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US lawmakers reach stimulus package deal

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Russian and US satellites collide

The American civilian

Top Stories

communications satellite Iridium 33 and the defunct Russian military communications satellite Kosmos-2251 collided over Siberia on Tuesday, according to NASA. The satellites, each weighing in excess of 1,000 pounds, and traveling at approximately 17,500 miles per hour, collided 491 miles above the earth.

Wikipedia Current Events

Zimbabwe Republic Police charge Roy Bennett of the Movement for Democratic Change with treason hours after Morgan Tsvangirai's power sharing cabinet is sworn in.

•Peanut-processing company Peanut Corporation of America files for Chapter 7 bankruptcy and liquidation following a salmonella outbreak linked to its products.

•Germany's economy shrank by 2.1 percent in the fourth fiscal quarter of 2008.

•Microsoft places a US\$250,000 bounty on the Conficker computer worm's creator.

•A suicide bomber kills at least 35 people and injures 30 others in Karbala, Iraq.

•China's government urges Yves Saint Laurent's estate to return two Qing Dynasty sculptures scheduled for auction in Paris.

•Australia's Senate approves a \$42-billion economic stimulus package.

Wikipedia Current Events

•Israeli Defense Forces in the Gaza Strip discover grenades made by Hamas from humanitarian supplies.

•Germany's Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology and 454 Life Sciences map the Neanderthal genome.

•Lloyds Banking Group warns that HBOS will register a loss of £8.5 billion for 2008.

•Unix time will equal "1234567890" at 23:31:30 UTC.

•BA CityFlyer Flight 8456, an Avro RJ100, crash-lands at London's City Airport.

•A passenger train derails in Orissa, India, killing at least 15 people and injuring 150 more.

Judd Gregg withdraws as US Commerce Secretary nominee

Judd Gregg (R-NH), who was nominated by President Barack Obama as the next United States Secretary of Commerce, withdrew from consideration Thursday, citing "irresolvable conflicts" with Obama over the administration's proposed stimulus package and the Census.

Judd Gregg is a current Senator representing New Hampshire, where he formerly served as Governor. Senator Gregg is also the ranking member of the Senate Budget Committee and a member of the Republican Party. Had he been confirmed, he would have been the second Republican in Obama's cabinet.

In a statement, Gregg thanked the President for the nomination.

"However, it has become apparent during this process that this will not work for me as I have found that on issues such as the stimulus package and the Census there are irresolvable conflicts for me. Prior to accepting this post, we had discussed these and other potential differences, but unfortunately we did not adequately focus on these concerns," Senator Gregg said in his statement.

In an official White House press release, Robert Gibbs stated: "Once it became clear after his nomination that Senator Gregg was not going to be supporting some of President Obama's key economic priorities, it became necessary for Senator Gregg and the Obama administration to part ways. We regret that he has had a change of heart."

Gregg is the fourth cabinet nominee of Obama to withdraw. The first three were former South Dakota Sen. Tom Daschle, consultant Nancy Killefer, and New Mexico Governor Bill Richardson who was Obama's first choice for Commerce Secretary.

Japan, Australia draw in World Cup qualifier

Australia and Japan played out a scoreless draw in front of sixty five and a half thousand spectators at Yokohama International Stadium in Japan. Both countries are expected to go through to the World Cup in South Africa.

The Australians sustained heavy pressure through out the match, they managed to defend effectively. The pressure however cause three players to be booked by the referee. Namely Scott

Chipperfield (after 21 minutes), Luke Wilkshire (25 minutes) and Carl Valeri (1 minute into 2nd half added time).

Japan managed to open up Australia's left hand side and create a number of chances up front. Unfortunately for the Japanese, the chances resulted in corners and near misses at best.

"It's a great result," said Tim Cahill, Australia's makeshift striker. "They've had five weeks preparing, we've had two days. We will take that result - and I'm sure they will too."

The result sees them two wins clear of Bahrain, who would play-off for fifth overall in Asia if qualification happened after four games per team.

"You've got to look at the table," Cahill said. "We're six points clear of the team in third (Bahrain). We're sitting pretty and so are Japan."

"It's frustrating not to take three points at home," said Japan coach Takeshi Okada, who had admitted his job was in trouble. "We did everything but put the ball in the net. But it's about qualifying for the World Cup. We have four games left and have to keep pushing."

Fifty killed in commuter plane crash in Clarence Center, New York

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Continental Airlines Flight 3407 is a daily commuter flight from

Newark Liberty International Airport in Newark, New Jersey to Buffalo, New York, operated under the Continental Connection brand by Virginia-based regional airline Colgan Air.

The Buffalo News has reported that the plane, a Bombardier Dash 8 turboprop with Tail Number N200WQ has crashed into a home located at 6038 Long Street, not far from the Clarence Center Fire Hall in the Buffalo suburb of Clarence Center approximately 10:17 p.m. EST (03:20 UTC), Thursday, February 12, 2009. Three people were inside the house.

According to Becky Gibbons of New York State Police and Chris Collins County Executive in Erie County, New York, the total number of fatalities is 50, including 45 passengers, four crew members and a person on the ground, while a woman and daughter on the ground were injured, near the edge of farmland, about seven miles from Buffalo Niagara International Airport.

Karen Wielinski, age 57, and her daughter, Jill, age 22 were brought to Millard Fillmore Suburban Hospital in Williamsville where they are in stable condition in the emergency room. The father, Douglas C. Wielinski, 61 died from his injuries. Two volunteer firefighters are also being treated for smoke inhalation and minor injuries. They are expected to be released later Friday morning.

The crew member names have been released as of 8:20 AM EST, and are listed as: Captain Marvin Renslow, First Officer Rebecca Shaw, Flight Attendant Matilda Quintero, Flight Attendant Donna Prisco, and Captain Joseph Zuffoletto who was an off-duty

crew member.

One of the crash victims, Beverly Eckert, of Stamford, Connecticut and widow of 9/11 terror attack victim, Buffalo native, Sean Rooney, was coming home for her husband's 58th birthday celebration. Her sister, Sue Bourque noted to The Buffalo News, "We know she was on that plane and now she's with him." Chris Kausner has said his sister Elise, age 24, a law student, was on board the plane. "I'm thinking about the fact that my mother has to fly home from Florida and what I'm going to tell my two sons," he said.

The plane, which was carrying over 2.5 tonnes (5,000 pounds) of fuel, impacted a residence that was completely destroyed. Amid rain and sleet, the ill-fated plane exploded into a huge orange fireball, sparking a large fire which emergency crews had to contain. Twelve houses near the crash site were evacuated.

The aircraft in question was on approach to land at the nearby Buffalo Niagara International Airport when it disappeared from radar.

"It sounded quite loud, and then the sound stopped. Then one or two seconds later, there was a thunderous explosion. The whole sky was lit up orange."

—Eyewitness David Luce and resident Bob Dworak

According to recordings from air traffic control, the pilot did not report any problem to approach control, and could not be contacted by the Buffalo tower after handoff. "Can other planes see anything?" asked the traffic controller, but no one has responded. The pilot's last

comment was "Colgan Flight 3407," but there were no sounds of distress.

The Buffalo News has reported that crew members aboard the flight from Newark Airport reported mechanical problems as they approached Buffalo. Weather conditions were reported to be a wintry mix in the area, with light snow, fog, and 17 mile per hour winds.

In the 31-minute audio-recording there are conversations between the cockpit, air traffic control and other aircraft in the vicinity.

Following take-off from Newark Airport, a female voice (pilot) in the 3407 plane's cockpit is heard informing air authorities that her aircraft was turning on approach to landing. The pilot stopped communicating at 2,300ft.

"This aircraft was 5 miles out, all of a sudden we have no response from that aircraft," the controller declares. 21 minutes and 45 seconds into the recording, the control tower informs a JetBlue Airlines: "...apparently we have an emergency, I'll have to get back to you," reported The Daily Telegraph.

"We know she was on that plane and now she's with him."
—Sue Bourque, sister of 9/11 widow Beverly Eckert

"It was cold, snowing and dark but these planes are designed to fly in icy conditions. However, those conditions can be very fickle and if ice builds up on a plane it can be very difficult. At this time of year, when a pilot crashes approaching an airport that they will know well, the first thing you look at is the weather," said David Learmount, of Flight International.

Continental Airlines Inc. said Colgan Air was in the process of collecting information. "Continental extends its deepest sympathy to the family members and loved ones of those involved in this accident. We are providing our full assistance to Colgan Air so that together we can provide as much support as possible for all concerned," said Larry Kellner, CEO of Continental Airlines since December 2004.

The Bombardier Dash 8 a 74-seat is a twin-engined, medium range, turboprop airliner.

According to the Ascend Online Fleets database, Colgan, a company of about 1,100 employees has a fleet of 15 Bombardier Dash 8's, along with 3 Hawker Beechcraft 1900D and 38 Saab 340B turboprops. Flight 3407's airplane was less than one year old and had flown for only about 1,500 hours, said Kieran Daly, of the online aviation news service Air Transport Intelligence, saying that the doomed turboprop plane is one of safest of its type.

Scandinavian Airlines (SAS) has permanently grounded its Dash 8s fleet after three crash landings during a two-month period in 2007 caused by faulty landing gear. "Confidence in the Q400 has diminished considerably and our customers are becoming increasingly doubtful about flying in this type of aircraft," said Mats Jansson, SAS president and CEO. "I have decided to immediately remove Dash 8 Q400 aircraft from service," he added.

"There is 'no indication of any security related event' that brought the plane down," said FBI spokesman Richard Kolko. Conditions of freezing drizzle, known as hard rime, were the

most likely cause of the tragedy.

The National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) has announced that they would send a team to the crash site on Friday to begin the investigation. Lorenda Ward will serve as chief investigator with the assistance of NTSB Commissioner Steven Chealander and public affairs officer Keith Holloway. Ward has investigated several other plane crashes — including the 2006 New York City plane crash that claimed the life of New York Yankees pitcher Corey Lidle.

"We are deeply shocked and saddened by the tragic accident that occurred tonight in Clarence. Our focus right now is on supporting the first responders on the ground and their efforts to ensure the health and safety of people in the area," said Chris Lee, an Republican politician from Corning, New York, representing the 26th Congressional District of New York.

The tragedy is the nation's deadliest disaster since the Comair Flight 191 crashed in Lexington, Kentucky in August 2006. Delta Air Lines Flight 5191 was a scheduled U.S. domestic passenger flight from Lexington, Kentucky, to Atlanta, Georgia. On the morning of August 27, 2006, the Bombardier Canadair Regional Jet 100ER that was being used for the flight crashed while attempting to take off from Blue Grass Airport in Fayette County, Kentucky, four miles (6 kilometers) west of the central business district of the City of Lexington.

Financially, Continental is faced with volatile fuel prices amid a slowdown from the weak economy. It has posted losses of \$585 million for 2008.

Russian and US satellites collide

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The Iridium satellite was launched in 1997, and the Russian satellite was a Strela-2M model. The American satellite is expected to be replaced within the coming month as Iridium will maneuver one of its in-orbit satellites to replace the lost unit.

Although the first such satellite crash in space, such an event has been long predicted. Nicholas Johnson, chief scientist of NASA's Orbital Debris Office at the Lyndon B. Johnson Space Center stated, "We knew this was going to happen eventually and this is it — this was the big one."

While the International Space Station and the Hubble Space Telescope are at minimal risk, the event does raise concerns that the debris cloud could collide with other satellites in the region, triggering an exponentially growing series of collisions and debris known as an Ablation cascade.

The United States Strategic Command of the U.S. Department of Defense office is tracking the debris. The result of plotting analysis will be posted to a public website.

US lawmakers reach stimulus package deal

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United States Congress have reached a consensus over a stimulus package worth hundreds of billions of dollars.

The package was bridged between the House of Representatives' version of the stimulus, which was worth US\$820 billion, and the Senate's version, which cost \$838 billion. The package now costs \$789 billion, and devotes resources to tax cuts and spending intended to help revive the faltering US economy.

The House of Representatives' version of the bill was passed without any Republican support, while the Senate's version, which was voted upon on Tuesday, was backed by only three Republican senators.

The stimulus is aimed at giving help to those who have suffered from the recession, in the form of food stamps, health coverage, and unemployment benefits, as well as various other things.

US President Barack Obama hailed the agreement as a "hard-fought compromise".

"I want to thank the Democrats and Republicans in Congress who came together," he said, "with the urgency that this moment demands."

Obama is to sign to bill into law after the revised version of the stimulus is passed by Congress. He has said that he wants the bill on his desk ready to sign by this weekend.

Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid estimated that the package should introduce three and a half million jobs, more than a third of it is to be devoted to various incentives for middle-class Americans and tax

cuts.

Republican politicians, however, still disapprove of the stimulus plan, saying that the package is too costly and will increase the size of the federal government and not create any new jobs.

US stock markets posted modest gains at the end of day following the agreement.

Today in History

1779 – English explorer James Cook was killed in a fight by Native Hawaiians near Kealahou on the Island of Hawaii.

1876 – Inventor Alexander Graham Bell and electrical engineer Elisha Gray each filed a patent for the telephone, starting a controversy on who invented the telecommunications device first.

1949 – Asbestos miners began a labour strike around Asbestos, Quebec, Canada, considered one of the causes of the Quiet Revolution.

1961 – Lawrencium, the metallic radioactive synthetic element with atomic number 103, was discovered at the Lawrence Radiation Laboratory on the campus of the University of California, Berkeley.

1989 – A fatwa was issued for the execution of Salman Rushdie for authoring *The Satanic Verses*, a novel Islamic fundamentalists considered blasphemous.

2005 – Former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri was assassinated when explosives were detonated as his motorcade drove past the St. George Hotel in Beirut, sparking the Cedar Revolution in Lebanon.

February 14 is Valentine's Day; Feast of St. Brigid of Kildare in Eastern Christianity

Quote of the Day

Morning has broken,
Like the first morning,
Blackbird has spoken
Like the first bird.
Praise for the singing!
Praise for the morning!
Praise for them springing
Fresh from the Word!
~ Eleanor Farjeon ~

Word of the Day

callipygous adj
1. Having shapely, beautiful buttocks.

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