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Image Credit:
National Park Service

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Image Credit:
Duncan Lock
GFDL

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case filed by applicant retired attorney Leo Donofrio, an East Brunswick, New Jersey voter who raised the legal issue on whether president-elect Barack Obama was a "natural born" American at the time of the election. He alleged that Obama had dual nationality at birth, because of his Kansas-born mother and his Kenyan-born father, who was a British subject at the time. Obama's birth certificate states he was born in Hawaii in August 1961, two years after the Hawaii Admission Act.

Quebec's Liberal premier Jean Charest wins third term

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Wikipedia Current Events

injures more than 100 in Peshawar, Pakistan.

- A cholera outbreak in Zimbabwe spreads, with hundreds dead and over 10,000 people infected since August 2008.

- At the request of Prime Minister Stephen Harper, Governor General of Canada Michaëlle Jean prorogues the parliament until January 26, 2009, to avoid a confidence motion by a newly-formed coalition of opposition parties.

Alleged 9-11 conspirators will confess and plead guilty

In proceedings by the Guantanamo military commission at the United States Guantanamo Bay Naval Base on Monday, Khalid Sheikh Mohammed and four alleged co-conspirators stated that they will confess and plead guilty to the charges they face in the planning and execution of the September 11 attacks in 2001.

The four that stand accused with Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, the alleged mastermind, are Mustafa al-Hawsawi, Ramzi Binalshibh, Ammar al-Baluchi (aka Ali Abd al-Aziz Ali), and Walid bin 'Attash. They have all been at the Guantanamo Bay detention camp for at least two years.

The defendants announced their intentions in court, with Stephen R. Henley reading their filing.

The judge asked if they would plead guilty. "Yes," said

Wikipedia Current Events

Anti-police riots continue in Athens and several cities across Greece.

- Ireland issues an international recall of its pork products following the discovery of contaminated pig feed.

- Patriarch Alexy II, the head of the Russian Orthodox Church, dies of heart failure in Peredelkino, Russia.

- A bombing kills 29 people and

Mohammed, "we don't want to waste time." He also said it was "our earnest desire" to admit guilt and said he wanted the proceeding to end because "I do not trust Americans."

Mohammed also expressed displeasure that it took over a month for the court to address his filing requesting "an immediate hearing session to announce our confessions." In court he said, "I don't know — are the military commissions using carrier pigeons or what?" speaking in English.

The judge would not accept pleas from Binalshibh and al-Hawsawi, ordering mental competency hearings for the two.

Al Hawsawi objected and told the judge he decided to plead guilty "with all my complete mental capacity and voluntarily."

However, Mohammed told the judge they would not enter their pleas without Binalshibh and al-Hawsawi, "We want everyone to plead together."

"Our plea was based on joint strategy," al-Baluchi told the judge. "All of these decisions are undertaken by us without any pressure or influence by Khalid Sheikh [Mohammed]," he further said. "What was said or will be said by Khalid Sheikh will be repeated by us, also."

After the competency evaluations, another hearing will be held, where the five may enter their pleas. Presiding Officer Stephen Henley is unclear whether he has the authority to accept a guilty plea.

Monday's hearing was unusual in that, in addition to the press, the

families of five 9/11 victims were also in attendance.

Quebec's Liberal premier Jean Charest wins third term

In the Quebec general election held in the Canadian province of Quebec on December 8, 2008, Jean Charest is elected for his 3rd mandate and forms a majority government of Quebec.

This is the first time since the 1950's, Maurice Duplessis and the Union Nationale that a party and/or leader has been elected to a third consecutive mandate, and the first for the Liberals since the 1920's and Premier Taschereau. The ruling Liberals has won a slim majority taking 66 of the provincial legislature's 125 seats, while the separatist Parti Quebecois (PQ), led by Pauline Marois finished second and had only 51.

John James Charest, PC MNA is a Canadian lawyer and politician from the province of Quebec and a former leader of the federal Progressive Conservative Party (1993–1998), the current leader of the Quebec Liberal Party and, the 29th and current Premier of Quebec. In November 5, 2008, seeing a chance to win a majority, Charest called a snap election for December 8. His party captured a slim majority of seats in the election.

Meanwhile, Action democratique du Quebec leader Mario Dumont announces leaving politics: "You will not be surprised to hear me tell you that I will not be at the head of my party during the next general election in Quebec. It is with much passion that I have served Quebec for more than 14 years as an MNA and more than 20 years as a party activist. I have loved what I did, but the time has

come for me to turn the page."

Parti Quebecois leader Pauline Marois claims PQ is a big winner, for she greatly improved on the party's 2007 disastrous performance: "Today we form the strongest Official Opposition since the Quiet Revolution. Tonight we have been reminded that the Parti Quebecois is a great party. It is a party that has rediscovered its fire.... Even if we are a little disappointed tonight, the great dream we have for Quebec is very much alive."

Governor of Illinois arrested on suspicion of corruption

The Democratic governor of Illinois in the United States, Rod Blagojevich, along with his chief of staff John Harris, have been arrested on federal corruption charges.

The Chicago Tribune reports that federal agents raided Blagojevich's home this morning and took him into federal custody. The arrest comes after a three year investigation into Blagojevich's "pay-to-play politics."

Specifically, there are allegations that Blagojevich attempted to sell the senate seat previously held by president-elect, Barack Obama. Blagojevich, as governor, gets to appoint someone to complete Obama's term. Authorities believe the process to select a new senator was tainted after authorities secretly recorded several of Blagojevich's conversations. They believe that Blagojevich was attempting to sell the seat in exchange, gaining financial benefit for himself and his wife.

Authorities also believe that Blagojevich was trying to withhold

state financial assistance from the owner of the Tribune, the Tribune Company, which recently filed for bankruptcy protection. They allege he was trying to get members of the editorial board of the Chicago Tribune fired by threatening to complicate the sale of Wrigley Field by Tribune Company.

On December 8, Blagojevich responded to the reports that federal authorities had wiretapped his phone conversations saying, "I should say if anybody wants to tape my conversations, go right ahead, feel free to do it. I can tell you that whatever I say is always lawful and the things I'm interested in are always lawful".

US Supreme Court dismisses appeal on Obama's citizenship

The United States Supreme Court on Monday denied "without opinion" an emergency appeal or certiorari case filed by applicant retired attorney Leo Donofrio, an East Brunswick, New Jersey voter who raised the legal issue on whether president-elect Barack Obama was a "natural born" American at the time of the election. He alleged that Obama had dual nationality at birth, because of his Kansas-born mother and his Kenyan-born father, who was a British subject at the time. Obama's birth certificate states he was born in Hawaii in August 1961, two years after the Hawaii Admission Act.

In November 2008, Donofrio's injunction application was filed with the Supreme Court of New Jersey. The applications then went to the Supreme Court but it was denied by Justice David H. Souter. The petition was refiled and assigned to Justice Clarence Thomas, who submitted the case to the Court for Conference on

December 5.

The United States Constitution's 14th amendment clearly defines the law on American citizenship: "All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside." Statutes passed since the constitution are more detailed about who is a citizen at birth. Those born - inside the United States, or in a US possession if one parent is a citizen and lived in the United States for at least a year, or outside the United States to at least one US-citizen parent who has lived in the US for a minimum of five years - are deemed US citizens. However, according to the Constitution, only natural born citizens are eligible for the Presidency.

Amid more pending lower courts cases, two other lawsuits were appealed to the US Supreme Court, though neither is yet scheduled for conference. The Boston Globe reported that a federal judge in Philadelphia threw out a lawsuit in October, for lack of legal standing. Lafayette Hill, Pennsylvania voter Philip J. Berg alleged "that Obama was born in Kenya, not Hawaii as Obama says and Hawaii officials have confirmed; and that Obama also may be a citizen of Indonesia, where he lived as a boy." Federal courts in Ohio and Washington state have dismissed similar citizenship cases against Obama."

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on the popular, free online encyclopedia Wikipedia, amid allegations that they contain child pornography. The filter was brought into play by the Internet Watch Foundation (IWF), which has stated that today they have removed the ban.

The IWF said, in a statement on its website, that "the decision has been taken to remove this webpage from our list." However, the organization does maintain that "the image in question is potentially in breach of the Protection of Children Act 1978."

At approximately 19:45 UTC, the ban was removed for customers of Virgin Media, who were previously unable to access the Virgin Killer article or the associated image.

The image and article in question is that of the 1976 album *Virgin Killer*, a studio album by the Scorpions, a German rock band. The controversy began after the image of the album's original cover, which depicted a naked prepubescent girl, was reported to the IWF in early December. Wikinews first discovered the controversial image in May 2008 after there were several attempts to delete it on Wikipedia. The image had been blocked because the IWF considered it to be "potentially illegal". As a result, the IWF have contacted authorities in the United States and in the UK.

The measures applied redirect Wikipedia-bound traffic from a significant portion of the UK's Internet population through a small number of servers which can log and filter the content that is available to the end user. A serious side-effect of this is the inability of administrators on Wikimedia sites to block vandals

and other troublemakers without potentially impacting hundreds of thousands of innocent contributors who are working on the sites in good faith.

Contributors or individuals attempting to view an affected image or file, depending on their ISP, may get a warning saying, "we have blocked this page because, according to the Internet Watch Foundation (IWF), it contains indecent images of children or pointers to them; you could be breaking UK law if you viewed the page.". Other ISPs provide blank pages, 404 errors, or other means of blocking the content.

Two-plane crash in Florida kills four

Four people were killed on Saturday when two small planes collided in midair over the Florida Everglades.

Broward County Sheriff's Office is reporting that the dead include Bryan Sax, 37, of Aspen, Colorado, Andrew Marc Rossignol, 21, of Stuart, Florida, Stuart Brown, 25, of Pembroke Pines, Florida, and Edson Jefferson, 30, of Miramar, Florida.

The accident happened Saturday afternoon 2.7 miles southwest of Everglades Holiday Park, according to Broward Sheriff's Office spokeswoman Veda Coleman-Wright.

Both planes took off from their respective airports at 3:30 PM Eastern Time (20:30 UTC). Rossignol and Sax were flying in a 1979 twin-engine Piper 44, from Fort-Lauderdale-Hollywood International Airport, which was headed to a practice area near Opa-locka Airport, when they

collided with Brown and Jefferson, who were flying a 1997 single-engine Cessna 172R, from North Perry Airport.

Kathleen Bergen, a spokeswoman for the Federal Aviation Administration, has stated that neither pilot filed a flight plan, which was not required, because the planes were flying under visual flight rules, meaning that pilots were responsible to watch for other planes.

The owners of the two planes reported them missing early Sunday after they failed to return. Florida state officials were made aware of the accident, and the search began. A Coast Guard Dolphin search-and-rescue helicopter discovered three separate debris fields at 8:00 AM, according to Coleman-Wright. Following this discovery, the Sheriff's Office deployed air boats into the area due to accessibility issues.

The bodies were recovered and identified by Monday morning, much to the relief of some relatives. Rohan Brown, cousin of Stuart Brown commented that "the whole family is thankful for that."

Both Brown and Jefferson were originally from Jamaica, and Brown aspired to fly for his country's airline.

Sax, taking advanced flight training, was the passenger in the Piper.

Piloting the Piper was Rossignol, who grew up in Biddeford, Maine, and was following in the family profession as his father, Richard Rossignol, is a commercial airline pilot for Continental Airlines.

His brother Matt Rossignol said that "he loved flying because my father's a pilot. He wanted to become a commercial airline pilot and sit next to my dad, as co-pilot."

US media group Tribune files for bankruptcy protection

The United States media group Tribune Company has filed for bankruptcy protection on Monday, as it struggled to sort out its US\$13 billion debt. It is the second-largest newspaper publisher in the United States, responsible for the Chicago Tribune and the Los Angeles Times, among others.

The firm has been hit hard by the industry-wide slump in newspaper advert revenues this year. Sam Zell, the billionaire who owns Tribune, took out large loans in order to buy the firm back in June of 2007.

The United States Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection law states that a company can continue trading whilst it sorts out its finances.

Bailout for US automakers nears agreement

The United States government is reportedly close to an agreement for a US\$15 billion bailout plan for the country's three largest auto firms.

According to a draft obtained by the Associated Press, the deal would give loans to Detroit's struggling Big Three automobile manufacturers — Ford, General Motors, and Chrysler — but under the condition that the auto industry restructures itself to survive. Another condition is that the incumbent US President, George W. Bush, would appoint an

overseer to supervise the effort.

Analysts suggest that the agreement could be signed into law by the end of this week.

Today in History

1041 - Empress Zoe of Byzantium elevates her adoptive son to the throne of the Eastern Roman Empire as Michael V.

1684 - Isaac Newton's derivation of Kepler's laws from his theory of gravity, contained in the paper *De motu corporum in gyrum*, is read to the Royal Society by Edmund Halley.

1868 - The first traffic lights are installed outside the Palace of Westminster in London.

Resembling railway signals, they use semaphore arms and are illuminated at night by red and green gas lamps.

1901 - The first Nobel Prizes are awarded.

1955 - The *Mighty Mouse* Playhouse premiered on television.

Quote of the Day

"Hope" is the thing with feathers —

That perches in the soul —
And sings the tune without the words —

And never stops — at all —
And sweetest — in the Gale — is heard —

And sore must be the storm —
That could abash the little Bird
That kept so many warm —
~ Emily Dickinson ~

Word of the Day

inchoate adj

- 1. Recently started but not fully formed yet; only elementary or immature.

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