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Top Stories

U.S. air strikes on Somalia confirmed

The Pentagon has confirmed that US forces began an on-going operation of airstrikes in southern Somalia on Monday. It also stated that the attacks, which it says are targetted at Islamic fighters on the ground, are continuing. Somalia's president had earlier said that the United States was pursuing suspects of the 1998 United States embassy bombings.



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CBS blog criticizes stations' coverage of Tigger incident

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Featured story

Prince Laurent of Belgium testifies in marine fraud case

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Featured story

questioned last night by the federal police and is attending today's court session in Hasselt in a marine fraud case that has gripped Belgian media since last December. The Prince is expected to testify this afternoon.

Wikipedia Current Events

- Bangladesh President Iajuddin Ahmed steps down as interim leader just hours after declaring a state of emergency and a curfew in the country.

- Austria's new government is sworn in under Chancellor Alfred Gusenbauer (SPÖ) and Vice-Chancellor Wilhelm Molterer (ÖVP).

- Amid a general shakeup of the ministers in the Government of Kazakhstan Foreign Minister Kassym-Jomart Tokayev is appointed Chairman of the Senate of Kazakhstan. If aging President Nursultan Nazarbayev dies, according to the Constitution, Tokayev would become President. Some analysts say this is a sign that Tokayev, and not one of Nazarbayev's politically active daughters, is his desired successor.

- A top U.S. official says that he believes the airstrike in Somalia yesterday failed to kill the al-Qaeda suspects they targeted.

- In the ongoing Operation Mountain Fury, NATO forces kill as many as 150 Taliban militants in Afghanistan's Paktika province.

Wikipedia Current Events

- The U.S. Defense Department reports that United States Department of Defense contractors, while traveling through Canada, have had Canadian coins with radio transmitters inside planted on them by unknown people. The transmitters could be used to track the locations of the contractors.

- Pieces of wreckage and a body are recovered from the missing Adam Air flight 574.

UFO Website: "Vatican official" says extraterrestrial contact is "real phenomenon"

Monsignor Corrado Balducci, a theologian member of the Vatican Curia, has said that extraterrestrial contact is real, the UFO Digest website claims.

According to the website, Monsignor Corrado Balducci provided analysis that relates directly with the teachings of the Catholic Church. He stressed that the extraterrestrial encounters "are NOT demonic, they are NOT due to psychological impairment, they are NOT a case of entity attachment, but these encounters deserve to be studied carefully." He said that the Vatican was closely following reported incidents of extraterrestrial encounters from its Nunciatures (embassies) in different countries.

"As God's power is limitless, it is not only possible but also likely that inhabited planets exist."

CBS blog criticizes stations' coverage of Tigger incident

CBS program The Early Show ran a segment Monday about the Tigger incident at Florida theme park Walt Disney World, which a company blog later criticized.

CBS runs a regularly updated feed on its website, entitled "The Public Eye". It was created by the television station to "bring transparency to the editorial operations" of that department. It went one step further, recently, when criticizing their program's actions.

The post knocked co-anchor Hannah Strom, who "did not challenge the family's characterization of the incident." Writer Brian Montopoli commented that "we'd like to think that we would have brought somewhat more skepticism to the table".... "*We can sort of understand why the "Early Show" had the Monacos on – video footage like this is hard to resist, and the folks at the "Early Show" have a couple hours to fill in the morning...*"

To her credit, Strom did ask, at the end of the interview, what the family was hoping to get from Disney. And while the Monaco's lawyer said only that they want an apology, it's safe to assume that the family is open to compensation. As for the interview, it took place because both sides got something out of it – the "Early Show" was able to run some moderately compelling video, and the Monacos got a platform that allowed them to put pressure on Disney. Everybody, it seems, was a winner. Well, except maybe Tigger. And Disney. And us."

On Sunday, video broke internationally of Disney employee

Michael J. Fedele as Tigger, hitting teen Jerry Monaco Jr. in the head. The New Hampshire tourist and his father both claim the hit was unprovoked. They claimed Jerry Jr. needed medical attention and prescription medicine that night.

"Nuh, no provokin' at all, ya know, it was all out of the blue." Junior told FOX News the day before.

The CBS interview was even featured in that morning's post-show email from CBS The Early Show.

The comments were made by Montopoli, associate producer of this section.

Bank of England raises interest rates

In a move widely viewed as surprising, the Bank of England raised UK interest rates from 5% to 5.25%, the highest in five years. In a press release the Bank stated that "an increase in Bank Rate of 0.25 percentage points to 5.25% was necessary to bring CPI inflation back to the target in the medium term".

The last publicly released value for inflation (measured according to the consumer price index) stood at 2.7%, above the Government target of 2%. However the Bank and Government receive advance figures, not due to be publicly released until next week. Analysts have speculated that these figures may explain the rise.

Following the announcement the FTSE 100 fell.

The Bank of England's Monetary Policy Committee has been responsible for setting the UK's official interest rate each month since 1997. Prior to this the base

rates were controlled by the Treasury and the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

In a separate decision the European Central Bank maintained the interest rate within the Eurozone at its previous value of 3.5%.

Ontario, Canada byelections announced

Three Canadian MPP byelections have been announced Wednesday for the ridings of:

- Burlington, Ontario,
- Markham, Ontario,
- York South-Weston, Ontario.

The ridings have been vacant for months due to the Municipal elections. Most candidates are already nominated and have started campaigning. Only residents over age 18 can vote in the riding they live in.

On Sept. 28 2006, Former Conservative Member of Provincial Parliament (MPP) Cam Jackson resigned to run for mayor of Burlington and won on November 13, 2006.

On Sept. 25, 2006, Former Liberal MPP Tony Wong resigned his seat in the legislature to run for York Regional Council and won the seat on the 13th.

On Sept. 18, 2006, Liberal Joe Cordiano, who was MPP for York South-Weston, left his political career to spend more time with his family.

The byelection officially ends on February 8, 2007.

The official Ontario election is scheduled to be held on October 4, 2007. It will pick the next premier of the province.

Large blizzard sweeps through British Columbia, Northern Alberta and Saskatchewan

Alberta closed many schools and highways as the eye of the storm traversed this western province. Travelling from British Columbia, into northern Alberta and Edmonton, Alberta region, through Saskatchewan and to Manitoba, a severe blizzard started the night of Tuesday January 9, 2007. By Wednesday January 10, 2007, the storm tracked from Alberta and hit Saskatchewan. According to weather announcements on the Weather Network the blizzard is expected to abate in Saskatchewan by 9:00 pm Central Standard Time. At the height of the storm, gusting winds approached upwards of 80 miles per hour. The temperature began in the morning around -10 Celsius, dropping to -21 Celsius by the evening.

Blowing snow conditions reduced visibility to less than a car length at times. Some drivers who dared venture out on the highway told of needing to leave their car to kick away snow on the ground in order to determine if they were still driving on pavement. Heroic citizens donned ski pants and parkas, and thus bundled against the elements, assisted drivers who were unable to navigate the black ice covered by the fresh snow at the top of the 25th Street Bridge. In this way their efforts relieved an already bad condition of the piled up congestion on this bridge. Early in the afternoon, the new Circle Drive bridge was closed, and traffic was ill advised to use Circle Drive, which was battered by drifting snow drifts and gusting winds coming in from the open countryside. Around noon, it was said that taxi companies ceased to operate. A typical 15 minute venture driving across the City of

Saskatoon mounted into line ups of 1 to two hours as traffic slowed to a snail's pace, due to stuck vehicles, accidents, tow trucks, emergency vehicles, and vehicles unable to navigate steep hills and the underlying black ice from previous winter conditions. Highways, public schools and school bus routes were among the first to be closed. Shopping malls, universities, colleges and high schools soon followed. Any children who arrived at school in early morning were kept at the school until parents could pick them up. Pedestrians were virtually impossible for vehicular traffic to see, and drifting snow made sidewalks hard to navigate. According to media sources, some children may be stranded overnight at schools in cases where roads are totally impassable due to white out conditions. By 6:00 pm City transit buses were not running, Saskatchewan transit buses would not take on highway travel and the airport closed down. Any travellers were strongly urged to book into hotel rooms by 3:00 pm as many hotels were near capacity by mid afternoon. Attempts to use cell phones were often greeted with a busy signal, as the network was loaded with calls during the emergency period. At 3:00 pm any calls for ambulances were encouraged to be of necessity only, and even then a 20 minute wait for the arrival of an ambulance was foreseeable according to radio announcements. As of 7:00 pm, police were only responding to crimes in progress and emergency situations. Tow trucks and RCMP were having a difficult time responding to situations. Residents were strongly urged to stay at home.

To make matters more complicated highway workers supported the

Saskatchewan Government Employees Union, (SGEU) which had been on strike since December 20, 2006. Correctional workers, and environmental employees who were on strike were joined by snowplow operators and supervisors Sunday, January 7, 2007. By the end of Sunday approximately 1,200 highway workers were on a rotating strike, and had walked off the job. On Tuesday, January 9, 2007, in the face of weather predictions, SGEU advised highway workers to return to work. By Wednesday, January 10, 2007, the brunt of the storm was faced by a full contingent of snowplow workers.

A Blizzard warning from environment Canada reported zero to almost zero visibility in Saskatchewan. The area around North Battleford announced closures first. Many highways closed between north western Lloydminster centrally located Saskatoon, and as far south and east as Yorkton, and everywhere in between. Highways out of the cities were barricaded. Police and media were advising any and all travel be delayed till the white out conditions abate. Snow is drifting and the strong winds have made total snowfall hard to calculate.

At 7:30 p.m. CST Martensville - Warman - Rosthern - Delisle - Wakaw- City of Saskatoon. Blizzard warning in effect. Wind northeast 60 km/h gusting to 80 diminishing to 40 gusting to 60 then becoming north 20 near midnight. Low minus 27. Wind chill minus 38. Winter storm warning in effect for Southern Saskatchewan.

Pictures of the January 10 Saskatchewan storm are online which were taken by CP Press photographer Geoff Howe. Sun Young walking to work, College

Drive pedestrian, and three young samaritans who helped vehicles navigate the weather.

The full effects of the blizzard have yet to be witnessed in news reports of Thursday January 11, 2007. Wednesday's announcements of leaving the home only if absolutely necessary, and blizzard warnings to eliminate highway travel hopefully have averted many disasters.

In Saskatchewan it has been reported on January 11, 2007 that three persons have lost their lives due to the blizzard. All had left their vehicles and fell short by meters of shelter from the elements.

Due to traffic snarls and tie ups emergency rescue personnel used snowmobiles to search out stranded vehicles and investigate for persons within. Several weary travellers were indeed found in this way. Due to drastic cold weather, vehicles failing to start, and homes being snowed in, school was cancelled the day following the blizzard, as wind chill dropped to -47 Celsius. Tow trucks were busy all day Thursday, and a special phone number was available for city residents who had abandoned their vehicles in the storm. To clear the streets, tow trucks would take vehicles to empty parking lots till claimed.

In Saskatchewan to attain "blizzard" status, a storm must last at least 4 hours. Wednesday's storm delivered approximately 7 hours of zero visibility. This storm severe as it was pales in comparison to the February 1947 blizzard which raged for 10 days burying trains, and the 4 day long blizzard of February 1978 which deposited snow up to the eavestrough of homes. The storm

has been dubbed an Alberta Clipper storm as it had its origins in the Rocky Mountains in western Canada racing south and westerly across Alberta and the prairies towards the Appalachians and north eastern USA as well as Eastern Canada. Frigidly cold weather follows the low pressure front of the Alberta Clipper storm.

Canadian sextuplets could get blood transfusion, religion forbids it

Six premature babies born in Vancouver, British Columbia could get a blood transfusion, if the parents allow it. Premature babies are usually encouraged to get them, especially the sextuplets born on Sunday, which weigh 700 to 800 grams.

The parents are Jehovah's Witnesses, a faith that has a doctrine against blood transfusions. (Officially, the church holds that blood transfusions consisting of blood products, rather than whole blood, may be accepted by Witnesses in some circumstances as a matter of individual conscience; however, de facto all blood transfusions are forbidden to Witnesses. Many people who are a part of the faith create an Advance Medical Directive card ordering that no blood transfusions be given under any circumstances.)

"Non-blood treatment is way superior in every situation and many doctors in hospitals worldwide are calling it the gold standard," said Mark Ruge, director of public information at the Canadian headquarters for Jehovah's Witnesses, from his office in Georgetown, Ontario. "Even for young children and babies, there are alternatives – no (blood) transfusion doesn't mean you're going to die."

"To have blood is not the superior way, even though the little jingles on TV say blood gives life...Parents want the best for their children and so do we; we consider life very precious," said Ruge. "We love our children dearly; we're very family oriented... but there can be a public misperception."

Peter Cech, a spokesperson for B.C. Women's Hospital said their religious status was leaked by the media.

"I'm very curious about that," said a man of the Jehovah's Witnesses Assembly Hall in Surrey, B.C. "So what if they're Jehovah's Witnesses? What difference does it make? If they were Catholic would the hospital have said that?"

"If a Catholic had sextuplets would people call the Vatican?" he added. "When there's a car crash or someone has won the lottery, do they mention religion? This isn't a religious issue."

No information was been released since the babies were born after the parents publicly asked for privacy. The first child was born 8:30 p.m. on Saturday, the others Sunday.

Apple introduces iPhone and Apple TV

Apple Inc. today has introduced the much-anticipated iPhone at the Macworld Conference in San Francisco.

The iPhone is claimed to be "a revolutionary mobile phone" as stated on the Apple website. The device appears to be running a mobile version of the Apple operating system Mac OSX. It is approximately the same size as an 5th generation iPod, it has a 3.5-inch LCD touchscreen display that

is used to access all features of the phone including number dial. As well as making phone calls the iPhone plays music, movies, displays pictures and is able to connect to a wireless network.

Apple CEO Steve Jobs unveiled the device by walking onto the stage and taking the iPhone out of his jeans pocket. During his 2 hour speech he stated that "Today Apple is going to reinvent the phone, We are going to make history today".

Today Apple also released their Media Center device - Apple TV. It will directly compete with Microsoft's Media Center operating system. Apple has taken a different approach to the media center market; rather than storing content (such as movies, music and photos) on the device, Apple TV connects to a computer (Mac and Windows) over a wireless network connection and plays all content stored on that computer. This makes it substantially easier for users to organize their media content.

During the Macworld Conference, Apple stocks jumped \$7.10 to a record \$92.57. Orders for both devices are already being taken.

Today in History

1838 - In order to avoid anti-Mormon persecution, Joseph Smith, Jr. and his followers fled Ohio for Missouri.

1967 - James Bedford became the first person to be cryonically frozen with intent of future resuscitation.

1969 - British rock band Led Zeppelin released their first record album, Led Zeppelin.

1970 - The self-proclaimed Republic of Biafra in southeastern Nigeria capitulated, ending the Nigerian Civil War.

1971 - The American situation comedy All in the Family, starring Carroll O'Connor, was first broadcast on the CBS television network. It became the first show to depict controversial issues previously deemed unsuitable for network television comedy.

Quote of the Day

Society is indeed a contract... it is not a partnership in things subservient only to the gross animal existence of a temporary and perishable nature. It is a partnership in all science; a partnership in all art; a partnership in every virtue, and in all perfection. As the ends of such a partnership cannot be obtained in many generations, it becomes a partnership not only between those who are living, but between those who are to be born.
~ Edmund Burke

Word of the Day

shutterbug; n

1. A person who makes a hobby of photography.

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