that damages the ozone layer; the chemical was supposed to be banned under the Montreal Protocol, which the U.S. signed. Strawberry and tomato farmers, as well as the owners of golf courses, will benefit. New satellite observations revealed that Arctic warming is much more severe than was previously thought and that the amount of Arctic sea ice was at a record low. The U.S. Nuclear Waste Technical Review Board concluded that the government's plan to bury nuclear waste at Yucca Mountain, near Las Vegas, is dangerously flawed; the design, the board said, would lead to the corrosion and perforation of the containers, and thus to leaks. Autopsies of 11 people in Pennsylvania revealed high concentrations of cadmium, a toxic metal. Much of Zimbabwe's wildlife is being wiped out by poachers, naturalists said, and Human Rights Watch accused Zimbabwe of using famine as a weapon against political dissidents. Brewers in Colorado were offering a pint of beer in exchange for a pint of blood.

A former Navy lawyer revealed that President Lyndon S. Johnson and Robert McNamara, his secretary of defense, ordered those who were investigating the 1967 Israeli attack on the American ship Liberty to conclude that the incident, in which 34 American servicemen died, was an accident, even though the evidence pointed overwhelmingly to the contrary. An Israeli helicopter fired a rocket at a car in the Gaza Strip; after a crowd gathered, another rocket was fired, killing at least eight people and injuring 70. Israeli officials initially disputed the claim that bystanders were injured in the second strike and released a videotape as evidence; upon closer examination, however, the tape confirmed the Palestinian version of

the events. Colin Powell was trying to make peace in Sudan. The emirate of Dubai announced that it will build a \$5 billion amusement park that will include an artificial rain forest and a ski slope. A letter containing ricin, a powerful poison, was discovered in an airport post office in South Carolina. Egremont, Massachusetts, a town in the Berkshire Mountains, voted to block its roads with sandbags to keep plague-ridden New Yorkers away in the event of a bioterror attack on the city. Charitable giving was down. New research estimated that British people collectively stand in line for 1.3 billion hours a year. Human Rights Watch reported that about 20 percent of America's prison inmates are crazy. The U.S. Senate banned "partial-birth abortions," a procedure known by doctors as "intact dilation and extraction." Six English schoolboys were hospitalized after it was learned they had taken Viagra during lunch; "by the the time the afternoon lessons began," said a source, "there was no hiding what they had done." Sales of industrial robots were up 26 percent. Creatures that are capable of changing their sex, it was discovered, typically do so when they have reached 72 percent of their maximum body size. German chemists discovered the secret ingredient in the preservation of Egyptian mummies. There were new reports of cannibalism in Congo, and in Croatia a one-year-old boy was attacked by a gang of babies and bitten 30 times. Facial tumors were killing off Tasmanian devils, and western Africa was suffering a plague of dusty locusts.

—Roger D. Hodge

Copyright © 2003 Harper's Magazine Foundation.

---

[View the Weekly Review Archive.](#)

[Subscribe to Harper's weekly update.](#)

---

[ONLINE](#) [NEWSSTAND](#) [SERVICES](#) [ABOUT](#) [CONTACT](#) [HOME](#)