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*...telecommunications and transportation news
from the Arctic*

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The Institute of the North works to improve the infrastructure of aviation, telecommunications and marine links throughout the Arctic region under a grant from the U.S. Department of Transportation/Federal Aviation Administration.

THIS WEEK'S HIGHLIGHTS

Today's issue marks the beginning of the third year for the Top of the World Telegraph, linking readers with news about Arctic shipping, aviation and telecommunications, as well as other items of relevance to those interested in the Arctic. As always, we thank our readers for their support and look forward to another year of highlighting Arctic issues.

NEWS FROM AROUND THE REGION

MARITIME

ALASKA/UNITED STATES

Drifting Aleutian freighter was minutes from disaster (Anchorage Daily News, 03/15/07)

<http://www.adn.com/money/industries/oil/story/8709551p-8611847c.html>

A 443-foot freighter lost power and drifted within 500 yards of an island in America's busiest commercial seafood port last week, renewing calls for additional shipping safety measures in the Aleutian Islands.

REGION

Murmansk governor criticized Finnish-Russian railway plans (BarentsObserver, 03/20/07)

<http://www.barentsobserver.com/index.php?id=444645&cat=16149&xforceredir=1&noredir=1>

Governor in Murmansk Oblast, Yuri Yevdokimov, criticizes plans to link the projected Belkomur railway line with Finland and Norway, saying that this would weaken the competitiveness of the northern Russian ports.

Russian mystery trawler raises Norwegian eyebrows (BarentsObserver, 03/19/07)

<http://www.barentsobserver.com/index.php?id=444387&cat=16149&xforceredir=1&noredir=1>

How come that the Russian trawler “Nemanskii” was three months at sea without having caught a single fish and in the same period changing name. The Norwegian police and the Coast Guard believe that the vessel might have dropped the trawl and fishing equipment in the sea, and that it plans to come back and pick it up.

Global warming boosts Arctic shipping, oil – report (Reuters India, 03/18/07)

http://in.today.reuters.com/news/newsArticle.aspx?type=worldNews&storyID=2007-03-18T204941Z_01_NOOTR_RTRJONC_0_India-291458-1.xml&archived=False

The dramatic decrease in sea ice above the Arctic Circle means formerly impenetrable shipping routes are now or soon could be open for much of the year, the U.S. Arctic Research Commission said in a report released last week at a summit of Arctic scientists.

New robot, icebreaker to gather polar data (Reuters, 03/15/07)

<http://www.reuters.com/article/scienceNews/idUSN1431608820070315?pageNumber=2>

Innovative technologies presented at an Arctic "science summit" on Wednesday, included a robot to carry instruments over vast stretches of the Arctic and Antarctic, an ice-breaker ship that can whirl slowly around on sea ice and a stand-alone science station that looks like a giant picnic cooler.

RUSSIA

Murmansk Fish Port will not be sold to petroleum company (BarentsObserver, 03/20/07)

<http://www.barentsobserver.com/index.php?id=444625&cat=16149&xforceredir=1&noredir=1>

New head of the Murmansk Fish Port, Vladimir Sokolov, stresses that the port will not be sold to the petroleum industry, but remain a specialized fish port. He also says the port now will take measures to deal with red tape and the economic crisis.

Vladivostok, Akita to expand shipping links (Vladivostok News, 03/16/07)

http://vn.vladnews.ru/issue560/Business/Vladivostok_Akita_to_expand_shipping_links

A new cargo shipping line will link the Far Eastern port of Vladivostok and the Japanese port of Akita. The new line, operated by Japan's Toyofuji Shipping Co, will start service mid April. The first trip from Akita to Vladivostok will deliver a shipment of about 700 automobiles, while the return run to Japan is expected to carry a cargo of timber.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

ALASKA/UNITED STATES

Cisco Systems to acquire online-meeting company (Washington Post, 03/16/07)

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/03/15/AR2007031502098.html?referrer=email>

Cisco Systems said Thursday that it agreed to acquire the online-meeting firm WebEx Communications for about \$3.2 billion in cash, a takeover that furthers Cisco's push beyond its core market and into business communications.

Congressional panel: FCC not a 'legislative body' (Washington Post, 03/14/07)

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/03/14/AR2007031401103.html>

The panel questioned the agency on a wide range of issues, including rural access to broadband services, enforcement of conditions applied to the AT&T Inc.-BellSouth Corp. merger and a backlog of complaints on the "do not call" phone registry. Commissioners were also asked what progress was being made on upgrading emergency communications.

Telecoms wait nervously on \$20 billion contract (Washington Post, 03/14/07)

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/03/13/AR2007031301739.html?referrer=email>

Executives from AT&T and other companies are anxiously awaiting the General Services Administration's announcement of the largest telecommunications contract ever awarded. The contract is part of one of the most sweeping revamps of the federal government's technology infrastructure in two decades.

FINLAND

Finnish mobile phone sales wane in February (NewsRoom Finland, 03/20/07)

<http://virtual.finland.fi/stt/showarticle.asp?intNWSAID=15300&group=Business>

Wholesalers shipped about 85,600 handsets to retailers in February, representing a drop of five per cent from the year-ago period. The wholesales value fell by eight per cent year-on-year.

RUSSIA

Spending to total USD14.7bn over five years (TeleGeography's CommsUpdate, 03/20/07)

http://www.telegeography.com/cu/article.php?article_id=17101&email=html

The president of Russia's largest cellco, MTS, says he expects the country's mobile market to see investment of USD14.7 billion over the next five years. Three 3G licenses are expected to be issued next month, with all of Russia's main cellular operators among the bidders.

New phone fees raise costs (The Moscow Times, 03/20/07)

<http://www.themoscowtimes.com/stories/2007/03/20/046.html>

The introduction of a pay-per-minute billing system for millions of landline-telephone users has led to a rise of more than 11 percent in the size of average bills, the Federal Tariff Services said. A law on telephone tariffs, passed in October 2005, which became effective Feb. 1 allowed telephone operators to charge customers a variable set of contracts.

Internet everywhere in Russia by 2015 (Kommersant, 03/19/07)

http://www.kommersant.com/p-10338/Internet_access/

In Russia, there should be no settlement without the Internet access by 2015, said First Vice Premier Sergey Ivanov when speaking at the meeting of IT and Communication Ministry. The wire telephone communication and communication via cell phones should cover the whole country by that date, the top-rank official made clear.

SWEDEN

Sweden plans new wireless broadband auction (TeleGeography's CommsUpdate, 03/15/07)

http://www.telegeography.com/cu/article.php?article_id=17068&email=html

Sweden's telecoms regulator the PTS is planning to hold an auction of licenses for WiMAX wireless broadband access in the 3.6GHz-3.8GHz frequency band in the fourth quarter of this year, to improve nationwide access to broadband services. The 15-year licenses are technology and service neutral and do not contain any rollout obligations.

AVIATION

ALASKA/UNITED STATES

Airbus superjumbo takes a lap around America (New York Times, 03/20/07)

<http://www.nytimes.com/2007/03/20/business/20plane.html?ref=business>

The largest passenger plane in the world begins its United States tour this week, with trips to New York's Kennedy International Airport, Dulles in Washington, Chicago O'Hare and Los Angeles. Even though American carriers are not buying the craft, the A380 will be flying in American skies.

FAA sees boom in small-jet air taxis as commercial flights get crowded (Executive Travel, 03/19/07)

<http://www.executivetravelmagazine.com/page/Alerts+for+3%2F19%2F07>

The Federal Aviation Administration's annual forecast for commercial aviation, issued last week, predicts a boom in air taxi services provided by new "very light jet" aircraft, as well as continued crowding of regular commercial flights as passenger demand keeps growing faster than capacity.

FAA on Congress' radar as air travelers await fallout (Sun Herald, 03/18/07)

<http://www.sunherald.com/mld/sunherald/news/politics/16931481.htm>

The head of the agency is warning that failure to do the task promptly could cause the U.S. to lose its lead in aviation, while some in Congress fear a major blow to the economy and even safety if the changes aren't made properly.

Pilots worry tax changes might clip wings (Fairbanks Daily News-Miner, 03/15/07)

<http://newsminer.com/2007/03/15/5933/>

A proposal to nearly quadruple fuel taxes levied against general aviation aircraft has small-plane operators in Alaska worried about the future of their industry. Alaska has more pilots per capita than any other state in the country. The biggest change for general aviation would be an increase in federal taxes on aviation gas and the more powerful aviation fuel.

CANADA

Airline to fight appeal court's food mail decision (CBC News, 03/20/07)

<http://www.cbc.ca/canada/north/story/2007/03/19/nu-foodmail.html>

Canadian North will not give up its argument that a \$175-million food mail contract was unfairly awarded to rival airline First Air, its president says. The airline is considering taking

its complaints about how the contract was handled to the Supreme Court of Canada and will also bring its concerns about the food mail program to the relevant federal departments.

FINLAND

Finnair sells ground handling operations of 13 airports (NewsRoom Finland, 03/20/07)

<http://virtual.finland.fi/stt/showarticle.asp?intNWSAID=15308&group=Business>

Finnish flag carrier Finnair said in a statement that its Northport division had signed an agreement to sell the ground handling operations of 13 Finnish airports to travel services group RTG as part of a cost-cutting measure.

REGION

ATA warns Canadian airport charges threaten industry (AeroNews, 03/20/07)

<http://www.aero-news.net/news/commair.cfm?ContentBlockID=b267a1bd-0a19-4a6e-9e5a-044b735b1694&Dynamic=1>

The Air Transport Association of America (ATA), the trade association for the leading US airlines, warns the "continued failure of the Canadian government to rationalize airport rents" threatens cross-border trade and travel, making Canadian destinations less attractive to US air carriers.

Europe's planned Galileo GPS-rival runs into snags (AeroNews, 03/16/07)

<http://www.aero-news.net/news/aerospace.cfm?ContentBlockID=46f5e540-466c-4de9-85d1-851e4331c9c7&Dynamic=1>

The planned launch of a European satellite navigation system, designed to compete with the US global positioning system (GPS), has ground to a halt due to a breakdown in talks between the government, and the private contractors tasked with implementing the system.

RUSSIA

Sukhoi to supply SuperJet-100 planes to Aeroflot by late 2008 (RIA Novosti, 03/20/07)

<http://en.rian.ru/business/20070320/62295025.html>

Russian aircraft maker Sukhoi will start supplying SuperJet-100 aircraft to the country's largest air carrier Aeroflot by late 2008, Sukhoi said. Earlier, it was reported that Aeroflot plans to buy 50 SuperJet-100 planes from Sukhoi Civil Aircraft.

Gazprom buys helicopters for Shtokman field (BarentsObserver, 03/19/07)

<http://www.barentsobserver.com/index.php?id=444395&cat=16149&xforceredir=1&noredir=1>

The Gazprom-subsidary Gazpromavia plans to spend 100 million USD on the acquisition of five helicopters from the Eurocopter company. The helicopters are to be used in connection with the development of the Shtokman field in the Barents Sea.

Sukhoi and Alenia to produce 1800 Superjet-100 airliners (RusAvNews, 03/14/07)

<http://www.avia.ru/cgi/news/news.cgi?action=geten&id=1173884313>

Russian company Sukhoi Civil Aircraft and company Alenia, a daughter of Italy's holding Finmeccanica will sign an agreement on joint manufacture of 1800 regional passenger airliners Sukhoi Superjet-100.

SWEDEN

Skavsta allowed to triple passenger numbers (The Local, 03/15/07)

<http://www.thelocal.se/6703/20070315/>

Skavsta's expansion would take it past Gothenburg Landvetter and Malmö Sturup to become Sweden's second biggest airport, based on current passenger numbers. Only Stockholm Arlanda Airport currently carries more passengers, with over 16 million people travelling through the airport annually.

EMERGING TECHNOLOGY

Boeing's 787 Dreamliner ready to fly (CNN, 03/19/07)

<http://money.cnn.com/2007/03/19/news/companies/boeing.reut/index.htm?postversion=2007031914>

The mid-sized 787, which relies heavily on carbon composite materials to lower its weight and operating costs, is on track to make its first test flight in late August and first delivery in May 2008.

Radical new Boeing aircraft takes flight (CNN, 03/13/07)

<http://money.cnn.com/2007/03/12/magazines/business2/planestakewing.biz2/index.htm>

Originally conceived by McDonnell Douglas and developed by NASA, the blended-wing merges fuselage and wings and eliminates the tail, reducing drag. That makes it vastly more fuel-efficient than regular "tube-and-wing" jets, according to Boeing.

OTHER AREAS OF GENERAL INTEREST

ALASKA/UNITED STATES

U.S. warns of long delays for passports (Washington Post, 03/16/07)

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/03/15/AR2007031501827.html>

About 12 million passport applications were processed in 2006 and as many as 17 million are expected this year, the State Department said. The department has hired hundreds of employees to process passport requests over the past two years as tougher immigration rules have taken effect.

CANADA

Crucial arctic map missing (National Post, 03/17/07)

<http://www.canada.com/nationalpost/news/story.html?id=5569b1be-64c5-48f6-8587-75596b554fa5>

The country's record-keepers can't find a Scandinavian explorer's map that Parliament bought so it could plant the Maple Leaf on a trio of petroleum-rich Arctic islands, potentially opening a door for Norway to grab them back.

Opinion: Polar opposites (National Post, 03/16/07)

<http://www.canada.com/nationalpost/story.html?id=52178550-ca23-4e3d-a964-8ea90f278976>

The new Conservative government's exercise in northern sovereignty should not end with its laudable commitment to bolstering the military presence in the region, but needs to include substantial, long-term investment into scientific research in the three northern territories.

N.W.T. waits to hear from overseas Polar Year scientists (CBC North, 03/15/07)

<http://www.cbc.ca/canada/north/story/2007/03/14/nwt-ipy.html>

It is known that 25 Canadian projects will take place in the territory during International Polar Year. However, it remains unclear how many scientists from the other 62 countries participating plan to come to the Northwest Territories. Given that hundreds or even thousands of scientists could arrive, the uncertainty is making planning efforts difficult for those responsible for working with those scientists.

ICELAND

Largest national park in Europe (Iceland Review, 03/19/07)

http://www.icelandreview.com/icelandreview/daily_news/?cat_id=28304&ew_0_a_id=270595

Before the parliament in Iceland closed on Saturday, MPs agreed to found a national park at Vatnajökull glacier, which will be the largest national park in Europe. Vatnajökull National Park will cover 1/8 of Iceland's surface and include the current Skaftafell National Park and Jökulsárgljúfur National Park.

REGION

Russian border guards returned Norwegian reindeer (BarentsObserver, 03/20/07)

<http://www.barentsobserver.com/index.php?id=444603&cat=16149&xforceredir=1&noredir=1>

Russian border guards last week met with representatives of Norwegian authorities to return 362 Norwegian reindeers, which have trespassed over the Norwegian-Russian border.

Scientists launch Arctic expedition (Juneau Empire, 03/19/07)

http://www.juneauempire.com/stories/031907/sta_20070319007.shtml

Students in schools across the world will be following the expedition on the Internet, where the team's daily progress will be mapped out and messages from the scientists will be posted daily. Teachers in 10 states, five Canadian provinces and Norway have been working with Sturm's team to develop curriculum to go along with the journey.

Norway, Russia discuss establishment of economic zone (BarentsObserver, 03/16/07)

<http://www.barentsobserver.com/index.php?id=443970&cat=16149&xforceredir=1&noredir=1>

Norwegian Foreign Minister Jonas Gahr Støre confirms that Norway is in a dialogue with Russian authorities about the establishment of a joint economic and industrial zone along the Barents Sea coast. Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergey Lavrov is reported to be positive towards the idea.

RUSSIA

Foreign companies invested 321 million USD in Komi Republic (BarentsObserver, 03/16/07)

<http://www.barentsobserver.com/index.php?id=443860&cat=16149&xforceredir=1&noredir=1>

The amount of foreign investments in the Komi Republic in 2006 totalled 321.1 million USD, figures from regional authorities show. The sum is a doubling from 2005.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Congress to feel heat from north (Anchorage Daily News, 03/20/07)

<http://www.adn.com/news/alaska/rural/story/8724028p-8626071c.html>

More than 125 Alaska Native organizations have signed a resolution urging Congress to take stronger action to combat global warming. Dramatic environmental changes imperil Natives and the animals they hunt and fish, the two-page resolution says, and changes are needed quickly.

Polar regions lose their shine (Scienceline, 03/19/07)

<http://scienceline.org/2007/03/19/env-sergo-ipcc/>

The early disappearance of snow due to warmer springs in high latitude areas near the arctic is not just a symptom of global warming; it's also a contributor. The faster transition from white, reflective snow to sun-absorbing ground is amplifying the warming effect greenhouse gases have on polar regions.

This what Finns worry about (SIKU News, 03/17/07)

<http://www.sikunews.com/art.html?artid=2797&catid=19>

Climate change has replaced terrorism as the primary threat seen by Finns. And according to the poll, the secondary threat in Finns' minds is floods, storms and heavy rains, all closely associated with climate change.

Are we at the tipping point? (SIKU News, 03/17/07)

<http://www.sikunews.com/art.html?artid=2794&catid=19>

Thinning Arctic sea ice may have reached a tipping point that could trigger major weather changes in western Europe and other temperate regions, say scientists. An estimated 50,000 square kilometres of sea ice is now being lost every year in the Arctic, according to measurements made each September.

Antarctic glaciers' sloughing of ice has scientists at a loss (Washington Post, 03/16/07)

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/03/15/AR2007031501063.html>

Some of the largest glaciers in Antarctica and Greenland are moving in unusual ways and are losing increased amounts of ice to the sea, researchers said yesterday. In Greenland, glaciers appear to be moving more quickly to sea because melting ice has allowed the sheet to slide more easily over the rock and dirt below.

Will northern Norway benefit from climate changes? (BarentsObserver, 03/15/07)

<http://www.barentsobserver.com/index.php?id=443437&cat=16149&xforcedir=1&noredir=1>

Consequences of the warming of sea water in the High North can already be seen, researchers and the regional fish industry confirm. As temperatures rise, the cod is moving further and

further north, opening up new industrial possibilities along the northernmost Norwegian coast, and making more southern places fear an upcoming crisis.

European, Russian pollution sullies Arctic: study (Reuters, 03/15/07)

<http://www.reuters.com/article/scienceNews/idUSN1516770620070315>

Pollution from Europe and Russia is heading to the Arctic, adding to the potential for more warming around the North Pole, researchers reported on Thursday. North America and Asia also add their share of sooty particles to the mix, along with ozone-forming nitrogen oxides and hydrocarbons.

Arctic spiders studied for warming clues (MSNBC, 03/15/07)

<http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/17628639/>

Reclusive spiders living in the Arctic may yield clues to the impact of global warming just like bigger, better known predators such as polar bears, according to a researcher. Any disruptions to tiny Arctic spiders, little studied and living much of their lives under snow, could ripple through the food chain since they prey on insects and are in turn eaten by birds.

FROM THE TELEGRAPH WIRES

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