



MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

Natalia Juric stacks Christmas cookies near other holiday goods this week at Svalbardbutikken.

Season of serenity

Bustling schedule of activities helps celebrate peacefulness of Christmas far from malls

By MARK SABBATINI
Editor

He owes Svalbard more than 100 billion kroner just this year, to say nothing of back taxes going to back to whenever they've been collected. But for some reason he seems to be the archipelago's most loved illegal occupant.

So adoring letters will again be left in Santa's mailbox below Mine 2B by Longyearbyen residents (with a bit of self interest) while celebrating the first Sunday of Advent. The afternoon's activities comes near the start of six weeks of holiday events that

don't include anything resembling Black Friday.

"It's so cozy there is none of the shopping stress there is on the mainland," said Monica Hansen, who will read children's stories at 4:45 p.m. at Longyearbyen Library as part of the Advent celebration. "The shopping hysteria is not what Christmas is about. Christmas is about being together with people, eating good food and sleeping a lot."

Hansen, who has read holiday stories at the library for the past four years, will miss the peacefulness she relishes this Christmas because she is moving back to the mainland next Tuesday. But as a final "gift that keeps giving," local youths gave her a custom-made book she will read Sunday.

See HOLIDAYS, page 3

Rocket tour of Lights

Launch at Ny-Ålesund part of study about how aurora borealis disrupts radio and other signals

By MARK SABBATINI
Editor

Getting out of town to see a spectacular Northern Lights show is great, but freezing to death because they kept you from getting home is kind of a bummer.

So a different kind of light show is scheduled in Ny-Ålesund sometime during the next two weeks. A rocket will be launched, weather permitting, to collect data about how solar storms disrupt radio and satellite signals.

"It's well known that solar storms cause disturbances, particularly in northern areas and around the equator," said Jøran Moen, a physics professor at the University of Oslo who is the project's manager. "But we still don't know enough about the mechanisms that create these problems."

The disruptions aren't just about getting lost during a hiking or fishing trip. A university report notes "serious users are in a particularly vulnerable position. Offshore activity, for example, is moving further north, and GPS is increasingly used in aviation."

See LAUNCH, page 4

Inside

Gritty in pink at Svea; Santa scandal
Page 2

Headlines from Svalbardposten

- Report: Mail plane runway accident 'serious'

- Cannon from WW II returns to Baretnsburg

- Man hospitalized after accident at Svea mine

Page 3

Weather forecast

Page 3

Events calendar

Page 4

Battling SvalSat to a standoff

Review: 'Satellitkrigen' details military use claims with fervor, but unlikely to change minds

By MARK SABBATIC
Editor

Bård Wormdal uses 11 years of knowledge to make a detailed and complex case for a passionate claim: The Svalbard Satellite Station is illegally being used for military purposes.

The widespread response is generally quick, simple and indifferent: Nothing to see here, move along.

See REVIEW, page 4



GEOEYE INC.

Seemingly common images, such as this photo of the Libyan-Tunisian border, are being used illegally for war purposes, a new book claims.

Who's to blame and how to express your wrath

Editor

Mark Sabbatini

Staff writer/photographer

Karla Paz

Copy editor

Kristan Hutchison

Psychiatrist

Irene Gallion

Mailing address

Icepeople

Vei 210 -2- 13

Longyearbyen, Svalbard

9170

Norway

Telephone

Norway: +47 41 51 46 38

U.S. +1 (970) 673-4472

E-mail

marksabbatini@yahoo.com

Web site

www.icepeople.net

Icepeople is published weekly (or thereabouts) on Tuesdays (or thereabouts), with printed copies available free on a limited basis in Longyearbyen. Additional printed copies are available locally and by mail upon request. Charges are on an "at cost" basis.

Copyright stuff

Original contents of this publication can be reproduced for non-commercial purposes free of charge if *Icepeople* is credited as the source. The original writers, photographers and other contributors retain their rights to all published works.

Corrections policy

When we screw up you'll know about it – on the front page. One of the big complaints about newspapers is they tend to bury corrections and clarifications deep inside where few people who read the original article see them. If we need to fix something, an alert box on the front page will state what story is in error and where the full correction is printed.

Submitting material

Letters, columns, photos and other material are welcome, but we can't offer pay for published items since nobody here is getting paid at the moment. Submissions in electronic form (text, Word documents, JPEGs, etc.) are highly preferred, although typing and/or scanning of items will be considered on a per-case basis. We reserve the right to edit submissions for length, clarity, accuracy, libel and other reasons, but we will also make every reasonable effort to contact the author about any changes prior to publication.



TERJE CARLSEN / STORE NORSKE

Martin Lorig, a manager at Store Norske, models a t-shirt matching the color of a large piece of equipment he ordered for Svea. The initial excuse was a typo, but he now admits it was deliberate.

Icesheet

Random bits of the week's weirdness:

Thanksgiving is a distinctly U.S. holiday, but we're dishing up seconds and thirds of turkeys in the news in the spirit of that exaltation to gluttony. For the appetizer, the guy in the pink t-shirt pictured above is apparently hearing a few fowl remarks after admitting he deliberately ordered a new piece of equipment for the Svea mine in not-so-masculine pink (the rules of newspapering say we have to ID that as the picture to the right of him, as if you didn't know). The original explanation was a typo on the order form, but manager-type guy Martin Lorig now tells NRK "we in the mining world boast that we are the toughest guys in the world. I thought it might be fun to bring in some humor in the environment." He's also hoping the miners take special care of the unique contraption. So far none of the miners are asking for matching uniforms, according to Store's Norske's internal newsletter ... While we're on garish colors and the holiday season, check out the outfit of Arthur Christmas, North Pole operations manager, in the picture below. A movie opening this week bearing his name details how Santa Claus has gone high-tech with various NASA advancements. A *Wired* article says it appears that involves downloading SvalSat data, which "works great because (he) can cover the whole planet in a day and ... cross the North Pole on every orbit." We're not sure what that means, but it's definitely one more thing Bård Wormdal ought to investigate (see story about SvalSat's sinister side on page one) ... Another watershed moment in Svalbard cinema is iconic director Bruce Robinson has come out of retirement. For the clueless, he's "the man behind the funniest British film ever (this has been scientifically proven by boffins at the University of Svalbard)," according to Michael Edwards of *whatculture.com*. Anyhow, the movie, "The Rum Diary," is "based on an early Hunter S. Thompson novel about a journo who goes to Puerto Rico, where he lives on rum, lust and righteous indignation as he stumbles through the incendiary environment" ... Sticking with goofy journalism, we've always said Svalbard is a right-wing

conservative haven despite being the environmental showpiece of a "Socialist" country and now it appears that view is being endorsed by that Official Wingnut Network known as FOX News. It is recommending our center of climate change as an ideal destination for cruise ship tourists wanting an alternative, even going so far as to acknowledge "a variety of beautiful animals are becoming more rare, but few are more endangered than the polar bear." The rather breathless reporter also warns "they may look cute, but if it has a chance the bear will eat you." Lest anyone think we're being overly cynical, a Pew Foundation study published this week shows Fox viewers are the least accurately informed in the U.S., even less so than those watching no news at all (it actually makes you stupider, in other words) ... The Arctic Cold War continues to be a fascinating subject with *The Voice of Russia* publishing a 12-part series from the Motherland's perspective filled with facts and opinions of equal intrigue. The first piece wastes no time in returning to the old Cold War mentality, declaring that with more countries looking to ward Arctic's riches that "Russia is forced and compelled to fight off the challenges in question, and is reinforcing its Northern and Pacific Fleets. Meanwhile, the United States is actively developing its sea-based ABM system, and it would seem that nothing can prevent it from deploying the elements of the system in the Arctic Ocean to control the greater part of Russian territory." The article is at <http://english.ruvr.ru/2011/11/11/60208868.html>. We seem to recall the Seed Vault is able to withstand a nuclear warhead, but maybe it's time to call them back and verify that ...



SONY ENTERTAINMENT



MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

Carl Martin Ianssen, left, and Jan Ollen perform a clown routine during the 11th annual Sirkus Svalnardo show Saturday at Kulturhuset. At right, Tiina Laine dangles from a trapeze during the show. About 40 local youths helped the professional troupe from Tromsø perform the show as a benefit for Doctors Without Borders, coming near the start of more than a month of holiday events.

Celebrating peace at frenetic pace

HOLIDAYS, from page 1

"They drew it from a story I told them this year," she said. There's also a photo of her with the youths, which she will scan with the other pictures to project on a wall during the reading.

"I can read for 30 kids without being interrupted," she said.

Hansen now has a collection of about 20 or so stories to pick from for the holidays. Among those she selected this year is a Swedish book that, while she doesn't want to give the details away, "is a funny story that gets kids in the mood."

The Advent activities begin at 3 p.m. with a torchlight procession from Huset to the town square, passing the mailbox beneath the mine in Nybyen along the way. The former coal deposit is now said to be the true home of Santa's workshop (there's also something about a preference by him for blue instead of red).

The lighting of the town's Christmas tree is scheduled at 4:10 p.m., followed by Hansen's reading. The events conclude with a "Don't Worry, Be Happy" concert and dance by the Longyearbyen Storband at 6 p.m. at Kulturhuset.

It's part of more than a month of holiday activities that arguably began at the start of the month with Kunstpause welcoming in the dark season, where crafts by artists are frequently bought as gifts.

Two performances kept locals busy during the past weekend, beginning with more than 40



MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

Monica Hansen holds a book made by Longyearbyen youths she will read at the library during an Advent celebration Sunday.

youths joining a professional troupe from Tromsø for the annual Sirkus Svalnardo.

They were followed Sunday by a Christmas concert by the high-profile duo Gaute Ormåsén and Cecilia Vennersten. But they experienced that *other* constant of Svalbard during the holidays as poor weather cancelled their return flight and forced them to delay a show in Tromsø this week.

There's more! Visit www.icepeople.net for the complete story.

HEADLINES STOLEN FROM SVALBARDPOSTEN

VERDENS NORDLIGSTE AVIS

Runway accident by mail plane 'serious,' AIBN says

A wayward landing by a mail plane in January 2010 is being classified as a "serious aircraft incident" by Norway's Accident Investigation Board in a report published this week. The Bombardier CRJ200PF operated by West Air Sweden had braking problems during the landing, which were complicated by a slippery runway and high crosswinds. The aircraft touched down well past the beginning of the runway and skidded about 15 meters off of it on a downhill slope before stopping. The plane "came into the last third of the runway where there was low friction, which is significant in this case," the report states. "The safety margins at the landing area in Longyearbyen were too small." The airline has delivered mail to Longyearbyen since 2006.

Cannon from WW II returns to Barentsburg after 21 years

A Norwegian cannon used during World War II is being returned to Barentsburg 21 years after it was moved to Longyearbyen due to concerns the Russians weren't properly caring for the relic. Norwegian forces established several positions in the Russian mining town when it was evacuated in 1942. Two similar cannons were placed in Longyearbyen after the war, but have long since been lost. The relocated cannon was placed at Hotellneset in 1989. "The gun could have been better maintained, it is clear," said Irene Skauen Sandodden, cultural advisor for the governor, referring to its condition at the time. Now "the governor is still in charge of the cannon so the Russians cannot do anything with it without consulting us." The cannon is indoors in Barentsburg for maintenance and will be placed at its original spot on Heerodden next summer.

Man hospitalized for inhaling coal dust in accident at Svea

A man in his 40s was hospitalized Sunday after falling into a funnel he was inspecting at Svea, officials said. Co-workers had to remove the man, who had difficulty breathing after inhaling coal dust. The man was brought to Longyearbyen Hospital, where he was in good condition.

Weather forecast for Longyearbyen

Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Snow at times. S winds to 39 km/h. High -1C (-8C wind chill), low -6C (-11C wind chill).	Snow. E winds to 42 km/h. High -2C (-11C wind chill), low -5C (-11C wind chill).	Partly cloudy. N winds at 11 km/h. High -11C (-17C wind chill), low -15C (-22C wind chill).	Partly cloudy. N winds at 11 km/h. High 16C (-23C wind chill), low -17C (-24C wind chill).
Sunrise 0:00; sunset 0:00	Sunrise 0:00; sunset 0:00	Sunrise 0:00; sunset 0:00	Sunrise 0:00; sunset 0:00
Extended forecast: Sunday, p. cloudy, -17C (-23C), -17C (-23C), light 0:00h; Monday, cloudy, -18C (-23C), -18C (-24C), light 0:00h; Tuesday, cloudy, -17C (-24C), -18C (-24C), light 0:00h; Wednesday, cloudy, -18C (-24C), -20C (-27C), light 0:00h			
Data provided by yr.no			



TROND ABRAHAMSEN / ANDØYA ROCKET RANGE

An ICI-3 rocket, depicted above in an artist's illustration, will orbit about 350 kilometers above Earth to collect data about auroral activity. At right, project members gather to inspect the rocket in Ny-Ålesund, where launch attempts began today. The team has until Dec. 6 for weather conditions to be favorable enough for a launch.



TORE ANDRÉ BEKKENG / UNIVERSITY OF OSLO

Rocket to Lights off to dark start

LAUNCH, from page 1

The ICI-3 rocket will fly for about 10 minutes to an orbit of up to 350 kilometers to collect data, primarily about daytime auroral activity during extreme conditions.

"We know that there are waves and turbulence in the altitude range from 200 to 1,000 kilometers that spread and block radio waves," Moen said.

French and Japanese scientists are also contributing instruments.

The initial launch attempt today was un-

successful, according to the project's blog (http://www.rocketrange.no/?page_id=751&campaign_id=9&post=69).

"The team began the launch attempt at 0800, local time," it notes. "The launcher did not elevate to nominal position due to wind conditions, and the launch vehicle stayed inside the shelter throughout the countdown. The launch attempt was aborted around 12 o'clock, local time."

There's more! Visit www.icepeople.net for the complete story.

Book makes strong, but biased, case

REVIEW, from page 1

Wormdal's claim got a global, but short-lived response, coming at the same time a U.S. government report suggested SvalSat has been repeatedly hacked in a manner consistent with Chinese military techniques. His book making the case, "Satellittkrigen," offers highly detailed specifics about an issue of enormous complexity, but in a tone that may not persuade the unknowing or unconvinced.

His allegations are not new, as he revealed two years ago he had obtained leaked documents making the main points of his case. The claims were widely reported then as well, but policymakers and the public had little reaction.

This time he said increased pressure is coming from Bård Vegard Solhjell, parliamentary leader of the Socialist Left Party, for an explanation from Norway's Minister of Foreign Affairs.

"It's much more bigger than it was (two) years ago," Wormdal said.

But he said he has also received little direct feedback from the public. Reader comments about a lengthy NRK article detailing the allegations are nearly all skeptical.

"My opinion is this is very difficult to understand," Wormdal said. "We don't have the skills, the knowledge."

"Satellittkrigen" thoroughly details how SvalSat's climate and terrain data is accessed by numerous entities, arguing military operations in various countries have violated the Svalbard Treaty by obtaining the information through forbidden channels. Among the highlights of his claims are the U.S. used data to fight Iraq and Italy used data against Libya.

Officials with the accused governments and with Kongsberg Satellite Services, which operates SvalSat, essentially argue military units are simply accessing weather reports and maps already widely available. Wormdal said such denials are "either based on ignorance or deliberate distortion of the truth," noting, for instance, military entities have funded some of the critical equipment used by SvalSat.

But his book, which reads much like a prosecutor trying to obtain a guilty verdict, also raises questions about whether he's putting too much of his own slant on the facts.

There's more! Visit www.icepeople.net for the complete story.

What's up

Nov. 23

6 p.m.: Movie: "In Time," U.S. sci-fi/thriller, ages 11 and up. Kulturhuset.

Nov. 27

3 p.m.: Advent celebration. Torchlight procession begins at Huset and proceeds past "Santa's Mine" to downtown, where the Christmas tree will be lit at about 4:10 p.m., followed by children's stories at the library.

6 p.m.: Concert "Don't Worry, By Happy" by the Longyearbyen Storband. Kulturhuset.

8 p.m.: Movie: "Immortals" (3D), U.S. action/fantasy, no age limit determined. Kulturhuset.

Nov. 30

6 p.m.: Movie: "Ola Froskesnapper"(3D), Danish animated/family, ages 11 and up. Kulturhuset.

Dec. 4

6 p.m.: Movie: "Blåfjell 2 – Jakten på get Magiske Horn" (3D), Norwegian family film, all ages. Kulturhuset.

Dec. 5

10:15 a.m.: Environmental and Economic Committee meeting. Næringsbygget 3, Newtontoppen room.

Dec. 7

6 p.m.: Movie: "Footloose," U.S. drama/comedy/musical, ages 11 and up. Kulturhuset.

Dec. 10

1 p.m.: Puppet show "Kaspar and Krokodillen" by Kjell Wernøe, followed at 2 p.m. by "Kaspar and Gullskatten" by Mette Wernøe. Each show is about 30 minutes. Kulturhuset.

7 p.m.: Holiday trek from Nybyen to Trollsteinen. All forms of non-motorized transportation welcomed for the up and down tour.

Dec. 11

7:30 p.m.: Concert by Leif Ove Andsnes, celebrating the 25th anniversary of the acclaimed pianist's debut. Kulturhuset.

What's online

Icepeople.net provides daily updates of news about Svalbard and the world's polar regions, plus extras for articles from the print edition. Among the latest news:

- *Norway: Jan Mayen seas an oil bonanza*
- *Linking climate change, extreme weather*
- *More stolen climate e-mails released*
- *Polar bear worth \$400K live, \$2K as rug*