

April 10



Josh Anderson / AP

Sgt. 1st Class Landon Ranker treats a training dummy. Exercises like this are designed to help soldiers with brain injuries readjust [?] before being redeployed [!].

According to a 17th Century Baptist account, a certain Ranter, Mrs. Paul Wayt, professed to doubt that the Virgin Mary or Jesus Christ had been actual persons. Something told her it wasn't so. "She knew it was truth according to the history, but not according to the mystery."

A clash of heated air from the Plains and moist air pushing up from the Gulf of Mexico produces thunderstorms and high-wind-driven wildfires in Oklahoma and Texas. Born of this cauldron, a passel of deadly tornadoes whip eastward into Arkansas and Tennessee.

In central Italy, so much collapse. So many interred.



AFP/Getty

April 12



Easter. From your refuge, the southeast prospect.

April 13

6:15 a.m. South southwest sky, a three-quarter waning moon. A trio of gulls swoops low over the crossroads of Eighth and 24th around second story height. It's their cries that alert you. Out of nowhere, suddenly, maybe nine more. What are they after? They fly up Eighth, lost to your view. Then two return, passing close by your window before swooping lower. Now they're gone and you hear the roar of the subway, waves of traffic, and calls of what sound like a thousand starlings.

April 14

Barbara Silverstone

A friend emails in response to the bizarre sky you photographed over lower Manhattan on February 10 and included in *Scroll* number 13: "... if you think that sky was weird, well here are another two for you taken in upstate NY [on October 25, 2003] not far from Chittenango, hometown of L. Frank Baum.

"They write their own commentary – btw they were so biblical and roiling I half expected to hear Yahweh and see Moses emerge with a new set of tablets."



Barbara Silverstone

Photo # KN-11060 The Tonkin Gulf Incident, 2 August 1964. Painting by E.J. Fitzgerald



Presented for your consideration: Official U.S. Navy depiction of the USS

Maddox firing upon three North Vietnamese torpedo boats. Of course one could point to a thousand significant moments, but this “incident,” and the Resolution that followed hard upon – only two senators voted against it – seems as good a forking path as any. And the painting itself, made in Reagan’s 1980, so relentlessly bland. Not so much a representation, as a derivative. Paint by numbness.

April 15

At what point in a culture or individual’s development does naïve mutate into naïevil?

Proverbs, Persian and Chinese:

“First dig the well, then steal the minaret.”

“The thief covers his ears while stealing the bell.”

Does Bo Know He’s Top Dog?



Chip Somodevilla/Getty Images

The Obamas’ new pet is a celebrity. Trainers and psychologists ask: does he understand?



It's begun to blossom: the cherry tree JFK planted on the Penn South lawn. What does it know of life along the Potomac?

April 16

From the *Guardian*, UK, and so rich it's worth quoting in full:

Lehman Brothers Sitting on a Stockpile of Uranium “Yellowcake”

New York – The rump of the bankrupt bank Lehman Brothers is sitting on a stockpile of 450,000 lb of uranium “yellowcake” which could be used to power a nuclear reactor or, theoretically, to make a bomb.

Lehman's potentially explosive asset is a hangover from a commodities trading contract undertaken before the Wall Street bank went bust in September. The substance, yellowcake, is a solid form of mined uranium which is yet to be enriched.

Liquidators have been trying to offload the stuff for months. But the price of uranium has been dropping steadily, leaving Lehman's yellowcake

languishing in a variety of secure storage facilities, some of which are in Canada.

Bryan Marshal, Lehman's chief executive, who was appointed to salvage value for creditors, told Bloomberg News that the stockpile, which is worth about \$18m, would be sold responsibly.

"We plan on gradually selling this material over the next two years," he said. "We are not dumping this on the market and have no fire-sale mentality."

The price of uranium has slumped from \$65 per pound to \$40.50 over the last six months as pressure on recession-hit commodity investors to liquidate their assets has eased.

Yellowcake can be purified and enriched to fuel nuclear reactors or, notionally, weapons. A lively financial market in uranium trading has developed in recent years. While commodities such as oil and precious metals are dealt in futures contracts which rarely see delivery, the relative immaturity of uranium trading means that trading firms sometimes end up taking ownership of the stuff.

"Uranium is a liberalising marketplace. It's not as mature as most other exchange-traded commodities," said Scott Lawrence, head of nuclear fuel trading at MF Global in London. "It's certainly not unusual for a wide range of parties to have legal title to the material."

Lehman's ownership is governed by tight regulations. Its yellowcake must be stored at licensed facilities and the substance cannot be transported around freely. One trader said: "They're not holding it in Canary Wharf. [Phew!] There are very strict rules about what you can do with it."

Some 43m lb of yellowcake was sold on the spot market last year. Market participants say Lehman tried to sell its stockpile in one block but was unsuccessful and may try to sell it on a piece-by-piece basis instead.

Lehman's brokerage operation was bought in September by Barclays Capital, which took on about 10,000 of the bankrupt firm's staff. The remaining chunk of Lehman has outstanding debts estimated at \$200bn.

And from golbalpost.com comes the news that:

Drug Traffickers Move Underwater

Bogota, Colombia – Only a few years ago tales of traffickers plying the underseas world aboard cocaine-laden submarines struck anti-drug agents as a Jules Verne fantasy.

Not anymore.

Today, smugglers are moving tons of drugs towards the United States in so-called “semi-submersibles,” homemade vessels that travel just below the ocean's surface and cover distances of up to 2,000 miles.

Because they leave tiny wakes, the crude subs are extremely difficult to detect visually or by radar. Even when they are spotted, crew members quickly sink the vessels to get rid of the evidence and avoid being prosecuted for drug trafficking.

Authorities seized 14 semi-submersibles last year, and another six have been captured this year, according to Colombian Navy Capt. Mario Rodriguez.

Most of the vessels move between Colombia and drop-off points in Mexico and Central America. But in 2006, police discovered a scuttled 33-foot-long semi-submersible off the northwest coast of Spain.

Colombian authorities now believe that up to 70 percent of the cocaine leaving the country's Pacific coast is packed aboard semi-submersibles. U.S. Sen. Frank Lautenberg, a New Jersey Democrat, estimated that the vessels this year would ship up to 480 metric tons of cocaine.

“They went from being an urban legend to some sporadic seizures to a flurry in the last two years,” said an official at the U.S. embassy in Bogota. “Semi-submersibles are the transportation of choice for maritime drug traffickers.”

The smugglers are trading speed for stealth.

They used to prefer go-fast boats, high-speed fiberglass watercraft

that can carry 2 tons of drugs and travel up to 80 miles per hour in calm seas. But those crafts leave huge wakes and anti-drug agents, using helicopters and their own racing boats, have become far more adept at spotting them.

So, the traffickers have moved underwater by making modifications to the go-fast boat design. A semi-submersible is, in essence, a go-fast boat with a fiberglass top fitted with air vents that stick out of the water.

Instead of high-speed engines, the semi-submersible is powered by a 200 or 300 horsepower diesel motor, allowing the vessel to move about 10 miles per hour. The resulting wake is so small that anti-drug agents or Coast Guard officials must get within 3,000 yards of the vessels to spot them.

Most semi-submersibles are built along the rivers, estuaries and mangrove swamps of Colombia's Pacific coast, at a cost of between \$500,000 and \$1 million per vessel.

They leave Colombia above water at night, with only about 30 percent of their cargo. Once on the open sea, smugglers add more cocaine, diesel fuel, water, food and other supplies, and often position rocks in the bow and stern to partially sink the craft and maintain ballast.

Inside, the living quarters are cramped. Typically, four or five crew members sleep on mattresses and live on a diet of canned food, crackers and energy drinks. With no bathroom, they must climb on top of the vessel to do their business.

"It's very uncomfortable," said Rodriguez, the Colombian Navy captain.

But it's also effective. Rodriguez estimates that perhaps as few as 25 percent of all semi-submersibles leaving Colombia are seized.

Built to be disposable, the vessels are constructed with valves allowing them to be filled with water. Once the drugs are dropped off – or if the vessels are about to be seized – crew members can sink them within a few minutes.

Rodriguez recalled a case in January when the Colombian Navy

spotted a semi-submersible near the Pacific island of Gorgona. Before Navy officers could arrest them, the traffickers sunk the vessel. The evidence was lost and all Rodriguez's men could do was pass out life jackets to the smugglers and return them to the mainland.

Frustration over similar cases in international waters prompted the U.S. Congress last year to pass the Drug Trafficking Vessel Interdiction Act. Co-sponsored by Lautenberg, the law mandates up to 15 years in prison for operators of semi-submersibles.

But just as authorities close one loophole, the drug traffickers seem to find others. Many anti-drug agents fear that smugglers will turn to full-fledged submarines, which would be even more difficult to spot.

In 2000, Colombian police found a massive, double-hulled submarine being built high in the Andes Mountains in a warehouse outside of Bogota. The 78-foot vessel, which was half built, was designed to descend to depths of more than 300 feet – to avoid sonar – as well as to travel 3,000 nautical miles and remain at sea for nearly two weeks.

“A submarine of this sophistication might be found in the world's leading navies,” said John B. Brown III, then the acting DEA administrator, in a 2003 speech....

Another fear is that submarines and semi-submersibles could be used by terrorists...

And another, and another...

But the canaries have left the submersible. Or is it the mine shaft?

And even as the bubble within the bust continues to expand... dope springs eternal.

April 17

Early a.m., out on the street, above the traffic roar, a big truck braking

squeals the first six notes of *Au claire de la lune*...

Sous les pavés, le dao.

Mais c'est bien inconnu.

"Uh, I'm in my cell – ah, I mean on my cell..."

Mon ami pierrot.



At 54th and Lex. The wall not taken.

Chance you can believe in.