

## NEWS IN BRIEF

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ICELAND

One of Iceland's largest volcanoes, the Eyjafjallajökull, had been dormant for two centuries before returning to life last week. An explosion sent clouds of ash soaring as high as 11,000 meters, disrupting air travel throughout northern Europe. The eruption led to the evacuation of hundreds of rural Icelanders, many of whom have been anticipating this eruption for many years. According to *The New York Times*, more than 24,000 flights have been cancelled every day throughout Europe, causing huge economic losses to airline companies and major disruptions in peoples' travel plans. According to the *Washington Post* European flights are expected to resume soon, as an increasing number of airline tests have proven the decrease of volcanic ash in the atmosphere.



UNITED STATES

According to a BBC World Service Poll, global views of the United States have improved sharply over the past year. Having fallen to a low international approval rate of 28% in 2007, the sentiments of the 14 countries included in the census have risen to 40 percent in this year's poll. For the first time since 2005, this poll has shown that more countries see the United States' influence on the rest of the world as positive rather than negative. Analysts do not hesitate to point out that this rise in United States popularity has coincided with the election of President Obama in 2009.



VENEZUELA

This week Venezuela celebrated its 200th year as an independent country. The festivities have inspired people from every sector of Venezuelan society to come out and show pride in their country. Olympic athletes, indigenous leaders, and afro-caribbean descendants all joined together to march past socialist President Hugo Chavez, who was joined by President of Cuba Raul Castro and Bolivian President Evo Morales for the occasion. According to BBC, Chavez took the opportunity to speak to his supporters, drawing parallels between Simon Bolivar and Venezuela's liberation and his own socialist ideal of Latin American unity and independence from the West.



CHINA

On April 14 China fell victim to the latest earthquake, a 7.1 magnitude which shook the Qinghai region in the Tibetan plateau. Today, the death toll is reported at over 500. While the Qinghai region is not as densely populated as much of China, the *Washington Post* has reported at least 589 dead and over 10,000 injured. According to the CNM News Network, 90 percent of the homes in the area were leveled, leaving most of the population homeless. The earthquake is the most damaging since the devastating earthquake that took place in Chile in February.

## Poland mourns the death of president, plans to move forward

By Izak Shapiro  
STAFF WRITER

On April 10, President of Poland Lech Kaczynski was killed, along with many important Polish leaders, when the plane he was in crashed in Smolensk, Russia.

According to Russian officials, 97 people were killed in the crash, including First Lady Maria Kaczynska, Chief of the General Staff of the Polish Armed Forces Franciszek Gagar, and eight crew members.

The group of Polish officials was flying for the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Katyn massacre of thousands of Poles by Soviet forces during WWII. The group was traveling in a Tupolev 154, a Soviet-designed plane that was more than 20 years old. The pilots were Russian.

"For the life of me I can't understand why so many prominent Polish people were flying on a commercial airline maintained by ex-Soviet military pensioners," said Ken Gilmore, associate professor of political science. "It'd be like asking Obama and congress to eat Mexican from a food cart in Tijuana."

Many people speculate that the pilots are at fault for the plane's crash.

"Flight controllers ... suggested that the plane be forwarded to Minsk but as far as we know the crew took an independent

decision to land the plane in Smolensk," Andrei Yevseyenkov, Smolensk regional government spokesman, told Russian television, according to BBC.com.

Russian and Polish officials are still gathering information about the crash. For now, a week of remembrance has been declared

in Poland, and at 12 p.m. on April 18, two minutes of silence were held throughout the country, according to FoxNews.com.

Poland now has the task of grieving and moving forward as a nation in the coming

last 25 years and this is the first death of a Polish president while in a democracy. The speaker of the lower house of parliament, Bronislaw Komorowski, is now the acting president.

"I can say, at this point, that I've been impressed by the orderliness of the succession process in Poland thus far," said Gilmore. "They've been very 'constitutional' in picking various successors, including the interim president, who seems ready to hold elections."

As Poland continues to move forward after the deaths of so many government officials, the upcoming elections could provide a shift in Polish politics.

"(Kaczynski) had advocated a right-wing Catholic agenda, opposed rapid free-market reforms and favoured retaining social welfare programmes," according to BBC.com.

Kaczynski was a polarizing figure in Poland, but those who agreed and disagreed with his policies mourned together, and will continue to mourn together. Although tragic and painful, perhaps this accident will bring Poland together and make it stronger.

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"The Polish state must function and will function," said Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk, who was reportedly in tears when news of the crash reached his ears, according to BBC.com.

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