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Airbus A320 crashes off French coast, 7 missing or dead



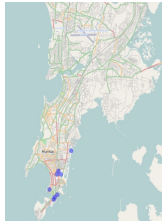
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near Perpignan, killing at least two of a crew of seven, French officials reported on Thursday.

UK coach driver jailed for triple-death crash near London

A driver for the UK coach firm National Express has been jailed for five years after causing a crash last year that killed three people. Philip Rooney, 49, was in a double-decker coach near London's Heathrow Airport which rolled on January 3 last year.

Standoffs remain after Mumbai attacks



According to police, at least 101 people were killed and 314 wounded in yesterday's attacks in Mumbai, India. The attackers, who were reportedly armed with AK-47 assault rifles and hand grenades, have taken hostages at three locations.

Wikipedia Current Events

- A series of terrorist attacks in Mumbai, India, kills at least 125 and injures hundreds.
- Brazilian officials declare a state of emergency as flooding (pictured) in the Southern state of Santa Catarina causes at least 99 deaths and forces the evacuation of over 78,000 people.
- The PAIGC wins a majority of seats in the National People's Assembly after legislative elections in Guinea-Bissau.
- The eruption of Nevado del Huila, a volcano in southern Colombia, causes at least 10 deaths and the evacuation of 12,000 people.
- Ibrahim Nasir, the first President of the Second Republic of the Maldives, dies of an unknown cause in Singapore.
- The United Nations Security Council votes unanimously to reinforce MONUC, the largest peacekeeping force in the world, stationed in Nord-Kivu, Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Airbus A320 crashes off French coast, 7 missing or dead

An Airbus A320 airliner owned by Air New Zealand crashed into the Mediterranean Sea near Perpignan, killing at least two of a crew of seven, French officials reported on Thursday.

The aircraft crashed at about 5 p.m. local time (1600 UTC) during a test flight. The twin-engine jet airliner had just undergone

maintenance at Perpignan in preparation for its return to Air New Zealand by German airline XL Airways, which had been operating it on lease.

The seven on board included two XL Airways crew, one inspector, and four Air New Zealand personnel. No additional passengers were on board for the flight, which was part of a maintenance test procedure. All seven crew are feared dead, and at least two bodies have been recovered. Search and rescue efforts will continue at the site where the remains of the fuselage were located, say officials.

The cause of the crash is not yet clear. The pilots may have attempted an emergency landing on water. Manufacturer Airbus, based in Toulouse, will aid French authorities in investigating the incident, Airbus spokespersons stated.

UK coach driver jailed for triple-death crash near London

A driver for the UK coach firm National Express has been jailed for five years after causing a crash last year that killed three people. Philip Rooney, 49, was in a double-decker coach near London's Heathrow Airport which rolled on January 3 last year.

The vehicle landed on its side after Rooney attempted to take a 40mph turnoff at 55mph on the M4/M25 slip road near Heathrow. He was described at Oxford Crown Court today as driving like one

Wikipedia Current Events

The people of Greenland pass a referendum regarding greater autonomy from Denmark.

'possessed', possibly in a bid to make up for lost time after a luggage issue had delayed the London-Aberdeen service's departure.

Rooney had been delayed after summoning a taxi to transport one family's luggage due to a lack of room on the crowded coach. This delayed departure by an hour and a half.

The coach, with 69 passengers on board, skidded along on its side after overturning whilst Rooney made a safety announcement over the vehicle's PA system. 76-year-old Christina Toner from Dundee and 30-year-old Chinese citizen Yi Di Lin were killed, while 78-year-old John Carruthers from Chertsey, Surrey succumbed to his injuries six months later.

Another 65 people sustained injuries, including four who had amputations as a result of their injuries and 19 who suffered fractures. "After Heathrow the driver drove like he was possessed. He kept overtaking everything and going like the clappers," said one passenger. Fire and rescue crews had to cut several victims from the wreck.

Rooney had been convicted on five previous occasions of speeding in public service vehicles during his career of fifteen years with large passenger vehicles. He was also disciplined in 2004 by National Express after he was caught tampering with a speed limiter to allow him to drive his coach faster.

Defending, Mohammed Khamisa QC said of Rooney "The events [of the day in question] have crushed him and continue to haunt him," and that he offers his "heartfelt apologies" to all victims and relatives.

Rooney pled guilty to three counts of causing death by dangerous driving. He was jailed for five years, banned from driving for three and ordered to take an extended driving test.

Standoffs remain after Mumbai attacks

According to police, at least 101 people were killed and 314 wounded in yesterday's attacks in Mumbai, India. The attackers, who were reportedly armed with AK-47 assault rifles and hand grenades, have taken hostages at three locations.

It is still unclear how many gunmen there were, but police say that at least nine of them have been killed in fighting. CNN-IBN quoted a source as saying there may have been 26 gunmen.

Commandos with the Rapid Action Force have stormed the Taj Mahal Palace & Tower and Oberoi Trident hotels. Ten hostages have been reported freed at the Oberoi, but it is unclear how many remain. Fresh explosions were heard at the Taj Hotel, but an official said that the situation is "almost sorted out."

Unconfirmed reports suggest one of the attackers is in custody.

"People who were held up there, they have all been rescued. But there are guests in the rooms, we don't know how many," said police chief A.N. Roy to Reuters.

A Jewish centre in Mumbai was also targeted by the attackers.

NSG has announced that the Taj hotel is now clear and all terrorists are killed. One cell phone with a foreign SIM card was found outside Taj hotel, which was suspiciously belonged to one of the

terrorists.

There are also hostages at Nariman House, the Indian headquarters for Chabad Lubavitch, an Orthodox Jewish group. Police have surrounded the building.

Manmohan Singh addressed his country on national television: "We intend to ensure the safety of our citizens. We salute the police and men who lay down their lives in fighting these terrorists."

"The well-planned and well-orchestrated attacks, probably with external linkages, were intended to create a sense of terror by choosing high-profile targets," he said.

An e-mail claiming responsibility by the Deccan Mujahideen has not been verified or confirmed.

"It's even unclear whether it's a real group or not," said Professor Bruce Hoffman, a terrorism scholar at Georgetown University.

Large drop in US consumer spending

United States consumer spending dropped one percent in in October, the largest decline since September of 2001. Consumer spending, which makes up approximately two-thirds of economic activity in the United States, rose by 0.3% in September.

Meanwhile, the Commerce Department has stated that the pace of new home sales in October dropped by 5.3% to a seasonally adjusted annual rate of 433,000, their lowest rates since January 1991.

Other figures released yesterday say that the number of new

jobless claims last week dropped to 529,000 from a sixteen-year high of 543,000 in the previous week.

Thai Prime Minister rejects calls to step down

Thailand's Prime Minister, Somchai Wongsawat, has rejected calls by General Anupong Paochinda, the commander-in-chief of the Royal Thai Army, to step down.

Somchai said that his government was legitimate, and that he would continue to work for the country.

This comes in the face of massive anti-government protests, the latest of which saw Bangkok's main airport being shut down by hundreds of demonstrators.

Speaking in a televised address, Somchai said that "I reassure the people that this government, which is legitimate and came from elections, will keep functioning until the end."

Europe announces €200 billion rescue plan

The European Commission (EC) has unveiled an economic recovery plan worth €200 billion, which it hopes will save millions of jobs.

The EC is expecting European Union member states to pay €170 billion, while the EC will contribute the rest of the sum.

It is hoped that the plan will stimulate spending and increase consumer confidence. A portion of the money will be allocated to job training, improving energy links and broadband access, and creating lower-emission cars.

Former Indian Prime Minister

Vishwanath Pratap Singh dies
Vishwanath Pratap Singh, the former Prime Minister of India, has

died today at the age of 77. The cause of death was announced as blood cancer and renal failure. The Indian government has announced a seven-day state mourning as a mark of respect to V P Singh.

Singh was born on June 25, 1931, in Allahabad. He served as India's Prime Minister from 1989 to 1990.

Today in History

1777 - San Jose, California, is founded as el Pueblo de San José de Guadalupe. It is the first civilian settlement, or pueblo, in Alta California.

1910 - The first US patent for inventing the traffic lights system is issued to Ernest Serrine.

1944 - The first surgery (on a human) to correct blue baby syndrome is performed by Alfred Blalock and Vivien Thomas.

1947 - The United Nations General Assembly votes to partition Palestine (The Partition Plan).

1987 - A Korean Air Boeing 707 explodes over the Thai-Burmese border, killing 155.

Quote of the Day

Do not deny the classical approach, simply as a reaction, or you will have created another pattern and trapped yourself there.~ Bruce Lee

Word of the Day

cognoscente n

- Someone possessing superior or specialized knowledge in a particular field.

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