

Top Stories

Bigger than Pluto, possible 10th planet found



The definition of what is – and what is not – a planet is being challenged by a newly announced discovery

Friday. Astronomers from the Palomar Observatory near San Diego, California said they found a chunk of ice and rock in the Solar system larger than Pluto.

Armed police arrest two more July 21 bombing suspects in dramatic raids



SPECIALREPORT

Armed police officers from SO19 have raided properties in the Notting Hill and North Kensington areas of London. The

raids were in connection with the failed bombings on July 21.

Featured story

Third union seperates from AFL-CIO

The UFCW broke away from the AFL-CIO, making it the third union to split from the AFL-CIO this week over disagreements about how to revive labor's diminishing influence.

The departure of the three unions from the AFL-CIO means it is losing more than 4 million of its 13 million members.

Wikipedia Current Events

- At least two British private security agents have been killed following an attack on a convoy in Basra, south Iraq.
- Lawyers for the former President of Iraq, Saddam Hussein, claim he was attacked by an unidentified man after questioning by the Iraqi special tribunal on Thursday, however the US denies the event.

Wikipedia Current Events

- Uzbekistan has reportedly given the United States six months to move out of a key base used for operations in Afghanistan.

Bigger than Pluto, possible 10th planet found



Artist's impression of possible 10th planet 2003 UB313, with the Sun in the distance. Source: NASA/JPL-Caltech

The definition of what is and what is not a planet is being challenged by a newly announced discovery Friday. Astronomers from the Palomar Observatory near San Diego, California said they found a chunk of ice and rock in the Solar system larger than Pluto.

The object, given the temporary generic name of 2003 UB313, is about 9 billion miles away from the sun. It was first photographed in 2003 using the Gemini Observatory in Hawaii. But it was an indistinguishable bright spot among a field of stars in an area of the sky where astronomers don't usually look at for planets or planet-type objects.

Solar system bodies found beyond the orbit of Neptune are called "trans-Neptunian objects". One of them, Pluto, is also classified as a planet. Up until now the all other planet-like discoveries beyond Neptune, including Sedna, found by the same Palomar team in 2004, are called Kuiper Belt objects, or minor planets.

Using a photo taken on January 8, the Palomar team compared it with previous

2003 UB313 photos to triangulate the object's distance, brightness and orbit.

Using mathematical formulas, they found a range of sizes for 2003 UB313, with an estimated average showing the approximate diameter of the new body to be about 2,600 kilometers. But even at the smallest estimate scientists are certain 2003 UB313 is larger than Pluto's 2,250 kilometer diameter.

To determine size, Scientists deduce the relative size of a solar system object by its brightness, just as one can infer the size of a faraway light bulb if one knows its wattage. The reflectance of 2003 UB313 is not yet known for sure. Scientists can not yet tell how much light from the sun is reflected away from its surface, but the amount of light the planet does reflect puts a lower limit on its size.

"Even if it reflected 100 percent of the light reaching it, it would still be as big as Pluto," Michael E. Brown, a professor of planetary astronomy at the California Institute of Technology said in a NASA press release. "I'd say it's probably one and a half times the size of Pluto, but we're not sure yet of the final size."

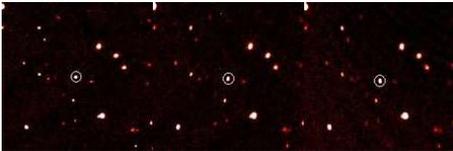
"We are 100 percent confident that this is the first object bigger than Pluto ever found in the outer solar system," Brown added.

Now that the discovery data has been released, the scientists will turn over their work to the International Astronomical Union (IAU), which will review it, classify the object and approve a new name to replace the temporary 2003 UB313.

Sometimes the discoverers of a new planetary body get to choose its name, but not always. "We have a name we really like, and we want it to stick," Brown told reporters at a press conference. He said the team has submitted the name to the IAU but would not disclose their choice. In the 2004 naming of Sedna, Brown noted objects

found in the Kuiper Belt are usually named after deities of the Underworld.

The astronomers have been using a code name of sorts for the discovery. The tongue-in-cheek nickname is "Xena" after the fictional main character of the television series of the same name. "Because we always wanted to name something Xena," Dr. Brown said in a New York Times report.



These time-lapse images of a newfound "planet" in our solar system, called 2003 UB313, were taken on Oct. 21, 2003, using the Samuel Oschin Telescope at the Palomar Observatory near San Diego, Calif. The planet, circled in white, is seen moving across a field of stars. The three images were taken about 90 minutes apart. Scientists did not discover that the object in these pictures was a planet until Jan. 8, 2005. Source: Samuel Oschin Telescope, Palomar Observatory

There has been controversy in the scientific community about what is and what is not a planet. Some purists insist the Solar system has only eight planets and that Kuiper Belt object including Pluto, Sedna and 2003 UB313 cannot be listed among the major planets.

A minor furor erupted when the IAU suggested removing Pluto from the pantheon of planets a few years ago. Because of that Pluto's status as a "planet" in addition to being a Kuiper Belt object was cemented. But with the discovery of 2003 UB313 the "planet or not" debate may rekindle.

The new "10th planet" was not the only new discovery in the Kuiper Belt this past week. José-Luis Ortiz at the Sierra Nevada Observatory in Spain announced the discovery of an object called 2003 EL61. This object, thought to be larger than Sedna, is the brightest trans-Neptune object next to Pluto.

Although some news media confused the discovery of 2003 EL61 with 2003 UB313, they are different objects.

2003 EL61 is so bright, it can be seen with high-end amateur-grade telescopes

equipped with CCD cameras. Although this second discovery may not be as large as 2003 UB313, scientists have confirmed that 2003 EL61 has its own moon.

Libya allows US oil company to return

Libya gave US-based Occidental Petroleum Corporation permission to resume business there for the first time in 19 years.

The company abandoned operations in the mid 1980's due to sanctions imposed on Libya by the United States.

The sanctions, enforced by Ronald Reagan's administration in 1986, were in response to Libya's backing of terrorist activities. The sanctions were lifted in 2004, giving the US companies opportunity to return.

Occidental is the first US oil company to resume operations in Libya. Daily output from their wells is expected to be 12,000 - 15,000 barrels per day.

Third union separates from AFL-CIO

The United Food and Commercial Workers International Union broke away from the AFL-CIO, making it the third union to split from the AFL-CIO this week over disagreements about how to revive labor's diminishing influence.

The departure of the UFCW, along with two other unions, the Teamsters, and Service Employees International unions from the AFL-CIO means it is losing more than 4 million of its 13 million members.

Union membership in the U.S. has been declining for many years, and the breakaway unions want to commit more money to recruiting members. They complain that the AFL-CIO has spent too much money on backing political candidates, particularly Democrats, instead of organizing labor.

UFCW President Joe Hansen wrote to AFL-CIO President John J. Sweeney saying: "Tradition and past success are not sufficient to meet the new challenges."

AFL-CIO spokeswoman Lane Windham responded, saying "The UFCW leadership

decision to leave the AFL-CIO, especially when working people are up against the most powerful, anti-worker corporate and governmental forces in 80 years, is a tragedy for working families. Only union's enemies win when unions split our strength."

"The unions that split from the AFL-CIO now face the challenge of having to work together to maximize the power of labor," predicted Harley Shaiken, a professor of labor issues at UC Berkley.

Their clearest difference is in how they want a national labor organization to operate, Shaiken said. The breakaway unions favor a more authoritative federation that can compel member unions to act on its directives.

The departure is part of the biggest rift in organized labor since 1938, when the CIO split from the AFL.

When the groups merged to form the AFL-CIO in the 1950s, one of every three private-sector workers belonged to a labor union. Today, fewer than 8 percent of private-sector workers are unionized.

Irish woman wins record lottery jackpot

A woman from Limerick, in the Republic of Ireland, has won a record European lottery win on the EuroMillions cross-European lottery draw. Delores McNamara won €115.6 million, tax-free in the game, after the jackpot had rolled over un-won for 9 weeks.

The Garryowen woman will have to wait until at least Tuesday, August 2nd, to claim her winnings, as the Irish National Lottery offices are closed for the August Bank Holiday.

Britain launches 2012 Olympic Lottery games

The first ever olympic lottery scheme has been launched to the public in Britain, seven years to the day that the Olympics will be hosted to the City of London.

A scratch card game will be one of the schemes that would be used to help make

money for the Olympic Games in 2012. It is called "Go for Gold" and it costs £1 to buy. The actual amount that the National Lottery could give would be £1.5 million pounds, but the lottery games would raise an estimated £750 million for sporting infrastructure.

Olympics Minister and Culture Secretary Tessa Jowell said the game was needed now to raise the cash necessary to develop the venues that will host the event.

She stated: "The Lottery needs to raise altogether £1.5 billion of which we estimate that £750 million over the seven years between now and the Games will come from the new Olympic lottery game."

Coe stated: "Camelot have a very good record for raising money, certainly for good causes."

The games went on sale on Thursday.

Two Britons killed in British consulate convoy attack in Basra

It has been confirmed by a British consulate spokeswoman in Iraq that an Improvised Explosive Device (IED) attack on a British consulate convoy took place at 09:30 am local time.

The attack happened on the outskirts of Basra and is reported to have killed two British security contractors and wounded two Iraqi civilians.

The two British contractors were killed in the first blast that took place in close proximity to the vehicle they were in. According to the BBC World Affairs correspondent John Simpson, two Iraqi children were injured after a second explosion occurred while Iraqi civilians were attempting to help the convoy.

The nationality the two contractors was confirmed by their employers, Control Risks Group.

At least one car was destroyed and British Army soldiers later arrived to secure the scene.

U.S. names German bases to close

The U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) has announced that eleven bases in Bavaria are to close by 2007, with two further bases being handed over later. The closures are the first step that will see 50,000 troops withdrawn from Europe and South Korea. The U.S. has 181,061 troops stationed in Western Europe and the Far East.

NATO has been present in Germany since the end of World War II and its presence played an important role in the Cold War, when Germany was split into West Germany and East Germany.

The U.S. and U.K. are the only remaining powers that maintain large forces in the country. The U.S. presently has 75,603 personnel in southern Germany while the British have some 55,000 personnel based in North Rhine-Westphalia and Lower Saxony as part of British Forces Germany.

It is planned that the U.S. Army's 1st Infantry Division will move back to the U.S. in 2006. Some units of V Corps and the U.S. Army Europe will also be returned. It is estimated that the move will affect 6,100 soldiers, 11,000 family members, 1,000 Department of the Army civilians and 1,000 locally employed civilians.

The DoD said in its statement that: "These changes are part of the Department of Defense's overall plan (the Integrated Global Presence and Basing Strategy) to transform the military to increase strategic responsiveness and flexibility in the face of current and anticipated future threats, and are the result of extensive consultation with our German allies."

No breakthrough in the WTO trade talks

Two days of ministerial talks have ended without agreement and evidence of a possible deadlock between developing and developed countries.

148 member countries are trying to reach a consensus on how to proceed with the Doha round of talks which are scheduled to be agreed in 2006. However, they are now behind the deadlines they set and the Geneva meeting saw no progress.

Richer countries are being accused of demanding too many concessions in return for opening up trade and reducing subsidies while they say that the poorer countries are holding them to ransom by blocking progress.

Cyclist crosses Canada in 30 days for orphans

Beginning May 28, 2005, ultra-marathon cyclist Arvid Loewen cycled 7,000km in 30 days across Canada raising money and awareness for an orphanage, MCF, in Kenya. Cycling 240km a day, Arvid began in White Rock, BC, and finished on June 26 in Halifax, NS.

MCF, or Mully Children's Family, was founded by Charles Mulli, a man who was abandoned on the streets in Kenya at the age of six. He fought through life on the streets and subsequently became wealthy. He sold all his wealth and businesses and began an orphanage in his own home. That orphanage is now home to over 800 children.

Loewen, 48, cycled 12-14 hours a day, pushing through just about every weather possible. His biggest challenge to date has raised close to \$100,000 (CA) and will hopefully continue. Riding on the back of his specially modified tandem bicycle was a rotating group of three Kenyan orphans, just 3 of the many whose lives have been changed. They took turns being pulled across the country by Loewen.

For more information and to donate to the cause, see the ride's official site, www.spoke2005.com

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Today in History

- 1667 - The Treaty of Breda ended the Second Anglo-Dutch War.
- 1790 - The U.S. Patent Office issued the first patent in the United States.
- 1917 - The Battle of Passchendaele began on the Western Front in World War I.
- 1941 - Holocaust: Hermann Göring ordered SS general Reinhard Heydrich to develop a final solution to the Jewish question.
- 1971 - Apollo program: The first Lunar Rover was used during the Apollo 15 moon mission.
- July 31 is La Hae Hawai'i in Hawai'i, Feast day of Saint Ignatius of Loyola

Quote of the Day

"I think I'd most like to spend a day with Harry. I'd take him out for a meal and apologise for everything I've put him through." ~ J. K. Rowling

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