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EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW

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Series of earthquakes strikes Reno, Nevada area

A large series of earthquakes has hit the northern area of U.S. state Nevada recently, particularly in and around the Reno metropolitan area. Nevada is the third most earthquake-active state in the United States, and the Reno area regularly sees seismological activity. However,

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recent events, particularly yesterday's series of tremors, have become alarmingly frequent for locals.

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW

Wikinews holds a follow-up interview with Max Riekse, Constitution Party candidate for the 2008 U.S. presidential election

In March, Wikinews interviewed Max Riekse, candidate for the Constitution Party's nomination for the 2008 U.S. presidential election. With the Constitution Party's national convention underway this weekend, we spoke with him one last time before he either wins his party's nomination or loses.

Wikipedia Current Events

Dignitaries including the President of Afghanistan Hamid Karzai take cover as automatic gunfire breaks out at a ceremony in Kabul.

•A father-and-son duo who owned and managed the factory that burnt down with 55 deaths yesterday in Casablanca have been arrested over serious safety violations.

Owner and manager of Moroccan factory arrested over 55-fatality fire

Police have arrested the owner of a mattress factory in Hay Hassini, Casablanca, Morocco which burned down in a disaster that claimed 55 lives. His son, who was the

factory's manager, was also arrested.

Those killed — 35 of whom were women — were trapped inside by locked fire exits, which were barricaded to stop theft during working hours. "The people who died were either asphyxiated or burned," commented a firefighter. 17 were wounded. Moustapha Taouil of the Casablanca civil protection service said the blaze was triggered by an inadequately maintained electric saw on the ground floor. The initial fire quickly engulfed all four storeys of the building.

The Rosamor factory was clearly operating unsafely, officials said. It's a building with a ground floor and three upper floors specialising in making furniture, therefore there were highly inflammable products," said Taouil. "We confirmed during our examination that the owners of the premises failed to respect legal requirements for this kind of industry including staff training... the owner in contravention of the law, locked staff inside the plant apparently to prevent theft of raw material. It was this that prevented them getting out. The fire was caused by lack of proper maintenance of certain machines and electrical installations." He said a short circuit on the ground floor, which was filled with power saws, triggered the disaster.

As a result of the investigations, "The plant's owner, Adil Moufarreh, and his son Abdelali Moufarreh,

who was the manager, have been taken into custody after having been questioned by police," said an official.

28-year-old factory employee Fadila Khadija said "There was no emergency exit, the extinguishers were empty and the working conditions were difficult." One source said that windows were also unusable as they were covered with iron bars. 20-year-old survivor Omar Elaaz said "I was working on the first floor as an upholsterer. The smoke came up from the ground floor where the foam rubber, wood and glue are stored. I used a gas bottle to break the wire mesh that protects every window." 31-year-old upholsterer Hakim Hakki told of his own lucky escape and its effect on him from hospital: "I jumped from the third floor with four other colleagues while the women, who didn't dare to follow us, perished in the inferno. God saved me but I'll never forget those who died."

The father of deceased 19-year-old Abdelazziz Darif said his son was paid 250 dirhams (20 euro/31 US dollars) per week and did not have social insurance.

California wildfire forces evacuation of thousands

At least 400 homes have been evacuated in Sierra Madre near Los Angeles, California after a wildfire which started on Saturday, began to threaten their homes.

So far only five percent of the 350 acre fire is contained, with over 400 firefighters battling the blaze. Authorities say that it has been over 40 years since some parts of the land have caught fire.

The cause of the fire is not known. Authorities say the investigation into how it started may take up to

three days to finish.

So far there have been no injuries and no homes have yet been damaged, but one building storing equipment used by firefighters was burned to the ground. For a short time, at least 100 hikers were trapped in the mountains and a boy scout camp was also threatened by the blaze. Several people celebrating a wedding have also been trapped by the fire but are not injured and authorities say they are in no danger from the blaze.

It could take at least five days before the fire can be brought under full control.

Spectator killed and 10 injured in German airshow crash

A spectator has been killed and at least 10 people injured after an aircraft struck spectators at an airshow in Germany yesterday. The one-engined propeller-driven aircraft exited the runway after failing to take off and ploughed into a group that had congregated around a snack stand.

The accident occurred at Kindel Air Field, which is located south of Berlin, near Eisenach. The aircraft involved was a Zlin Z-37 Cmelak, a Czech built single-seater plane which had been used by authorities in former East Germany as a cropduster.

A 45-year-old woman was killed, and the 35-year-old pilot had to be freed from his wrecked aircraft and was badly injured. A 14-year-old girl is hospitalised in a critical condition, according to Bloomberg, although other sources suggest the 14-year-old and a nine-year-old child were amongst those less seriously injured. Some reports suggest 15 people were wounded by the crash, and German TV

network ZDF suggested the plane struck a children's carousel near the runway's end and not a refreshments stall.

Toronto transit workers ordered back to work

Canada's largest public transit system is expected to resume service Sunday evening after the Ontario provincial government ordered striking Toronto transit workers back to work today. Service was shut down when transit workers suddenly walked off the job on Friday, having just voted to reject a labour contract deal made the previous weekend.

The provincial legislature met in an extraordinary Sunday afternoon session to pass Bill 66, the Toronto Public Transit Service Resumption Act, 2008 which not only orders the transit work to resume, but includes follow-up arbitration to resolve outstanding disagreements between transit management and its unions. The largest union affected is Local 113 of the Amalgamated Transit Union, but the legislation also affects workers unionised under International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers Lodge 235, and the Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 2.

Union members who defy this law could be fined C\$2000 per day, while the union itself would risk a daily fine of C\$25,000. However, ATU Local 113 president Bob Kinnear indicated that his union would respect the law and return to work while supporting the choice of Kevin Burkett as arbitrator. Wages were not an issue for union members, who voted against the earlier draft contract out of fears regarding compensation for on-the-job injuries, and for maintenance workers' job security.

Toronto's subways, streetcars and buses will operate on a limited service for Sunday evening, with full service expected as the work week begins Monday morning.

Last Titan launch complex at Cape Canaveral demolished

Launch Complex 40 (LC-40) at the Cape Canaveral Air Force Station, Merritt Island, Florida has been demolished. The Mobile Service Structure (MSS), which was once used to load payloads onto Titan III and Titan IV rockets, was toppled by explosive charges at 13:00 GMT (09:00 local time). The launch tower had already been dismantled.

Complex 40 was first used in 1965, for the maiden flight of the Titan IIIC rocket. Following the second Titan III launch, it was modified to serve as a launch pad for the US Air Force's Manned Orbiting Laboratory (MOL). In November 1966, a boilerplate MOL space station was launched on a Titan IIIC from the complex, along with a Gemini capsule, and four satellites. Following the cancellation of MOL, it was converted back to a regular Titan launch complex, and was used for 55 launches, of Titan IIIC, 34D, and IV rockets. Two planetary probes, two commercial satellites, a British military communications satellite, and numerous payloads for the American armed forces were launched from the complex, which ceased operations in April 2005, when the penultimate Titan IV launched the Lacrosse-5 spy satellite for America's National Reconnaissance Office.

Along with Launch Complex 41, which was demolished in 1999, LC-40 was used for heavy-lift Titan rocket launches. The Mars Observer and Cassini-Huygens missions to Mars and Saturn

respectively were launched from Complex 40. The launch pad is being demolished to make way for a new complex, which will be used by the SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket, currently scheduled to make its maiden flight in 2009. As well as being used for commercial launches, the new LC-40 will be used for cargo resupply missions to the International Space Station, under a Commercial Orbital Transportation Services (COTS) contract with NASA. It could eventually be used for manned missions using the SpaceX Dragon spacecraft. SpaceX currently has a five year lease on the site.

Vandals deface family crypt of Pierre Elliott Trudeau

A woman in the tiny farming community of Saint-Rémi, Quebec, south of Montreal visited the local cemetery Saturday and received a rude shock. Graffitied on former Canadian Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau's family crypt were "FLQ", the initials of the Front de libération du Québec and the French words for "traitor" and "bastard" in black spray-paint.

"It's very sad," said Pierre Sauriol, whose organization maintains the graveyard. "He made errors and good decisions like everyone, but he was one of the prime ministers of Canada, and he should rest in peace."

Trudeau, who served as Canada's prime minister from 1968-79 and again in 1980-84, was a controversial figure in the history of Quebec.

During the FLQ crisis in October 1970, Trudeau invoked the War Measures Act after a British diplomat, James Cross and a provincial cabinet minister, Pierre Laporte were kidnapped, leading to arrests of any individuals the

police thought to be separatists, and to their detentions without bail. Laporte was later strangled to death by the FLQ.

Trudeau, who died in September 2000, is entombed in the grey-stone mausoleum with his parents and 11 other family members.

Mr. Sauriol said this was the first time vandals have left their mark on the crypt.

Police believe the tomb was vandalized sometime on Friday night or early Saturday morning.

The Trudeau crypt, which stands taller than any monument in the cemetery, was cordoned off Saturday using orange police tape tied to tombstones.

Provincial police are searching the area in the hope of finding any clues. They have also measured and taken photos of the graffiti, which was applied to every wall of the structure. The letters "FLQ" on the front of the crypt covered a pair of names on a plaque posted by the door. As of now, there have been no arrests or suspects.

The crypt is located a few metres from a major road and many residents from the town of 6,000 slowed to see the damage as they passed by in their vehicles.

Trudeau's family could not be reached for comment but the head of a prominent nationalist group gave his opinion on the matter, calling the vandalism "extremely deplorable."

"It isn't acceptable," said Jean Dorion of the Societe Saint-Jean-Baptiste de Montreal. "Of course we disagree with the Constitution that has been imposed forcibly on Quebec – this is not acceptable.

But it's not a reason to desecrate a burial place."

Environment Minister John Baird, who is responsible for Parks Canada, said in a statement that his department would remove the offensive graffiti.

"It is important to protect the historic resting places of former prime ministers, and these places should at all times be given the respect and honour they deserve," Baird said.

Austrian man kept daughter prisoner in cellar for 24 years

Police in the Lower Austrian town of Amstetten have arrested a 73 year old man who is alleged to have kept his daughter, now aged 42, locked in the cellar of his house in Amstetten since 29th August 1984.

The man, identified by police as "Josef F.", is alleged to have started sexually abusing his daughter, named as "Elisabeth F.", when she was eleven years old, and to have subsequently fathered seven children on her. One of the children, one of a set of twins born in 1996, died of neglect shortly after birth and the body was burned by the father. The surviving six children, three boys and three girls, are currently aged between 5 and 20 years old. Three of the children were left on Josef F.'s doorstep and subsequently raised as the adoptive children of Josef F. and his wife, Rosemarie, while the other three children were left with their mother and never saw daylight until she was discovered. Rosemarie F. is said to have been unaware of her husbands' activities.

Police became suspicious when a 19-year-old daughter, Kerstin, was taken to hospital with a mysterious

life-threatening illness, and the family's medical records were checked. Police say that Elisabeth F. appeared to be "greatly disturbed" psychologically, and only agreed to talk after the authorities assured her that she would not have to have contact with her father, and that her children would be cared for.

The news has shocked Austria, recalling the case of Natascha Kampusch who was kidnapped aged 10, and escaped after being held in a "dungeon" for eight years in 2006.

DNA tests are to be undertaken to confirm the paternity of the children.

Lakshmi Mittal tops Sunday Times Rich List

Lakshmi Mittal has topped the Sunday Times Rich List for the fourth consecutive year, with his GBP 27.7 billion fortune giving him over twice the wealth of Roman Abramovich, who is second in the list.

The Duke of Westminster has retained his position of third place in the list, while Alisher Usmanov, who has a large share in Arsenal FC, has risen to fifth place in the list.

The Sunday Times Rich list is published annually. It lists the riches 1000 people in the United Kingdom.

Soyuz rocket launches GIOVE-B satellite

At 22:16 GMT yesterday (04:16 today local time), a Russian Soyuz-FG/Fregat carrier rocket was launched from Site 31/6 the Baikonur Cosmodrome in Kazakhstan, carrying the European GIOVE-B experimental Navigation satellite. The launch was

conducted by Starsem, a Russo-European organisation which commercially markets Soyuz-FG and Soyuz-2 launches. GIOVE-B was successfully deployed into a medium Earth orbit at 02:01 GMT this morning, after an ascent lasting nearly four hours.

GIOVE-B will serve as a prototype for the Galileo positioning system. It is the second such prototype, GIOVE-A is already in orbit, having been launched in December 2005. GIOVE-B was originally scheduled to launch in April 2006, but was delayed for a number of reasons. The next Galileo launch is scheduled to be the first cluster of operational satellites, which will be launched in 2010. The next Soyuz launch will be a Soyuz-U in mid-May, with a Progress spacecraft to resupply the International Space Station.

This was the 20th orbital launch of 2008, the 24th Soyuz-FG launch, and the 1,732nd flight of a Soyuz rocket of any variant.

President of Afghanistan uninjured after assassination attempt

At least one person was killed and nearly a dozen were injured after six Taliban militants opened fire during a celebration in an assassination attempt on the life of the president of Afghanistan, Hamid Karzai.

Karzai was taken away by body guards and was uninjured in the attack which happened in Kabul. Several other government diplomats and ministers were also present during the celebration and were uninjured. United States and British ambassadors were also present and uninjured.

"Today, the enemies of Afghanistan, the enemies of

Afghanistan's security and progress tried to disrupt the ceremony and cause disorder and terror. Fortunately, Afghanistan's military forces surrounded them quickly and arrested some of the suspects," stated Karzai in a statement on national television less than two hours after the attack.

The people of Afghanistan were celebrating the 16th anniversary of the fall of the communist party of Afghanistan to the Mujahideen during a parade when the militants opened fire from a nearby building using guns and rocket propelled grenades.

At least three of the militants were killed, and the other three were arrested by police.

Large increase in number of foreclosures across US

Recently released figures have revealed that the number of foreclosures in the US state of California has more than quadrupled. The figures for the first quarter of 2008 show a significant increase on previous figures.

There were 47,171 foreclosures on California properties in the first quarter of 2008. The figure for the same period last year was just over 10,000.

An increase was also reported in the state of Arizona. The Attorney general there released a report on this issue. It said that "the collective efforts of servicers and government officials to date have not translated into meaningful improvement in foreclosure prevention outcomes." The Attorney General also commented on the report:

"We continue to see a rising number of foreclosures in Arizona,

which is a significant drag on Arizona's economy. This report confirms that efforts made by servicers to prevent unnecessary foreclosures are not enough. We need to explore additional approaches to prevent tens of thousands of unnecessary foreclosures in Arizona."

Wikimedia board of trustees announces restructure

The Wikimedia Board of Trustees recently announced that it would dramatically restructure the makeup of the board. The Board announced that there would now be three seats elected by the Wikimedia community, two seats elected by the Wikimedia chapters, one 'community founder' seat appointed by the Trustees, and four 'specific expertise' seats, also appointed by the Trustees.

Jan-Bart Vreede, Vice Chair of the Board of Trustees, gave Wikinews more information about the decision in a short email interview, which was carried out yesterday. Below is the text of the interview:

Wikinews: How long was this decision process in the works?

Jan-Bart: We have known that we need to carefully look at the board as a whole for quite a while. We weren't sure how drastic our steps needed to be. We spend a large amount of time on this during our April board meeting, using the additional insights from our newest board members Michael Snow and Domas Mituzas. It took us a while after that fill in all the details. The election committee has been very patient in waiting for us to complete this process, because they were unable to move forward without us.

WN: Why did you chose to have a "community foundation person" position, a position not common

among other non profits?

Jan-Bart: There have been and will always be discussions with regards to the position of Jimmy within the board, does he count as a community member or not. Keeping in mind his special role we thought it was best to take this opportunity to make his position clear as well. He does have a special seat which doesn't go in any of the other categories. His seat is up for re-appointment every year (which Jimmy himself insisted on), the big difference is that if the seat is not taken by him, it is left vacant and the board reverts to 9 members. [Note- Jimmy Wales, Wikimedia Founder, is the person who will have the "community foundation" position]

WN: How/when will the elections be held for the new open seats?

Jan-Bart: This has been announced by the election committee today. Please note that these are only the community elected seats. The chapters are going to formulate their own process for filling the chapter-selected seats, this may or may not involve elections. [Note: Kwan Ting Chan announced on the Wikinews Water Cooler that candidates may nominate themselves for election between May 8 and May 22, and that the voting will occur between 1 June and 21 June.]

Today in History

1192 – Third Crusade: Conrad of Montferrat, the elected King of Jerusalem, was fatally stabbed by members of the Hashshashin.

1611 – The University of Santo Tomas in Manila, one of the oldest existing universities in Asia and one of the world's largest Catholic universities in terms of population, was founded.

1789 – Fletcher Christian led a mutiny aboard the Royal Navy ship

HMAV Bounty against its commander William Bligh.

1923 – London's Wembley Stadium, then known as Empire Stadium, was opened to the public for the first time and held the 1923 FA Cup Final between Bolton Wanderers and West Ham United football clubs.

1952 – The Treaty of San Francisco entered into force, ending the occupation of Japan by the former Allied Powers of World War II.

April 28 is Easter Monday (Eastern Christianity, 2008); Festival of Matsu in Southeast Asia (2008); International Workers' Memorial Day

Quote of the Day

The pen is mightier than the sword if the sword is very short, and the pen is very sharp.
~ Terry Pratchett

Word of the Day

battology n

1. Continual unnecessary reiteration of the same words, phrases, or ideas.

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