



### Top Stories



**Iraq preparing for "final battle with al-Qaeda"**

**Monte Carlo hotel and casino in Las Vegas, Nevada catches fire**

Flames were seen shooting out of the top of the Monte Carlo hotel on Friday. "The Strip" has been closed off in front of the hotel while firefighters continue to fight the blaze.



### Featured story

**"Anonymous" releases statements outlining "War on Scientology"**

An Internet group has released statements on YouTube and via a press release, outlining what they call a "War on Scientology". On Friday, the same group allegedly brought down Scientology's main website, scientology.org, which was available sporadically throughout the weekend.

[http://en.wikinews.org/wiki/%22Anonymous%22\\_releases\\_statements\\_outlining\\_%22War\\_on\\_Scientology%22](http://en.wikinews.org/wiki/%22Anonymous%22_releases_statements_outlining_%22War_on_Scientology%22)

### Wikipedia Current Events

Hugo Chavez, the President of Venezuela, accuses Colombia of preparing a "military aggression against Venezuela".

- United States Secretary of Defense Robert Gates says the U.S. is "ready and willing" to send troops to Pakistan to combat al-Qaeda and the Taliban.

- Iraq War: Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki claims al-Qaeda in Iraq has been pushed out of most of the nation, and Iraqi security forces are preparing a "decisive" offensive against the group in Mosul, their last stronghold, in response to attacks in the city that have killed around 40 people, including the area's police chief.

- Power shortages cause South African mines to suspend production.

- Semion Mogilevich, an organised crime boss with ties to the Russian Mafia, is detained in Moscow.

- United States presidential election: Ohio Congressman Dennis Kucinich withdraws his candidacy.

- An explosion in a Beirut suburb (Hazmiyeh) kills Lebanon's top anti-terror investigating officer and his driver.

- A fire breaks out at the Monte Carlo Resort and Casino in Las Vegas causing the entire building to be evacuated. There were no major injuries.

### Thomas Cecil Gray, pioneer in anaesthesiology, dead at 94

Thomas Cecil Gray born 11 March 1913 in Liverpool, died 21 January 2008. He died peacefully at home on the Wirral. A requiem mass will be held at Liverpool Metropolitan Cathedral on 26 January 2008. He pioneered modern Anaesthetic techniques.

Born in Liverpool in 1913, educated at Ampleforth College, he qualified in medicine at The University of Liverpool in 1937. He began his career as a General Practitioner before joining the Royal Army Medical Corps.

He later returned to the University to become Head of the Department of Anaesthesia and was made Dean of the Faculty of Medicine in 1970, retiring in 1976. As Senior Lecturer he established the Department of Anaesthesia at Liverpool University, the 'Liverpool technique', based on the triad of unconsciousness, analgesia and muscle relaxation, was developed as a result.

Professor Gray was the editor of the British Journal of Anaesthesia from 1948 to 1964. Until recently Professor Gray continued to give occasional lectures at the university.

Professor Gray was presented with a CBE by Her Majesty the Queen and in 1982 was honoured by Pope John Paul II who made him a Commander of the Order of St. Gregory the Great. In 2007 the Liverpool Echo included him in its

list of the 700 greatest Liverpoolians, as part of Liverpool's 700th anniversary.

Married twice. He married his first wife Marjorie Kathleen Hely in 1937 they had 2 children, she died in 1978; He married Pamela Mary Corning in 1979, they had 1 son before she died on 5 January 2008. He had four grandchildren.

### **International participants showcase different industry cultures at 2008 Taipei Game Show**

B2B Trade Area of Taipei Game Show, criticized by trade buyers last year, but accompanied with 2008 Taiwan Digital Content Forum, moved to the second floor at Taipei World Trade Center for world-wide participants with a better exchange atmosphere this year.

Not only local OBM's (Softstar Entertainment, Soft-World International Corp., International Games System Corp., ..., etc.) but also companies from New Zealand, Canada, Japan, Hong Kong, and South Korea showcased different specialists with multiple styles. Especially on South Korea, participated members from G★ Trade Show (Game Show & Trade, All-Round, aka Gstar) showcased gaming industry of South Korea and the G★ upcoming at this November with brochures.

In the 2-days Digital Content Forum, world-class experts not only shared industry experiences, members from Taiwan Gaming Industry Association also discussed and forecasted marketing models for gaming industry. With participations from governmental, industrial, and academical executives world-wide, this forum helps them gain precious experiences of digital content

industry from several countries.

According to the Taipei Computer Association, the show and forum organizer, the digital content industry in Taiwan was apparently grown up recent years as Minister of Economic Affairs of the Republic of China Steve Ruey-long Chen said at Opening Ceremony yesterday. Without R&Ds from cyber-gaming, and basic conceptions from policies and copyright issues, this (digital content) industry will be fallen down in Taiwan. If this industry wanted to be grown up in sustainability, gaming OBMs in Taiwan should independently produce different and unique games and change market style to market brands and games to the world.

### **Monte Carlo hotel and casino in Las Vegas, Nevada catches fire**

A fire has been confirmed at The Monte Carlo Resort and Casino in Las Vegas, Nevada, in the United States.

Reports say the fire, which was reported at about 11:00 a.m. (Pacific Time) began in the top center of the hotel and quickly spread to the top five floors, burning a large section of the roof and facade. Flames were seen shooting out of the top of the hotel. Also visible was a plume of black smoke which according to witnesses, was visible for many miles.

At least three fire companies responded to the scene and quickly began to extinguish the fire. As of 12:00 p.m., the fire was nearly contained. The Strip has been closed off in front of the hotel while firefighters continue to fight the blaze.

All guests have been evacuated

from the hotel with no injuries reported. The hotel has 3,002 guest rooms, 211 suites and is 32 stories high.

The cause of the fire is not known and is being investigated.

### **Sony Computer Entertainment announce talent project to help digital content industry in Taiwan**

Sony Computer Entertainment, a world-class gaming company, yesterday announced not only upcoming models from the PS2 and PSP lines, but also a special project named "Taiwan Digital Content Talent R&D Project," strongly supported by the Ministry of Economic Affairs (MOEA). The September launch of this project is expected to bring profits and opportunities to Taiwan's digital content industry, especially in gaming.

According to the SCE Taiwan Limited, this project will be mainly supervised by MOEA. SCE will cooperate with academic units in Taiwan. Students and the public interested on the R&D of digital content are welcomed to join trainings from this project. Some famous Japanese gaming developers will give lectures and choose some excellent games at this project to market to the world including Japan.

SCE Taiwan, as well as the lecturers, will also provide some debug machines, on which trainees can experiment during the lectures. It is expected that some selected games will be preliminary announced at PlayStation Home and PlayStation Store in Japan.

### **Car bomb in Beirut kills 6, including top police investigator**

Lebanese officials say a car bomb

blast in a Christian suburb of the capital Beirut has killed at least six people, including a top security official. The bombing has been criticised by the US Embassy in Lebanon.

Red Cross ambulances evacuated at least a dozen casualties, after a powerful explosion tore through rows of parked cars, near a major highway overpass, targeting a top Lebanese police investigator.

Firefighters worked feverishly to douse the blazing wreckage of twisted automobiles, as thick plumes of acrid black smoke choked the air.

Lebanese security officials say top police investigator Wissam Eid, the apparent target of the blast, died immediately.

Eid had reportedly just finished meeting with members of the UN Tribunal investigating the explosion death of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq al Hariri in February 2005.

The head of Lebanon's Internal Security Forces, the country's national police force, Ashraf Rifi says that the perpetrator's of the explosion intended today's explosion to be a message to his forces. He says that Eid was a technological expert and engineer, and that he was involved in investigating all recent terrorist bombings.

Rifi also stressed that the explosion was the result of a car-bomb, repeating that it was intended as a "message to Lebanon's police and investigating community."

Charles Ayoub, the Editor of Lebanon's Ad Diyar newspaper told al Arabiya television that at least

30 to 40 kilos of a TNT were used in the bombing.

Lebanese investigators, using sniffer dogs, combed through the rubble of the explosion, looking for clues, but sources say that water used to douse the blaze was making the search extremely difficult.

Over 30 major explosions have hit Lebanon since 2005, killing at least ten top politicians, civil servants, army officers, and journalists. Most of the victims were, in some way, opponents of Syria.

Several members of parliament from the anti-Syrian March 14 government coalition quickly accused Syria of today's killing. Syria has denied any role in any of the deaths.

### **"Unauthorized" Tom Cruise bio hits number one on Amazon.com, New York Times best sellers list**

Tom Cruise: An Unauthorized Biography, a biography of actor Tom Cruise written by journalist Andrew Morton, has hit the number one spot on Amazon.com's Top Sellers list and The New York Times Best Sellers list.

Morton's book was published January 15, and hit number one on Amazon.com's Top Sellers list on January 18. Yesterday, the book hit the number one spot on The New York Times Best Sellers list. The book is not for sale in Britain or Ireland, and the New York Post has reported that British tourists to the United States are buying copies of the book to bring back home.

Morton makes some controversial assertions in the book, including that Cruise is second in command at the Church of Scientology, and

that Scientology was the cause of Cruise and Nicole Kidman's separation.

Cruise's attorney, Bertram Fields released a statement which said that the book was "absolutely loaded with false statements." Cruise has threatened a USD\$100 million lawsuit against Morton and the book's publisher, St. Martin's Press. The Church of Scientology also responded to Morton's claims in the book. In a 15-page statement, the Church called the book "bigoted" and a "defamatory assault," and said that Cruise "holds no official or unofficial position in the Church hierarchy."

Morton was interviewed by the Associated Press, and responded to some of the statements made by the Church of Scientology. When asked if he had attempted to interview Cruise for the book, Morton said "I asked Tom for an interview and he declined." In response to a statement released by Cruise's publicists that he had not interviewed "one person who has known or worked with Tom" in the past twenty-five years, Morton responded "I interviewed everyone from scriptwriters to producers to actors to actresses to teachers to girlfriends to pupils to Scientologists to people who have audited him." When questioned about his assertion that Cruise is "second in command" of the Church of Scientology, Morton stated "Scientology would be a shadow of what it is today if it had not been for the involvement of Tom Cruise."

"Mr. Morton, apparently unfazed by the reputation of the group's notoriously hair-triggered legal department, leaves few stones unhurled."

—The Wall Street Journal

Janet Maslin of The New York Times wrote that parts of the book "push the limits of responsible reporting." A review in the Chicago Tribune was also critical, and Teresa Budasi wrote "If you read Andrew Morton's unauthorized biography of Tom Cruise with a fan's curiosity in one hand and a thinking person's skepticism in the other, you'll likely end up in the same place you were before you read it: not all that interested." In his review of the book, Dave Shiflett of The Wall Street Journal commented on the litigious nature of the Church of Scientology, writing "Mr. Morton, apparently unfazed by the reputation of the group's notoriously hair-triggered legal department, leaves few stones unhurled."

Shortly before the book's publication, a video produced by the Church of Scientology featuring Tom Cruise promoting his beliefs appeared on the Internet. After the Church of Scientology sent a legal complaint to the online video-sharing website YouTube, the video was taken down from that site, but is available on Gawker.com. A group of Internet users calling themselves "Anonymous" subsequently announced a "War on Scientology" including denial-of-service attacks against the Church of Scientology's main websites. Andreas Heldal-Lund, founder of the Scientology-critical site and Norway-based non-profit organization Operation Clambake released a statement on Tuesday critical of the actions of the "Anonymous" group, saying that the Church of Scientology deserves the right to freedom of speech.

"People lose sight of the fact that Tom Cruise is actually a person. I feel for him." —Ben Stiller

Actor Jerry O'Connell, who had previously acted alongside Cruise in the 1996 film *Jerry Maguire*, produced a parody of the Cruise video which was released on Wednesday. Other Hollywood acquaintances of Cruise, including comedians Adam Sandler and Ben Stiller, released statements defending Cruise and criticizing those who have mocked him for his beliefs. Sandler stated "To see anyone's private life invaded and mocked like this is sickening," and Stiller commented "People lose sight of the fact that Tom Cruise is actually a person. I feel for him."

On Wednesday the Associated Press reported that Cruise will be a presenter at the Screen Actors Guild Awards ceremony on Sunday.

### **Toronto Maple Leafs name Fletcher interim GM**

The struggling Toronto Maple Leafs National Hockey League team is under new, interim management this week when Leafs General Manager John Ferguson, Jr. was replaced by Cliff Fletcher. Ferguson's contract was due to expire at the end of June. Fletcher was the Leafs' General Manager from 1991 to 1997.

The new management began on a positive note as the Leafs won 3-2 over the Washington Capitals on Wednesday.

### **Argentina: TV channel taken off the air in Mendoza at rival's request**

Mendoza, Argentina – The Argentinian federal judge Olga Arrabal ordered closure of public rebroadcasting station in Mendoza Province at request of Vila-Manzano Group, a monopolistic media conglomerate.

The judge ordered the cessation of

broadcasts by the local relay transmitter of Canal 7 television station in Mendoza's capital. The inhabitants of this city and Maipú, Luján de Cuyo, Lavalle, San Martín, Palmira, Junín, Santa Rosa, La Paz and Rivadavia Departments lost access to the public television.

The country's Media Secretary, Public Broadcasting System and Channel 7 will appeal the resolution of the Second Federal Court of Mendoza.

"We are going to do everything necessary to defend the right to the information", said Rosario Lufrano, the executive director of Canal 7. In addition, she added that they would go to Mendoza all the times that be necessary, since they had done it with San Rafael, to achieve that all the citizens have free and free access to the unique national channel that has Argentina.

In 2007, Channel 7 had installed new relay in the cities of Mar del Plata, Bariloche, Neuquén, Santa Rosa, Comodoro Rivadavia, San Rafael and Mendoza. Nevertheless, in San Rafael and Mendoza they had problems, due to the judicial presentations made by Vila-Manzano Group's companies.

A Commission of Neighbors called for a day of mobilization for the next January 30 in the downtown of Mendoza, to repudiate the measure adopted by the judge.

### **President Bush, Congress agree on economic stimulus package**

President Bush and Congressional leaders from both political parties have reached agreement on US \$150 billion in tax relief in an effort to help stimulate the U.S. economy. VOA White House

Correspondent Scott Stearns has the story.

The agreement includes provision to give up to US\$600 in tax rebates to millions of wage earners and an additional US\$300 refund for each child. It allows businesses to immediately write off 50 percent of capital equipment purchases.

President Bush says it is an effective, robust and temporary set of incentives that will boost the economy and create new jobs.

"This package has the right set of policies and is the right size," he said. "The incentives in this package will lead to higher consumer spending and increased business investment this year."

"The incentives in this package will lead to higher consumer spending and increased business investment this year." —George W. Bush

The president says he knows Americans are concerned about their economic future, with the challenges of higher energy prices and a falling housing market slowing growth.

President Bush is urging the House and Senate to pass the agreement as soon as possible.

"We have an opportunity to come together and take the swift, decisive action our economy urgently needs," he added.

Stock markets around the world dipped sharply early this week amid widespread fears of a U.S. recession and its potential to drag down foreign markets as well.

The stimulus deal was an unusual display of bipartisanship in Washington, with Democrats and

Republicans in the House making concessions to get the deal done quickly.

Republicans dropped a provision that would have allowed businesses to reclaim taxes previously paid. Democrats dropped their demands for increases in food stamps and unemployment benefits.

"This bipartisan package should be acted upon rapidly and can help alleviate the economic pain felt by millions of Americans."  
—Nancy Pelosi

House Speaker Democrat Nancy Pelosi says she is not totally pleased with the package, but knows it will help stimulate the economy.

"This bipartisan package should be acted upon rapidly and can help alleviate the economic pain felt by millions of Americans," she said.

John Boehner is the leader of Republicans in the House of Representatives. He says it was not easy for Republicans and Democrats to agree on a plan, but he is confident it is in the best interests of the nation.

"This agreement is a big win for the American people," he said. "It will stimulate our economy in the most direct and effective way possible by putting money in the hands of middle income American families and by giving businesses incentives to create and build new jobs in our country."

Treasury Secretary Henry Paulson was the president's lead negotiator with Congress.

"I know the work isn't done yet," he noted. "As the Speaker said, we've got more to do. And I am

looking forward to working with the Senate and working with the House to get a package as soon as possible, because, again, speed is of the essence."

Senate Majority Leader Democrat Harry Reid says he wants to get the plan to the president for signature by February 15. But changes in the Senate may slow passage of the package, as Reid says senators may consider restoring provisions to extend unemployment benefits.

### Today in History

1500 – Spanish navigator, explorer, and conquistador Vicente Yáñez Pinzón reached the north coast of what today is Brazil.

1788 – The British First Fleet, led by Captain Arthur Phillip, landed at Sydney Cove, establishing the first permanent European settlement in Australia.

1905 – The Cullinan Diamond, the largest rough gem-quality diamond ever found, was discovered at the Premier Mine in Cullinan, Gauteng, South Africa.

1950 – Indian independence movement: India officially became a republic under a new constitution, with Rajendra Prasad as its first president.

1983 – The spreadsheet program Lotus 1-2-3, the IBM Personal Computer's first "killer application", was first released.

January 26 is Australia Day in Australia (1788), Republic Day in India (1950).

### Quote of the Day

Prometheus, I have no Titan's might,  
Yet I, too, must each dusk renew my heart,  
For daytime's vulture talons tear apart  
The tender alcoves built by love at night.

~ Philip José Farmer ~

**Word of the Day**

nepotism n

1. The favoring of relatives or personal friends because of their relationship rather than because of their abilities.

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+1-866-653-4265  
 (toll-free in the U.S.)  
 +1-202-742-5918  
 (outside the U.S.)  
 +44-871-218-6397  
 (U.K. / Europe)

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