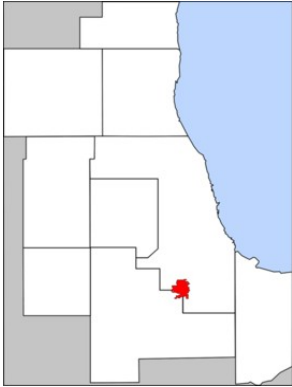




Top Stories



5 dead in Chicago-area store shooting

130,000 farmers protest in Mexico against NAFTA

Thousands of farmers marched through the streets of the Mexico City to express their opposition to the agricultural section of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA).



Featured story

Reports claim French President marries girlfriend



French radio station RTL announced today that President Nicolas Sarkozy has married his Italian girlfriend Carla Bruni at the Élysée Palace.

Wikipedia Current Events

United States presidential election, 2008: Mitt Romney wins the Maine Republican caucus ahead of John McCain and Ron Paul.

Wikipedia Current Events

- Five people are shot dead in a women's clothing store in Tinley Park, Illinois with the person responsible fleeing the scene.
- An explosion on a bus in the central Sri Lankan town of Dambulla kills at least 20 people.
- Battle of N'Djamena: Chadian rebels have entered the capital N'Djamena and are heading for the presidential palace, according to eyewitnesses in the city.
- The Libyan JANA news agency claims that the Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi has brokered a ceasefire.
- French President Nicolas Sarkozy marries singer and former supermodel Carla Bruni at the Élysée Palace.

5 dead in Chicago-area store shooting

Five women are reported dead after a shooting at a strip mall in suburban Chicago, Illinois, and police are searching for the perpetrator, who they say fled the scene. According to police, the shooting may have been part of a botched robbery.

The shooting took place at a Lane Bryant clothing store in Tinley Park, a suburb of Chicago. Tinley Park police Sgt. T.J. Grady says a 911 call reported the shooting at 10:44 a.m. When police arrived, they found all five victims lying in a back room of the store.

Other stores in the strip mall,

including a Target, were temporarily locked down as police officers - armed with pistols and rifles - searched for the gunman.

"Every store was immediately canvassed and a search by air too has given us every indication that the offender has left the scene," Grady said.

Selena Kujawa, who was inside the Target with her 5-year old son when police entered, said, "I was so scared I couldn't think."

Grady did not identify the names of the victims, as their families are still in the process of being notified. However, the victims have now been identified as ranging between ages 22 and 37, and at least one is believed to be a store employee.

He described the shooter as an African-American man, about 5 feet 9 inches tall and weighing between 230 and 260 pounds. He was reportedly wearing a black coat, a knit cap, and dark jeans. Grady believes the shooter is no longer in the immediate area.

Tinley Park police chief Mike O'Connell said that more information would be made available Sunday afternoon, when forensic exams have been completed.

"This is a very serious and sensitive investigation," O'Connell said.

Illinois senator and Chicago

resident Barack Obama released the following statement addressing the shootings: "I was deeply saddened to learn about the shooting in Tinley Park, and my heart goes out to the victims' families. This kind of violence is unacceptable -- not just in a shopping center where we're supposed to feel safe, but wherever it occurs. And as the facts become clear, I hope the authorities find and prosecute whoever is responsible for this tragedy."

American government official Earl Butz dies at age 98

Earl Butz, A United States government official who served as Secretary of Agriculture under Presidents Richard Nixon and Gerald Ford has died today. he was 98.

Butz was born Earl Lauer Butz on July 3, 1909 in Albion, Indiana.

In 1948, Butz became vice president of the American Agricultural Economics Association, and three years later was named to the same post at the American Society of Farm Managers and Rural Appraisers. In 1954, he was appointed Assistant Secretary of Agriculture by President Dwight D. Eisenhower.

In 1971, President Richard Nixon appointed Butz as Secretary of Agriculture, a position in which he continued to serve after Nixon resigned as the result of the Watergate scandal in 1974.

In 1981, Butz pleaded guilty to federal tax evasion charges, for having underreported income he had earned in 1978. On June 19 he was sentenced to five years in prison; however, all but 30 days of the term were suspended. He was also fined \$10,000 and ordered to

pay \$61,183 in civil penalties.

US presidential candidates gearing up for Super Tuesday

With less than 72 hours to go until the Super Tuesday primary election event, Republican and Democratic candidates are campaigning all across the United States this weekend in hopes of gaining votes.

Democratic Senator Hilary Clinton is spending Saturday in the state of California, while rival Senator Barack Obama is making stops in Idaho, Minnesota, and Missouri today. However, the Clinton Campaign is also present in Arkansas today where former President, Bill Clinton, is talking about educational reforms.

On the Republican side, Mike Huckabee is in the South trying to win support of fellow Evangelicals for his campaign.

Senator John McCain is in Nashville today before he heads to opponent Mitt Romney's home state of Massachusetts tomorrow.

Also on the election front, on Friday Senators McCain and Obama won the endorsements of the Los Angeles Times, one of the most read newspapers in the US. Obama also received the endorsements of the liberal political action committee at MoveOn.org and California's Service Employees International Union, which represents 650,000 people.

Most of the candidates are raising funds for TV advertising this weekend, including Senator McCain whose ads will air in 20 states this weekend. The Campaign Media Analysis Group estimates that spending on political ads alone could reach an

unprecedented \$20 million.

Alan Keyes, one of the Republican candidates who has not received media attention over the past few months, shifted his campaign efforts to Texas, where he is this weekend. His campaign is notable because it is made up of largely grassroots efforts.

Super Tuesday is in fact the biggest day of the primary elections for both Republican and Democratic candidates, with elections in 24 states.

NASA holds ceremony to commemorate anniversary of Space Shuttle Columbia disaster

NASA has held a memorial ceremony to mark the fifth anniversary of the Space Shuttle Columbia disaster. All seven astronauts were killed when their spacecraft broke up on re-entry over Texas on February 1, 2003, 16 minutes prior to scheduled landing time at Florida Columbia had been damaged by a chunk of loose foam during takeoff 16 days earlier.

NASA officials, astronauts, schoolchildren and family members attended the ceremony, which was held just miles from Columbia's intended landing site. Approximately 200 people attended the event, held at the Kennedy Space Center's Space Mirror Memorial to all 24 astronauts killed in space disasters. Each was presented with a rose, which was placed in front of a granite memorial bearing the names of the 24.

Evelyn Husband-Thompson, widow of commander Rick, who has remarried just three weeks ago, said "This morning, I couldn't stop thinking about Rick and Willie and

Kalpana and Dave and Mike and Laurel and Ilan. All of our families went through so much that day. We so miss them, and we will never forget them."

44 teenagers from Israel were amongst those present, there in respect to astronaut Ilan Ramon. Some came from the same school Ramon had attended. 15-year-old Roman Rashchupkin said "He's Israeli, so it's important. He learned in our school."

G. Madhavan Nair represented India at the memorial, remembering Indian astronaut Kalpana Chawla. Nair is chairman of the Indian Space Research Organisation.

Former shuttle commander Bill Readdy commented that, despite a large number of memorials, including one on Mars, "... much more importantly than any physical monument, they're memorialized right here in our hearts," Going on to name them individually, then saying "We'll always miss your easy laughter and your smiling faces. God willing, five years from now, they'll have even more to be proud of us about as we take even longer strides ... back to the moon and onward toward Mars. May God bless the crew of Columbia."

NASA boss Michael Griffin was amongst several people who commented on the dangerous nature of spaceflight. He proceeded to read a letter from United States President George W. Bush praising the astronauts, which was then presented to Husband-Thompson. "Space exploration is a dream deeply rooted in humanity, and the seven brave astronauts of Columbia sacrificed their lives so the rest of mankind could realize that dream,"

said Bush's letter. "They assumed great risk so they could understand what lies beyond the heavens. We are grateful for their service and they will be always be cherished."

Griffin also noted the importance of learning from mistakes, adding "Americans don't quit and we won't quit. We'll never quit," and that "not quitting has high costs."

It wasn't the only such anniversary around this time. The 41st anniversary of the Apollo 1 fire was on Sunday, and Monday saw the 22nd anniversary of the Challenger disaster.

Groundhog predicts 6 more weeks of winter weather for US

Each year, for the past 118 years, thousands of people have traveled to the Pennsylvania town of Punxsutawney in the United States, about 65 miles northeast of Pittsburgh, on February 2nd to see if the groundhog named Phil predicted more winter weather or an early spring.

This year, Phil did see his shadow when pulled out of his burrow on Gobblers' Knob, which according to an essentially German superstition, means the area should brace for more winter weather.

This year, visitors came from as far as Texas and Alaska to see the annual event, which may be linked to a European festival of Candlemas. The crowd of nearly 30,000 people was one of the largest in the event's history.

In Wiarton, Ontario, Canada's Wiarton Willie, however, predicted an early spring for Canadians in the province. Just a day ago a heavy snowstorm blaze struck Ontario and Quebec. "Dignitaries,

me lads and ladies, get your shorts and T-shirts too, Wiarton Willie's annual task is through. Now the town crier proudly rings, Willie predicts it's an early spring," said town crier Bruce Kruger while ringing his bell. Nova Scotia's Shubenacadie Sam also predicted an early spring. It is said up to ten-thousand people attend the event in Ontario annually.

NASA to beam Beatles song into deep space

On February 4, NASA will digitally transmit the Beatles song Across the Universe in the direction of the star Polaris, commonly known as the North Star.

This will mark the first time music has been sent into deep space. The song will be transmitted from the DSS-63 radio antenna at the Madrid Deep Space Communication Complex in Robledo de Chavela, Spain at 12:00 am UTC.

The broadcast celebrates the 40th anniversary of the song's recording, the 45th anniversary of NASA's Deep Space Network, and the 50th anniversary of NASA itself.

Polaris is approximately 431 light years away from Earth, meaning it will take 431 years for the song to reach the star traveling at the speed of light.

NASA's press release includes statements from Beatle Paul McCartney, who tells NASA to "send [his] love to the aliens", and John Lennon's wife Yoko Ono, who sees the event as "the beginning of the new age in which we will communicate with billions of planets across the universe."

The idea was hatched by Martin Lewis, a Los Angeles-based

humorist and Beatles historian.

"It never had the highest profile and is a bit of a forgotten classic," Lewis said of the song. "But it has universal appeal. It transcends ages, borders, language and other barriers."

NASA invites astronomy fans and Beatles fans alike to play the song simultaneously as it is being transmitted into space.

Reports claim French President marries girlfriend

French radio station RTL announced today that President Nicolas Sarkozy has married his Italian girlfriend Carla Bruni at the Élysée Palace. They quote "several witnesses" of the alleged ceremony, which the local mayor of the 8th arrondissement of Paris, François Lebel, presided. The President's office and his spokesman have refused to comment.

According to radio station Europe 1, mayor Lebel admitted he wed the couple, saying that "the bride was in white, she looked gorgeous. The groom didn't look bad either." The radio stations say that Nicolas Bazire and Mathilde Agostinelli were the best men and maid of honour. Lebel told AFP that some 20 guests were present, close relatives and a couple of friends.

If confirmed, Sarkozy would be the first French President of the French Fifth Republic to marry during his office, after already becoming the first one to divorce.

On January 10, the French newspaper L'Est Republicain already reported that they may have married, and several false reports continued thereafter. Responding to questions about a possible marriage, Sarkozy said in

early January that his relationship with Ms. Bruni was "serious", but that "the media will not set the date. It is highly likely that you will hear of it only when it has taken place."

The couple's first public appearance was at Disneyland Paris, and they remained in the centre of media attention during recent visits to Egypt and Jordan.

A month after the President's divorce, the couple met in November at a sing-along to cheer up the lonely President. Bruni, 40, is a former model who started a career as a singer. She was previously linked to Mick Jagger, Eric Clapton and Donald Trump. She has a grown-up son from a previous relationship, while Sarkozy, 53, has three sons from his two previous marriages.

No fatalities as Boeing 727 crash lands in Bolivia

At least 151 passengers and an unknown number of crew on board a Lloyd Aereo Boliviano (LAB) Boeing 727-200 have escaped after the aircraft crash landed in swampland in Bolivia.

Local airline LAB had been operating the chartered passenger flight from La Paz to Cobija on behalf of Transporte Aereo Militar (TAM) when poor weather conditions caused the jet to be diverted. LAB has recently been handling excess passengers for TAM as an unusually severe rainy season has washed away many roads across the nation.

A flight engineer said that during the flight the engines failed due to a mechanical problem. The plane came down in a swampy forest clearing approximately 2 miles (3.3km) from a runway at the new destination of Trinidad, 370 miles

from the intended destination. Several passengers were injured in the accident, and all on board were taken to hospitals for checks. One pilot received a clavical fracture.

The plane was severely damaged, with the New York Times reporting that photographs of the scene showed at least one wing of the aircraft to have separated from the fuselage.

Survivors confirmed this. Paolo Bravo, a Bolivian senator on board the plane, said to local radio network Erbol "We noticed the engines went out, and there was this calm... Then they told us, 'Crash positions! crash positions!' and it was just another two or three seconds before we hit... The plane fell, the wings broke off, but the fuselage was OK."

Experts from the Auxiliary Aerial Navigation Service and an airport commented that it is possible that the soft mud in the area absorbed some of the impact forces, allowing the plane to be salvaged and returned to service. LAB's operations chief Gustavo Viscarra made a statement saying "The crew members did not suffer any problem and there is no blood... The airplane has minimum damages, there is no structural damage, there was not any fire nor smoke. It was a forced landing planned by the pilot and it was not caused by our enterprise's negligence nor lack of maintenance of our airplanes."

Passenger numbers are unclear, with LAB reporting 151 and some media sources saying 155.

An investigation has been launched. It has been established that an undisclosed technical problem prevented the plane from

departing for an hour.

Legal and financial difficulties have seen LAB suspend operations for almost a year, but the carrier has recently begun a limited return to charter services.

75 million left without Internet access after fault in undersea cable

Service to millions of Internet users in the Middle East and Asia has been disrupted, following damage to undersea cables.

The cables, SEA-ME-WE 4 and FLAG, which provide communications services for various countries — including India, Pakistan, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia — are believed to have been damaged by a ship attempting to moor off Egypt on Wednesday, January 30, 2008.

One day later, on February 1, the FALCON cable was also reported cut 56 km off Dubai. Repair ships have been sent to both breaks, with capacity to India expected to reach 80% of its usual speed by Friday, February 2.

130,000 farmers protest in Mexico against NAFTA

Thousands of farmers marched through the streets of the Mexico City to express their opposition to the agricultural section of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA).

Witnesses have reported that long rows of tractors moving at slow speed were observed in several of the access roads to Mexico City. Authorities have reported that over 120,000 people took part in the protest.

The march was headed by the National Peasant Confederation (NPC), an organization which

claims to represent five million workers in Mexico.

Since last Wednesday, thousands of farmers came to the Federal District with two demands: "renegotiating NAFTA and the reallocation of public resources to the countryside." Farmers who shouted slogans against the Mexican government, argued that they could not compete with prices products that are harvested in the United States because US farmers receive a strong subsidy here and that they have good conditions to improve production. The demands of the protesters are supported by the Episcopal Commission for Social Pastoral of the Conference of Mexican Episcopate (EMF), who this month asked the federal government to re-negotiate the agricultural section of the treaty. Bishops argue that this chapter violates the fundamental rights of the poorest people which they believe could lead to more people taking part in criminal activities . Protesters also burned a tractor in front of the Monument to the Revolution, and also demanded the dismissal of Alberto Cardenas, the head of Livestock, Rural Development, Fisheries and Food in Mexico.

NBA: Grizzlies trade Pau Gasol to Lakers

On Friday, the Memphis Grizzlies of the National Basketball Association agreed to send forward-center Pau Gasol and their 2010 second-round draft pick to the Los Angeles Lakers in exchange for center Kwame Brown, rookie point guard Javaris Crittenton, and two first-round draft picks in 2008 and 2010.

Also sent to Memphis were Pau's brother Marc Gasol, and Aaron McKie, who was signed by the Lakers the same day.

Lakers General Manger Mitch Kupchak said, "Pau is a proven player of All-Star caliber in this league who can score and rebound and he's still a young player. We feel this move strengthens our team in the short term as well as the long term."

The Commercial Appeal, a Memphis newspaper, also reports that Grizzlies forward Stromile Swift will be traded to the New Jersey Nets for center Jason Collins in a deal expected to be finalized on Monday.

Gasol is averaging 18.9 points and 8.8 rebounds per game this season, while Brown has a season average 5.7 points and 5.7 rebounds per game.

Wikinews interviews Tatsuhisa Yabushita of NBGI

Many rhythm gamers are anticipating the release of "Taiko no Tatsujin 11: Asian Version", the Namco Bandai Games Inc. (NBGI) beta version of which was recently showcased at the 2008 Taipei Game Show.

In fact, several managers from amusement stores in Taiwan frequently imported large quantities of arcade games, including rhythm games. Eventually, some slot machine developers modified codes from several game consoles like the Wii, PlayStation 2 (PS2), and Sega Saturn to fulfill needs for amusement arcades, but they risked hardware failure and copyright infringement.

But before those modifications happened in Taiwan, many rhythm games just used songs from other arcade machines due to copyright issues from enrolled songs.

The upcoming game will benefit Mandarin-language gamers after its release, but it may hide some secrets behind the development of "Taiko no Tatsujin 11: Asian Version". Wikinews reporter Rico Shen recently interviewed the producer of "Taiko no Tatsujin" Tatsuhisa Yabushita to talk about some of the background of this upcoming game and its series.

Interview

Wikinews: It became a hot topic after the NBTI decided to showcase the "Taiko no Tatsujin 11: Asian Version" at the 2008 Taipei Game Show, and it's different from past series' because the NBTI acquired several Mandarin-language songs from the Cross-Strait area (Taiwan, China, and Hong Kong) especially. When you choose them, what factors go into the decision?

Tatsuhisa Yabushita: We [the NBTI] enrolled those various songs based on their own performances and rankings from Cross-Strait countries. But we'll still keep several songs from Namco original, Japanese-pop, and classical music in this upcoming game.

WN I believe that a developer should be aware of international copyright coordination before choosing a song for a game, not only in rhythm games, but also games of other types. For instance, I know that some controversy erupted in Taiwan after some covers of Japanese songs were recorded in other languages without agreements from the original singers and composers. Before the release of this upcoming game, have you coordinated with record companies about the copyright issues?

Yabushita: Everyone should

respect copyrights, as you said. I guarantee that every song from the "Taiko no Tatsujin" series in console and arcade versions is licensed through coordination with those companies.

WN Some gamers may be confused because the console version of the "Taiko no Tatsujin" series is only available for PS2. After the release of the "Taiko no Tatsujin 11: Asian Version", will the NBTI release different versions in different countries similar to the way "Taiko Drum Master" was released with special designs for American and European gamers?

Yabushita: Currently, we'll focus our developments on the arcade version and temporarily not to consider different releases for different countries. This is because we will evaluate opinions from amusement stores and gamers after its release.

Summary

The "Taiko no Tatsujin" series became a hot topic after amusement stores imported several arcade machines in Taiwan. The release of the "Taiko no Tatsujin 11: Asian Version" aims to please countries speaking the Mandarin language.

Scores killed in twin Baghdad marketplace attacks

On Friday, twin attacks in Iraq killed at least 72 people and wounded another 149. Separated by twenty minutes, the bombings targeted two marketplaces in Baghdad shortly before the call to Friday prayers.

These attacks were unlike suicide bombings in that the bombs were dynamite and ball bearings strapped to two women. These human bombs were then detonated remotely using mobile

phone. The identities of the women have not been released.

Major-General Qassim Moussawi, spokesman for the Iraqi military in Baghdad said, "The operation was carried out by two booby-trapped mentally disabled women." He did not explain how the forensic evidence could have proven the mental disability of the women. "We found the mobiles used to detonate the women," he said.

Moussawi said this of the investigation: "Forensic and bomb squad experts as well as the people and traders of al-Shorja area of the carpet market have confirmed that the woman who was blown-up there today was often in the area and was mentally disabled... In the New Baghdad area the shop owners and customers of the pet market confirmed that the woman who was blown-up there was mentally disabled as well."

"Most people who visit this market are poor and just want to enjoy themselves but they came and got killed."

—Hassan Salman

An aide to Moussawi suggested the claims were based on eye-witness reports. He also said authorities believe the women were unaware of plans to detonate the explosives.

Lt. Col. Steve Stover, a spokesman for the multinational force in Baghdad, said, "By targeting innocent Iraqis, they show their true demonic character. They care nothing for the Iraqi people; they want to subjugate them and forcefully create a greater Islamic sharia state."

Later, Stover told Reuters that the U.S. military was not aware of

evidence to suggest the women were mentally handicapped. Pentagon reports on the attacks also lacked any reference to the mental condition of the women.

"There is nothing they won't do if they think it will work in creating carnage and the political fallout that comes from that," the U.S. Ambassador Ryan Crocker said. He blamed the attacks on Al-Qaeda in Iraq.

U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said the bombings underlined "the absolute bankruptcy and brutality" of those who carried them out. "The Iraqi people have been right to turn against these terrible, violent people in their midst who will do anything."

Forty-five were killed at the Ghazl pet market, and 27 were killed in New Baghdad. The Ghazl market is only open on Fridays and had remained popular despite two attacks in 2007. Both attacks were centered on pet markets.

"Most people who visit this market are poor and just want to enjoy themselves but they came and got killed," said Hassan Salman, who sells bird seed at the Ghazl market.

The attacks are the deadliest in Iraq since the al-Khilani Mosque bombing which killed 87 people on June 19, 2007.

Today in History

1488 – Portuguese explorer Bartolomeu Dias sailed around the Cape of Good Hope at the southern tip of Africa and landed in Mossel Bay.

1509 – Turkish-Portuguese War: Portugal defeated a joint fleet of Mamlûk Burji Sultanate of Egypt, Ottoman Empire, the Zamorin of Calicut and the Sultan of Gujarat at the Battle of Diu off the coast of Diu, India.

1867 – Crown Prince Mutsuhito succeeded his father Kōmei as Emperor of Japan, taking the title Meiji.

1959 – The Day the Music Died: A small plane crashed near Clear Lake, Iowa, USA, killing American rock and roll musicians Buddy Holly, Ritchie Valens, and J.P. "The Big Bopper" Richardson.

1966 – The Soviet spacecraft Luna 9 became the first space probe to land on the Moon and transmit pictures from the lunar surface to Earth.

February 03 is Setsubun in Japan; Four Chaplains' Day in the United States.

Quote of the Day

History, Stephen said, is a nightmare from which I am trying to awake.

~ James Joyce in Ulysses

Word of the Day

fanatic n

1. A person who is zealously enthusiastic for some cause, especially in religion.

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