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Thousands flee after volcano begins to erupt in Colombia

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Credit: C3tuxpo
GFDL

Burning debris from satellites spotted over several US cities

On Tuesday February 10, the American civilian communications satellite Iridium 33 launched in 1997 and the defunct Russian military communications satellite Kosmos-2251 launched in 1993, collided over Siberia. Five days after the collision, reports have surfaced that burning debris from the collision has been spotted over several U.S. cities from New Mexico to Kentucky.



Airplane that crashed near Buffalo, New York 'was on autopilot'

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on February 12, was on autopilot when it went down, and that the pilot flying the aircraft might have violated the airline's policy and federal safety recommendations.

Wikipedia Current Events

- At least 15 people are killed and seven injured in a hostel fire in Molodyozhny, Astrakhan, Russia.
- Israel will pay US\$50,000 to the family of a Palestinian man who was killed by the country's Defense Forces in December 2003.
- Zimbabwe replaces a treason charge against Deputy Agriculture Minister-designate Roy Bennett with "conspiring to acquire arms with a view to disrupting essential services."
- The Karen National Union attacks Myawaddy, Burma.
- Colombia's Galeras volcano erupts.
- Venezuela votes in a referendum in which a proposed constitutional amendment to remove term limits on the President of the Republic, state governors, mayors, and members of the National Assembly and state assemblies is accepted by 54% of the electorate.
- Prime Minister Ehud Olmert denies reports that Israel is negotiating with Hamas.
- General strikes over high living costs continue in Guadeloupe and Martinique.

Wikipedia Current Events

- Cancer Research UK's London Institute discovers a "danger receptor" that may initiate an immune reaction to cancer.
- The Taliban announces a ten-day ceasefire in its war in northwest Pakistan's Swat Valley.

Airplane that crashed near Buffalo, New York 'was on autopilot'

Investigators have stated that Continental Connection Flight 3407, which crashed in icy weather near Buffalo, New York on February 12, was on autopilot when it went down, and that the pilot flying the aircraft might have violated the airline's policy and federal safety recommendations.

The plane involved in the incident was a Bombardier Dash 8, which crashed into a home located at 6038 Long Street in Clarence Center, a suburb of Buffalo. It went down at approximately 10:17 p.m. EST (03:20 UTC), February 12. 44 passengers, an off-duty pilot, and four crew members died in the accident, as well as one person on the ground.

When the plane crashed, it was carrying over 2.5 tonnes (5,000 pounds) of fuel. Amid rain and sleet, the aircraft exploded into a huge orange fireball, sparking a large fire which emergency crews had to contain. Twelve houses near the crash site were evacuated.

Steve Chealander, an investigator

for the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB), said that the company which operated the flight suggests the pilot to fly manually when conditions are icy, saying that "you may be able in a manual mode to sense something sooner than the autopilot can sense it."

"If the autopilot is left on while the ice is building up, the pilot may suddenly be confronted with a very difficult situation," said William Voss, president of the Flight Safety Foundation, speaking to the Toronto Star. "Ice actually changes the shape of the wing. If you don't keep the wings clean you could find yourself in a situation where [...] suddenly the aircraft decides to quit flying."

The airplane's data recorders suggest that there was a significant accumulation of ice on the aircraft's wings and windshield before it crashed. Shortly before the crash, according to the flight voice recorder, the pilots were talking about the poor weather and ask the traffic controller for permission to descend. The airplane's de-icing system had been turned on before the crew had discussed the ice. Recordings of communications seemed to be normal until soon before impact, and the flight crew did not notify air traffic control of any problems.

Investigations have suggested that the aircraft was headed away from its destination airport when it went down.

Burning debris from satellites spotted over several US cities

On Tuesday, February 10, the American civilian communications satellite Iridium 33, launched in 1997, and the defunct Russian military communications satellite Kosmos-2251, launched in 1993, collided over Siberia. Five days

after the collision, reports have surfaced that burning debris from the collision has been spotted over several U.S. cities from New Mexico to Kentucky.

Calls to 9-1-1 began to come in to Williamson County, Texas sheriff's office around 12:30 p.m. (Central time) that burning debris and fireballs were seen falling from the sky onto parts of Austin, Houston, Waco and San Antonio. Residents reported their homes and windows shaking and large explosions. After a search of several areas, the Williamson county sheriff's office reported that no debris or impact sites were found. Earlier unconfirmed reports had said the debris could have been the result of a small plane exploding.

Steve Thornton, a resident in Austin told KEYE-TV that he "saw something burn up in the atmosphere going east to west at 40 degrees in the horizon looking north" which was "about the size of a half moon and as bright as a welders torch". Other residents reported to KEYE-TV that they saw an "egg-shape with an orange center and bluish outer aura; a silvery-white tail." Some report the incident lasting about 10 minutes.

On February 13, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) issued an alert following reports of "explosions and earthquakes" along with "flashes in the sky" in Jackson and Louisville, Kentucky. There were no injuries and authorities could not locate any damage.

"The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) reported to local law enforcement on Friday that these events are being caused by falling satellite debris. These pieces of debris have been causing

sonic booms, resulting in vibrations felt by some residents, as well as flashes of light across the sky," said the NOAA in a public information statement on February 13. The FAA also warns that the debris could cause damage to aircraft in areas reporting falling debris.

"Aircraft are advised that a potential hazard may occur due to reentry of satellite debris into the Earth's atmosphere. It is critical that all pilots/crew members report any observed falling space debris," said the FAA on February 13. Both the NOAA and FAA alerts are in place until further notice and cover an area from New Mexico to Kentucky.

However, Dr. Marco Ciocca, a professor at Eastern Kentucky University told WKYT in Kentucky it would "be months" before any of the satellite wreckage enters the earth's atmosphere. "The debris doesn't simply fall out of its orbit. It will either vaporize or stay in orbit for some time before falling into earth's atmosphere."

The satellites, both of which weighed in excess of 1,000 pounds, and traveling at approximately 17,500 miles per hour, collided 491 miles above the earth. Scientists say the explosion caused by the collision was massive. They are still trying to determine just how large the crash was and how the earth will be affected. 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.

"The Simpsons" announces change in title sequence and move to HD

The American cartoon series "The

Simpsons" will today be broadcast for the first time in high definition (HD). Today's show will also introduce a new title sequence.

Today's episode, named "Take My Life, Please" (20x10), also makes references to HDTV in the Chalkboard gag when Bart Simpson writes "HDTV is worth every cent" on the chalkboard.

This will be the first major permanent change to the show's introduction since its launch in 1989; previous changes have included variations in the speed of the intro, and special one-shot introductions for the Treehouse of Horror Halloween episodes. This new intro also includes some 3D animation when the camera pans over Springfield.

This new series is not quite the first time The Simpsons has appeared in HD, as The Simpsons Movie was also made to this television standard.

Fox will broadcast The Simpsons on their channel in the 720p HD video mode.

Australian football: Melbourne through to A-League Grand Final, Adelaide to play Queensland in preliminary final

Melbourne – Melbourne Victory FC has advanced through to the 2008-9 A-League Grand Final after defeating Adelaide United in their 2-leg Semi Final. Melbourne will now host the winner of the Adelaide versus Queensland Roar Preliminary Final. In a top four finals series, which the A-League uses, the Preliminary Final is a final played between the qualifying Semi Final (1st vs. 2nd) and the winner of the elimination Semi Final (3rd vs. 4th) for the remaining spot in the Grand Final.

Melbourne handed Adelaide a four goal to none thumping in the second leg of the semi final. Adelaide did not look like they were in the match after Archie Thompson slotted home a goal in the tenth minute.

Carlos Hernandez produced three assists and scored a goal in the 48th minute. Hernandez had flown in from representing Costa Rica in a World Cup qualifier.

Michael Lynch of The Age described Adelaide's performance as "inept and embarrassing, lacking wit, verve, invention or ideas."

"It will be interesting to see what happens when Carlos [Hernandez] is really fit as well, when he's had a bit of a rest. He was superb for us tonight," said Melbourne captain Kevin Muscat.

"After everything we spoke about last week, coming in and getting a positive result and working hard, it just didn't happen and at this level that's not acceptable...we'll have a long hard look at ourselves this week and see if we want to be here, and on that performance you would say no," said Adelaide captain Travis Dodd, ruing his sides defeat.

"The motivation has to be there, we're playing for a grand final spot, to host a grand final, and if that's the best we can do then...you have to wonder where we're at. I guess it is going to be a week of soul searching we have to get our act together for Queensland's game," added Dodd.

Melbourne won the game four goals to one and the semi final six goals to none.

Japanese tanker MV Chemstar Venus freed by Somali pirates

MV Chemstar Venus, a chemical tanker flagged in Panama and owned by a Japanese firm, has been freed by pirates in Somalia. The vessel has a crew of 23 and a cargo of chemicals that has not been identified.

The ship was seized on November 15 and has a crew of five South Koreans and eighteen Filipinos. She was released Thursday, with the news anounced Friday by an anonymous diplomat in Nairobi, Kenya. It is unclear if a ransom was paid.

There has recently been a sharp rise in pirate attacks after a lull in January, thought to be a result of a combination of stormy weather finally subsiding and pirates seeking to replenish their stock of captive vessels after seven recent releases. Six ships were attacked accross Wednesday and Thursday.

A Russian battlecruiser named after Peter the Great detained ten suspected pirates who were moving in on a fishing trawler registered in Iran. They seized drugs, rifles and a large amount of cash and military prosecutors are now interviewing the men.

Woman with world's longest fingernails loses them in car crash

A woman who held the Guinness World Record for having the world's longest fingernails has lost them in a four-car accident in her hometown of Salt Lake City, Utah in the United States.

66-year-old Lee Redmond was seriously injured after she was ejected from the sports utility vehicle (SUV) she had been a passenger in. It had collided with one car, causing it to collide with

two other cars on Tuesday February 10. She is expected to make a full recovery.

"[Her nails] were damaged beyond repair," reported the BBC, quoting Guinness World Records, who also said that Redmond's nails were "a fundamental part of her life and unique character". The cause of the crash is not yet known and an investigation is ongoing.

Redmond is credited by the Guinness Book for having a combined fingernail length of 28 feet, the longest on record. She has been growing all eight fingers and two thumbnails since 1979. Her longest of all nails was her right thumb, which was 2ft and eleven inches long.

Before Redmond was named as the record holder in 2006, Shridhar Chillal from India had the longest at a combined length of just over twenty feet.

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"[There is a] large amount of ash" falling from the sky, said Eduardo Alvarado, Pastos's provincial governor, adding that those "who live in urban areas, remain in their homes." The government in the area has been put on red alert and the Red Cross has also been called in to assist in aiding refugees. So far there are no reports of injuries damages, or deaths.

Galeras, which sits on the Colombian, Ecuador border, has a recent eruption which was in 2008, but there were no injuries or deaths. In 1993, nine people were killed in an eruption. It's the most active volcano in Colombia and has been erupting regularly for at least a million years.

Today in History

1804 – United States Navy Lieutenant Stephen Decatur led a raid to destroy the captured USS Philadelphia in Tripoli, denying her use to the Barbary States in the First Barbary War.

1899 – French President Félix Faure suddenly died from apoplexy while having sexual activities with Marguerite Steinheil in his office.

1918 – The Council of Lithuania signed the Act of Independence of Lithuania, proclaiming the restoration of an independent Lithuania governed by democratic principles, despite the presence of German troops in the country during World War I.

1934 – The Austrian Civil War ended with the military of the First Austrian Republic defeating the Republikanischer Schutzbund, leaving at least several hundred people dead and more than a thousand wounded in the five-day conflict.

1985 – "The Hizballah Program" was released, describing the ideology and goals of the Shia Islamic political and paramilitary organization Hezbollah as "putting an end to any colonialist entity" in Lebanon, bringing the Phalangists to justice for "the crimes they [had] perpetrated," and establishing an Islamic regime in Lebanon.

February 16 is Washington's Birthday/Presidents' Day in the United States (2009); Family Day in various regions of Canada (2009); Statehood Day in

Lithuania

Quote of the Day

All experience is an arch, to build upon. ~ Henry Brooks Adams

Word of the Day

sobriquet n

1. A familiar name for a person, such as a pet name or nickname.

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