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Global markets surge in value
Markets worldwide have surged in value following efforts by governments to ease the effect of the ongoing financial crisis, which has recently caused a massive decline in the value of stock markets. The Dow Jones Industrial Average index is one of the indexes that have done particularly well today, and, as of 16:00 UTC, it has gone up in value by 6.30%, or 532.13, although the index is still below 9000, at 8,983.32. General Motors was the best performer in this index, with its value rising by 31.49%.

Chula Vista, California becomes model for blight control laws in the US
San Diego-suburb Chula Vista has responded to the recent housing crisis with an aggressive blight control ordinance. As foreclosures increase throughout the United States, the ordinance has become a model for other cities overwhelmed by the problem of abandoned homes that decay into neighborhood eyesores.

American Paul Krugman wins Nobel prize for economics
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countries will trade with rich countries. As Krugman contributes to popular newspapers, such as the New York Times, with criticisms of the Bush administration and its financial policy, there has been speculation that Krugman's political opinions earned him the prize.

Thai Queen attends protester cremation as report indicates explosive tear gas used
With the People's Alliance for Democracy (PAD) having called off Monday's demonstration and march on Bangkok's police headquarters, Thailand's Queen Sirikit and HRH Princess Chulabhorn Valayalaksana attended the cremation and funeral of Angkana Radubpanyawoot, one of the protesters killed in clashes between police and PAD protesters last Tuesday.

Wikipedia Current Events

A Florida grand jury issues a murder indictment in the Caylee Anthony disappearance.

•Zimbabwe riot police disrupt a student protest in Harare as they attempt to present a petition to the Parliament of Zimbabwe.

•Thailand states that it is prepared to respond militarily if attacked by Cambodia after Cambodia issues an ultimatum to withdraw from disputed border areas.

Wikipedia Current Events

•Double murderer Richard Cooey is executed in a state prison in Lucasville, Ohio despite his claims that his obesity made lethal injection inhumane.

•The President of the United States George W. Bush announces new measures to attack the economic crisis of 2008 including plans for the United States Government to buy stakes in major banks.

•Canada goes to the polls in the 40th general election.

OpenOffice.org 3.0 released by Sun Microsystems
Sun Microsystems released version 3.0 of its free and open source (FOSS) office suite Openoffice.org on Monday. It has been reported that the new version comes with a number of performance enhancements and new features. Openoffice.org 3.0 now claims to work out of the box in Mac OS X as a native Aqua application.

News sources report the official download servers of OpenOffice.org crashed soon after the release due to heavy downloads. Downloads are however available from a number of mirror sites.

"As government after government, enterprise after enterprise adopt the Open Document Format, they frequently adopt OpenOffice.org and love it. With 3.0, the application is more interoperable with MS Office, more capable,

more extensible. It frees the desktop from vendor lock-in" —Louis Suárez-Potts, community manager of OpenOffice.org

Openoffice.org 3.0 suite includes spreadsheet, word processor, equation editor, presentation tool, relational database and vector drawing software. Full interoperability is available for Microsoft Office 98/XP formats, but offers read only support for OOXML file formats. This version supports the new ODF 1.2 document format. The software is available for many platforms including Linux, Microsoft Windows and Mac, as well as in multiple languages.

Users report OpenOffice.org 3.0 has introduced a new graphical and text-based hybrid equation editor, a mail merge wizard, improved label templates and better interface for outlining. Solver, a spreadsheet add-on for combinatorial optimization problems is included in this version.

Other enhancements highlighted by enthusiasts include collaborative options that allow multiple users to edit documents at the same time and improved drawing and charting tools. OpenOffice.org 3.0 can now display multiple pages during editing and workbooks up to 1024 columns in each spreadsheet.

The download size of OpenOffice.org 3.0 is 163 MB for Mac and requires OS X Tiger or later and an Intel Mac. The installer for Windows is about 145 MB in size.

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and love it. With 3.0, the application is more interoperable with MS Office, more capable, more extensible. It frees the desktop from vendor lock-in," claimed Louis Suárez-Potts, community manager of OpenOffice.org.

US Army sergeant asserts Posse Comitatus is not being violated

Wikinews recently published an article which explained that NorthComm, through an Executive Order of the President of the United States, directed the 3rd Infantry Division's 1st Brigade Combat Team to return to the United States from active duty missions in Iraq to begin training in a new role. NorthComm says that these troops will be used to protect the United States from threats within the United States, as well as to provide a support role to local and state agencies during times of emergency, such as with Hurricane Katrina.

Critics, however, believe that moving an active military unit back to United States soil represents a violation of the Posse Comitatus Act of 1878, which makes it illegal for federal military resources to act as law enforcement agencies against civilians. The article included cites from critic Namoi Watts, who based part of her opinion on an interview with retired U.S. Air Force Colonel David Antoon. Ret. Col. Antoon stated that a military coup was already under way through the actions of NorthComm, and that other branches of the government would be powerless.

Wikinews reporter Kevin Fields had an opportunity to speak with an active duty member of the United States Army, a sergeant who is currently deployed to a peace

keeping mission in Iraq. Federal laws officially prevents him from giving making any statement on military policy, however he agreed to do so on the condition of anonymity. The initials used here are not his initials of his name, only used as a pseudonym. Sgt. P.S.N. was asked to review a source article from the Army Times website which provided the original breaking information, and to provide his opinions on the article as well as follow-up questions.

Kevin Fields: In summary, what do you believe is happening here, from a military standpoint?
Sgt. P.S.N.: As far as I can tell, they won't be in charge of law enforcement, so no, this is not a violation of Posse Comitatus. As far as crowd control and disaster relief are concerned, that's certainly not without precedent.

Kevin Fields: Right, but before they've always been under the control of state officials, such as a governor or local law enforcement, correct?
Sgt. P.S.N.: The National Guard was called into Little Rock in 1957 to prevent black students from enrolling in Central High School as per Brown v Board. Eisenhower called in the 82nd Airborne, federalized the Arkansas National Guard, and ordered them to escort the students into the school. They hung around for months afterward to keep the peace. The military was used to quell the Watts riots in South Central L.A. in the 1960s, and again in the aftermath of the Rodney King trial in 1991.
In the cases where NorthComm is called to provide troops from the 1st BCT of the 3rd ID, they will still be used at the discretion of the local officials.

Kevin Fields: So it is possible that

the President can assign federal troops to act in law enforcement officials, and it NOT violate Posse Comitatus? Or would such a case clearly violate it, but nothing can be done about it?

Sgt. P.S.N.: No, the president cannot order them to act as law enforcement. He can order them to defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign AND domestic.

Kevin Fields: What would be the difference?

Sgt. P.S.N.: You're not going to see Humvees patrolling your city streets, writing tickets, and arresting shoplifters, wife beaters, or even rapists and murderers. You will see them stop rioting, looting, violent demonstrations, and the like if the local law enforcement does not possess the ability to do so. They won't be involved without either a request from local officials or a determination by DHS or FEMA that such involvement is necessary.

Kevin Fields: Critics have suggested that this is part of a strategy to usurp power and consolidate it in the Presidency. Is it possible for a President of the United States to stage a coup by deploying the CCMRF and NorthComm to permanently take over an area where there is rioting or a national disaster?

Sgt. P.S.N.: No. For one thing, Congressional oversight prevents this. For another, I'm quite certain the Supreme Court would claim original jurisdiction in a case such as that. This is one reason presidents are limited to two terms.

Kevin Fields: So even though this unit, and NorthComm, are under the direct command of the President, Congress can still stop

his actions?

Sgt. P.S.N.: They can call for hearings to examine his actions. Congress is who impeaches and ultimately removes the President from office if he usurps his authority.

Kevin Fields: Critics say that such hearings would not be swift, and that such action would not directly affect the President or any action he takes through this unit. Would you agree with that?

Sgt. P.S.N.: The only mandate NorthComm has is to provide support to Homeland Security operations, so no.

The three things I'd ask you to remember are these: First, there is precedence dating back nearly to the beginning of this nation's history for using the military in times of national emergency or cataclysmic disaster. Second, when there are cases where the citizens of an area have overpowered the police, such as in New Orleans during Katrina or the aforementioned riots in L.A., the military's mandate to defend the U.S. against domestic enemies is pretty much a no-brainer at that point. Third, who else is training to handle mass casualty situations such as dirty bombs, 9/11 type of events, or mass poisoning epidemics? These are things that the United States military are trained to handle that relatively few other agencies are equipped or funded to handle.

The whole point of NorthComm is so that the military is better organized and better able to respond on short notice than we were after Katrina.

Chula Vista, California becomes model for blight control laws in the US

The San Diego, California suburb of Chula Vista has responded to the recent housing crisis with an aggressive blight control ordinance that compels lenders to maintain the appearance of vacant homes. As foreclosures increase both locally and throughout the United States, the one year old ordinance has become a model for other cities overwhelmed by the problem of abandoned homes that decay into neighborhood eyesores.

Chula Vista city code enforcement manager Doug Leeper told the San Diego Union Tribune that over 300 jurisdictions have contacted his office during the past year with inquiries about the city's tough local ordinance. Coral Springs, Florida, and California towns Stockton, Santee, Riverside County, and Murietta have all modeled recently enacted anti-blight measures after Chula Vista's. On Wednesday, 8 October, the Escondido City Council also voted to tighten local measures making lenders more accountable for maintenance of empty homes.

"Lenders will respond when it costs them less to maintain the property than to ignore local agency requirements." —Jolie Houston, land use attorney

Under the Chula Vista ordinance lenders become legally responsible for upkeep as soon as a notice of mortgage default gets filed on a vacant dwelling, before actual ownership of the dwelling returns to the lender. Leeper regards that as "the cutting-edge part of our ordinance". Chula Vista also requires prompt registration of vacant homes and applies stiff fines as high as US$1000 per day for failure to maintain a property. Since foreclosed properties are subject to frequent resale between mortgage brokers, city officials enforce the fines by sending notices to every name on title documents and placing a lien on

the property, which prevents further resale until outstanding fines have been paid. In the year since the ordinance went into effect the city has applied $850,000 in fines and penalties, of which it has collected $200,000 to date. The city has collected an additional $77,000 in registration fees on vacant homes.

Jolie Houston, an attorney in San Jose, believes "Lenders will respond when it costs them less to maintain the property than to ignore local agency requirements." Traditionally, local governments have resorted to addressing blight problems on abandoned properties with public funds, mowing overgrown lawns and performing other vital functions, then seeking repayment afterward. Chula Vista has moved that responsibility to an upfront obligation upon lenders.

"That kind of measure will add additional costs to banks that have been hit really hard already and ultimately the cost will be transferred down to consumers and investors." —Marc Carpenter, real estate agent

As one of the fastest growing cities in the United States during recent years, Chula Vista saw 22.6% growth between 2000 and 2006, which brought the city's population from 173,556 in the 2000 census to an estimated 212,756, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. Chula Vista placed among the nation's 20 fastest growing cities in 2004. A large proportion of local homes were purchased during the recent housing boom using creative financing options that purchasers did not understand were beyond their means. Average home prices in San Diego County declined by 25% in the last year, which is the steepest drop on record. Many

homeowners in the region currently owe more than their homes are worth and confront rising balloon payment mortgages that they had expected to afford by refinancing new equity that either vanished or never materialized. In August 2008, Chula Vista's eastern 91913 zip code had the highest home mortgage default rate in the county with 154 filings and 94 foreclosures, an increase of 154% over one year previously. Regionally, the county saw 1,979 foreclosures in August.

Professionals from the real estate and mortgage industries object to Chula Vista's response to the crisis for the additional burdens it places on their struggling finances. Said San Diego real estate agent Marc Carpenter, "that kind of measure will add additional costs to banks that have been hit really hard already and ultimately the cost will be transferred down to consumers and investors." Yet city councils in many communities have been under pressure to do something about increasing numbers of vacant properties. Concentrations of abandoned and neglected homes can attract vandals who hasten the decline of struggling neighborhoods. Jolie Houston explained that city officials "can't fix the lending problem, but they can try to prevent neighborhoods from becoming blighted."

CEO Robert Klein of Safeguard, a property management firm, told the Union Tribune that his industry is having difficulty adapting to the rapidly changing local ordinances. "Every day we discover a new ordinance coming out of somewhere", he complained. Dustin Hobbs, a spokesman from the California Association of Mortgage Bankers agreed that uneven local ordinances are likely

to increase the costs of lending. Hobbs advised that local legislation is unnecessary due to California State Senate Bill 1137, which was recently approved to address blight. Yet according to Houston, the statewide measure falls short because it fails to address upkeep needs during the months between the time when foreclosure begins and when the lender takes title.

American Paul Krugman wins Nobel prize for economics
American Paul Krugman yesterday won the Nobel Prize for Economics for developing a theory known as the "new trade theory" and "new economic geography".

Krugman first released the above theory approximately thirty years ago, and it explained why rich countries will trade with rich countries.

As Krugman contributes to popular newspapers, such as The New York Times, with criticisms of the Bush administration and its financial policy, there has been speculation that Krugman's political opinions earned him the prize.

Tyler Cowen, a professor of economics at George Mason University, stated that he believed the award may have been motivated by politics. "They could have waited and nobody would have asked that question, he said. "It's fair speculation that in part they are making a political statement. Krugman does deserve it, though. It's not only a political statement."

Robert Solow, who was taught by Krugman at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, dismissed these claims, however. "I don't think it's true for one minute. I wouldn't be surprised if next year it was a conservative who wins. I

really think that it's pure coincidence and there is no reason at all to suppose his columns [in newspapers] had any role in this choice."

Tore Ellingsen, who was in the committee that decided the winner also responded to the claims that the decision was political. He claimed that "we disregard everything except for the scientific merits," when choosing the winner.

Thai Queen attends protester cremation as report indicates explosive tear gas used

With the People's Alliance for Democracy (PAD) having called off Monday's demonstration and march on Bangkok's police headquarters, Thailand's Queen Sirikit (Thai: สมเด็จพระนางเจ้าสิริกิติ์ พระบรมราชินีนาถ) and HRH Princess Chulabhorn Valayalaksana (Thai: สมเด็จพระเจ้าลูกเธอ เจ้าฟ้าจุฬาภรณวลัย ลักษณ์ อัครราชกุมารี) attended the cremation and funeral of Angkana Radubpanyawoot, one of the protesters killed in clashes between police and PAD protesters last Tuesday.

The queen, consort of the highly popular and revered eighty-year old Thai monarch Bhumibol Adulyadej (Thai: ภูมิพลอดุลยเดช), was joined by police chiefs, leaders of the PAD movement, and many protesters. Presiding over the ceremonies, the queen was accompanied by army chief Anupong Paojinda (Thai: อนุพงษ์ เผ่า จินดา), the opposition Democrat party leader, Abhisit Vejjajiva (Thai: อภิสิทธิ์ เวชชาชีวะ), and newly elected Bangkok Governor, Apirak Kosayodhin (Thai: อภิรักษ์ โกษะ โยธิน). Founder and de-facto head of the People's Alliance for Democracy movement, Sondhi Limthongkul (Thai: สนธิ ลิ้มทองกุล) attended as the protest group's

representative, along with thousands of others mainly from the PAD.

Queen Sirikit spoke with Angkhana's father, Jinda Radappanyawut during the Buddhist cremation ceremony. He later discussed their conversation, detailing that the queen had given moral support and said that his daughter was a decent person who had been helping the King and working for the good of the nation. Jinda's wife, Angkhana's mother, was not present at the funeral; she continues to be treated for injuries sustained during the protest outside parliament. The Bangkok Post report detailing this meeting mentions that the king has donated funds to help those injured in the police clampdown.

At the closing of the funeral services there were scuffles between PAD protesters and the Army's Commander-in-Chief, Anupong Paojinda, as he attempted to leave. Security guards had to assist him in reaching his car and protesters banged on the car as it drove away.

With a sub-committee appointed by the country's Human Rights Commission due to report within the week, details are beginning to emerge accounting for the number of injuries and severity of some in last Tuesday's clashes outside parliament. Nearly 500 were injured as police employed tear gas to try and disperse the crowd of PAD protesters blockading parliament. The group, originally formed seeking to topple deposed former prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra and his Thai Rak Thai party, had disbanded in September 2006 following Thaksin being removed by a coup. The 2007 general election saw them

reform to oppose the new government formed by the People's Power Party (PPP) who are widely regarded as a proxy for the ex-PM living in exile in the UK. The PAD protest aimed to stop the PPP government from announcing their legislative programme which included measures to amend the constitution and rehabilitate Thaksin and others from the now-outlawed Thai Rak Thai party. Investigations started during the coup period leave Thaksin and others accused of vote buying and electoral fraud.

Porntip Rojanasunan, the director of Thailand's Central Institute of Forensic Science has indicated that the tear gas employed was likely responsible for the many injuries during the October 7 crackdown. A number of the canisters were found to contain RDX, a militarily employed explosive. RDX is considered a powerful explosive and the quantities likely involved would have left craters. Other types of tear gas were employed, manufactured in the United States and Spain, but during the protest it was the RDX-laced variety which originated in China that had been favoured. Porntip's agency demonstrated the firing of these tear gas cannisters from a shotgun to the Human Rights Commission committee on Sunday, noting that one exploded canister "left a hole in a metal pipe". It is claimed that the lethal tear gas was sourced from a third party and not directly from China.

Along with the two fatalities, fifteen people remain hospitalised from last week's police action, with one critically injured having lost his right arm.

Monday's planned PAD protest and march on Bangkok police HQ was cancelled to allow people to attend

the cremation and funeral services for the two dead. No new date for the protest has been announced.

Today in History

1582 – Spain, Portugal, the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth, and Italy became the first countries to replace the Julian calendar with the Gregorian calendar.

1917 – Dutch exotic dancer Mata Hari was executed by a firing squad for spying for Germany.

1951 – Mexican chemist Luis E. Miramontes synthesized the first oral contraceptive.

1966 – The Black Panther Party, a Marxist/Maoist African-American organization that promoted Black Power and self-defense in the United States, was founded in Oakland, California.

2003 – Chinese space program: Shenzhou 5, China's first manned space mission was launched, carrying astronaut Yang Liwei.

October 15 is Global Handwashing Day; White Cane Safety Day in the United States

Quote of the Day

A nuclear war does not defend a country and it does not defend a system. I've put it the same way many times; not even the most accomplished ideologue will be able to tell the difference between the ashes of capitalism and the ashes of communism.
~ John Kenneth Galbraith

Word of the Day

treacle n
1. A syrupy byproduct of sugar refining; molasses or golden syrup.
2. Cloying sentimental speech.