

NEWS OF THE WEIRD

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Terrorism gets pizzazz

A physical fitness video, purportedly made in April by a U.S.-based al-Qaida operative, gives workout tips to jihadists, urging that they “train as hard as possible” to inflict maximum damage on “the enemies of Allah,” according to an ABC News report. Exercises such as crawling long distances on hands and knees are demonstrated by people in flowing robes. The narrator discourages

using gyms and fitness centers because of the “un-Islamic” music and “semi-naked” women. And a video released in May, purportedly from al-Qaida in Somalia, features an English-speaking rap singer making a recruitment pitch to U.S. and European youth, including such verses as: “Mortar by mortar / Shell by shell / Only going to stop / When I send them to hell.” ■

Can't possibly be true

► When a son, angry that his father had ordered him to clean up his room, screamed at Dad and threw a plate of food across the dinner table, Dad called 911. The son is 28-year-old Andrew Mizsak, who lives rent-free with his parents in the Cleveland suburb of Bedford, Ohio. He's also a member of the Bedford School Board (and his mom is a city councilwoman). After police arrived, the habitually untidy son apologized and, according to their report, “was sent to his room to clean it. He was crying uncontrollably.” Subsequently, the school board punished Andrew by removing two of his duties.

► When courts in Nashville, Tenn., get too backed up, a local tradition allows judges to appoint well-known local attorneys to act as “special judges” to help clear dockets. According to a months-long investigation by WTVF-TV, it

appears that at least some of the “special judges” used their power largely to dismiss speeding tickets, including at least one instance of a lawyer dismissing his own client's ticket. The station found that of almost 1,800 speeding tickets dismissed by courts during the time investigated, 1,300 were by the “special judges.”

► In September 2003, Lisa Strong was hospitalized for a kidney stone. It wasn't treated properly, and by the time the resultant, massive, life-threatening infections had been dealt with, both her arms and both her legs had been amputated. She filed a lawsuit against the doctors in 2005, but in May 2009, a jury in Broward County, Fla., somehow could not find any fault at all by doctors. (An incredulous Judge Charles Greene reversed the verdict, dismissed the jury and ordered a new trial.) ■

Unclear on the concept

London's celebrated high-end restaurant Nobu still serves a bluefin tuna entree for the equivalent of about \$51 but is apparently ashamed that it has a fresh inventory ready to carve, accord-

ing to a May report in the Daily Telegraph. Printed on the menu is this advisory: “Bluefin tuna is an environmentally threatened species — please ask your server for an alternative.” ■

Inexplicable

► They're studying what? Where? (1) Doctors and specialists from the New York Psychiatric Institute are in the middle of a two-year investigation, on a \$400,000 grant from the National Institutes of Health on why gay men have risky sex in Argentina. Researchers visit gay bars nightly in Buenos Aires and question men about their behavior and substance abuse. (2) Wayne State University (Detroit) researchers, operating on a \$2.6 million NIH grant, are “training” prostitutes to drink alcohol responsibly, to reduce the women's willingness to engage in risky sex. However, the training is taking place in Guangxi province, China.

► Challenges of geography (1) Chi-

na's Minister of Railways, Liu Zhijun, has acknowledged that the government has plans for a rail line connecting Beijing and Taipei, Taiwan (which would involve traversing the Taiwan Strait, which is 108 miles across at its narrowest point). (2) The Czech Republic newspaper Lidove Noviny reported that, as late as 1975, the communist government of Czechoslovakia was actively planning to dig a tunnel from that landlocked country underneath Austria and the part of Yugoslavia that is now Slovenia, to give it rail access to the Adriatic Sea, 250 miles away. It is not known what the Austrians and the Yugoslavs thought of the idea. ■

Fine points of the law

Kerry Fenton's pub, The Cutting Edge, in Worsbrough, England, initially complied with the 2007 Smoking Act, which prohibits lighting up inside. However, since smoking research is generally carried on indoors, “research” was exempt from the law. Mr. Fenton ultimately

renamed part of the bar the Smoking Research Centre and allows patrons to smoke provided they fill out questionnaires about their habit. So far, according to a May BBC News report, neither Britain's Home Office nor the local Barnsley council has intervened. ■

Least competent criminals

► Police in Indianapolis charged Fifth Third Bank manager Dwayne Roberts, 31, with arson and theft after the failure of his scheme to cover up embezzlement. Police said Mr. Roberts elaborately staged a fire inside a locked vault so that an undeterminable amount of money would burn up, thus perhaps covering his cash shortage. However, after he set the fire and locked the vault, he realized he had left his keys inside and could not re-open the vault or lock the bank's doors or drive home.

► Donny Guy, 31, was arrested in

Hickory, N.C., in May and charged with burglary of the Captain's Galley Seafood restaurant in a caper caught on surveillance video. Mr. Guy was immediately a suspect because he lives in an apartment about 50 yards from the restaurant, and there were two paper trails from the restaurant almost to his front door. The video revealed that, in carrying away the two cash registers in the dark, the burglar failed to notice that the spools of paper in each machine had snagged on something in the restaurant and were unraveling with each step he took. ■

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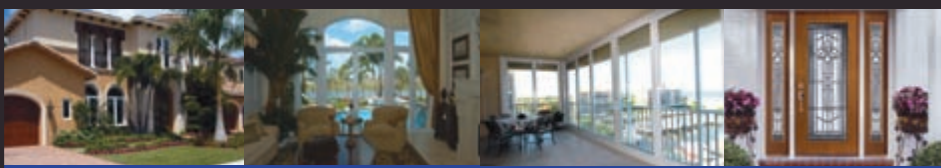
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